



Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Interview with Professor Anand Menon, Kings College, London, 7 June 2014

1. A Foreign Office official interviewed Professor Anand Menon on 7th July. The focus of the discussion was on the impact of enlargement on the UK's interests and the geostrategic implications of enlargement.

UK interests and past rounds of Enlargement

2. Overall the impact of enlargement for the UK had been very positive. It had expanded the zone of prosperity and stability throughout the European continent.
3. Enlargement has increased the weight of the EU in the global strategic picture. This is important given that in future the major players are likely to be continent sized. The UK's influence can be increased through a stronger EU.
4. The expansion of the single market is a boost to the UK economy.
5. The UK benefited from having been a strong supporter of enlargement when it found allies in new Member States. This benefit has, however, partly diminished as a result of disaffection in new Member States with more recent UK rhetoric and policy.
6. The UK has benefited economically from new Member State migrants but it has been politically contentious. Increased migration is often attributed to the policy of enlargement but the option of transitional controls was not used. This could have prevented the problem.
7. Future enlargement could benefit the UK as it would increase the number of Euro "outs" in the EU, thus reducing the risk of isolation.

The Enlargement process

8. The enlargement process is essentially intergovernmental. Member States play the leading role and the commission uses its expertise to evaluate the adoption of EU rules. This balance is appropriate. It would not be desirable to increase the power of the commission or use QMV in accession negotiations. There would be significant difficulties in new Member States working with existing Member States which had tried to block their accession.

9. Romania and Bulgaria were let into the EU too early. The enlargement process should have been allowed to take its course.

Future Enlargement

10. Enlargement has been one of the EU's most effective tools for influence, but it could take the EU closer to a zone of instability. Greater account should be taken of this risk in future. The EU displayed geostrategic naivety in trying to sign an Association Agreement with Ukraine and not anticipating a Russian reaction.
11. Mr Menon's research suggested that the "absorption capacity" argument that the EU would not function effectively with more Member States was misplaced. Further enlargement could be pursued without this cost.
12. Turkish accession would increase the influence of the EU due to its added weight and its geostrategic position and influence. The argument that the EU bordering Syria and Iraq would be a risk is naive as the EU already has significant interests in the Middle East and it would not be able to isolate itself from it. Turkey is currently disillusioned with the EU due to what it sees its unfair treatment.
13. Enlargement into the Western Balkans will lock in stability and good governance in a region which has been prone to conflict in the recent past. Conditionality should be fully applied in order to ensure that the reform process is completed.
14. Enlargement into the Eastern Partnership region would be beneficial in the long term; however there would be enormous challenges. Enlargement may be most effective within a "two speed" operation where these states could first join an emerging outer core of more loosely integrated members.