

Abstract

This master thesis's main hypothesis, is attempting to answer if the economic spillover effect of the European Union is a strong enough motive for countries to abandon their traditional realist behavior. In order to analyze and ultimately answer the question, the author employs a combination of qualitative research for the theoretical aspect and a quantitative comparative economic analysis. The qualitative research delves into the motivations and expectation of people prior to joining the EU, compared to after joining the EU. The comparative study attempts to highlight the positive economic spillover from EU membership, revealing how these economic benefits may have altered the nations perception of sovereignty and international relations. The latter part of the thesis is relying on quantitative data from six countries in total, spread evenly between the EU enlargement of 1995 and the one in 2004.

The findings do indicate that while the general motivation behind EU membership does include an economic driver. This is also underlined by the comparative case study, which highlights different levels of positive economic developments for the above-mentioned countries, indicating that the economic spillover effect may as well be a valid excuse for countries to abandon their realist mentality and resort to unilateral thinking.

The study contributes to our understanding and illuminates how in the contemporary world dynamics, potential economic benefits do encourage a cooperative and interdependent attitude towards foreign relations. Which, furthermore, helps our understanding of the evolving dynamics between economic integration and realist philosophy. It highlights the needs for countries, who wish to remain wealthy, powerful, and influential, need to embrace a multilateral approach. Finally, the results indicate how the significance of offensive realism is diminished, in favor for a more cooperative and mutually beneficial framework as the European Union.

Keywords: *Realism, European Union, Economic Spillover Effect, Multilateralism, Democracy, Europeanization*