

# Is 'Europeanization' a Useful Concept?

Written by Richard J. Vale

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In order to evaluate the usefulness of Europeanization as a concept, it is first necessary to define its terms and the conclusion of the study by Radaelli *et al* that 'ultimately Europeanization provides a theoretical lens on the effects of integration [into the European Union] on domestic political structures' (2006: 58) appears the most efficient.

However, assessing the usefulness of Europeanization proves most problematic since it has been shown that it is 'a contested and multifaceted concept' and explanations of its causes and effects 'vary according to the theoretical perspective adopted and the subject area chosen' (Quaglia *et al*, 2007: 406). Therefore, to determine the usefulness of Europeanization the approach adopted by Olsen will be taken that '[f]or analytical purposes models can be kept separate' (2002: 924) to consider the different ways in which Europeanization has been theorised and establish how effective and comprehensive these various theories are when tested against real-life examples, in particular Germany and Hungary. In order to formulate an unbiased test, these examples will constitute a sample of both states and policy areas where Europeanization has been found to be both most advanced and least prevalent to see how well the definitions account for such discrepancies.

Since Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier note that '[m]uch of the literature on European integration refers to the domestic impact of the European Union as "Europeanization" (2005: 1), the 'top-down' approach' to Europeanization will be taken as the starting point. Next the proposal that Europeanization is 'a two-way process' (Börzel, 2002: 193) will be analysed, followed by the idea of Europeanization as the horizontal transfer of policies and methods from one EU member state to another.

Throughout the exploration of the above theories, the findings will be used to challenge two major criticisms of the concept. Firstly, that Europeanization is 'faddish' (Featherstone, 2003: 3) and applied to too many different areas of study to render it useful. Secondly, that studies of Europeanization tend to be more interested in discussing outcomes and the extent to which subjects are Europeanized than in developing systematic analyses that seek to explain both the causes and effects of Europeanization (Exadaktylos and Radaelli, 2009: 521-526). It will be argued that, although it is true that when taken separately each Europeanization theory is of limited use since no one theory accounts for all the various causes and effects of European integration, when considered together these different definitions prove Europeanization to be an indispensable concept capable of providing a comprehensive overview of the methods and processes through which the domestic politics and institutions of European states are influenced by external actors operating from, or through the EU. It will be argued that it is not that the wide range of theories linked to Europeanization are a 'problem' (Radaelli *et al*, 2006: 75) or make it so unwieldy that it is futile to use Europeanization as an organising concept (Kassim, 2000: 238); it is more the case that 'different conceptions of Europeanization complement, rather than exclude, each other' (Olsen, 2002: 923) to produce a holistic account of the complex development of the EU and its integration with its member states.

Therefore, It will be concluded that the existence of a number of 'Europeanizations' is imperative in understanding specific instances of change and integration between EU and member states that differs 'from policy sector to policy sector' (Börzel, 2002: 209) and from country to country. Furthermore, the sum of these theories amounts to a detailed understanding of how the different causes of Europeanization merge and result in a more unified European Union. Europeanization, then, is a highly versatile and extremely useful concept.

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## 'Top-Down' Europeanization

'As European integration deepened and the EU enlarged, it became evident that the Union exerted a crucial influence on domestic politics' (Quaglia *et al*, 2007: 408) and so a theory of Europeanization emerged focussing on the change caused as a result of:

'shared beliefs and norms that are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy processes and then incorporated into the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, political structures and public policies' (Radaelli *et al*, 2006: 59).

Under this conception of Europeanization, the pressure for policy and institutional reform at the domestic level is the result of the degree of 'fit' or 'misfit' between EU policies and institutions and those of its member states; the greater the extent of 'misfit' between the two levels of governance, the more pressure there will be for domestic reform until an acceptable level of 'fit' is achieved (Börzel and Risse, 2000). So, for instance, when the Economic Monetary Union (EMU) was formally introduced in the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, member states could only sign up if their national central banks were independent; this put little pressure on the German Bundesbank to change since it had already been independent for a number of years, yet France, by contrast, was under huge pressure to reform its state-controlled Banque de France if it was to join EMU as it hoped. At a fundamental level, then, Europeanization is useful in demonstrating how EU policies compel states to enact domestic reforms.

However, Olsen has suggested that domestic change through 'top-down' Europeanization can be limited as a result of the absorption of EU policy demands into ordinary and routine processes, such as the Standard Operating Procedures of member state bureaucracies (2002: 924). The presumption here is that the impact of European integration is minimised by channelling supranational pressure caused as a result of 'misfit' into existing problem-solving mechanisms at the state level that lead to predetermined, expected outcomes that require very little, if any unexpected structural adjustments of domestic institutions.

This was the case in Germany if we consider the area of telecommunications regulation as examined by Thatcher (2004); Germany was used to an extensive monopoly of the market by Public Telecommunications Operators, but the then EC regulations of the late 1980s and early 1990s outlawed monopolies and demanded fair competition in the area. It would be assumed that such a shift in policy would have placed huge pressure on Germany to change its policies, but such a shift had already been considered by domestic actors as part of a wider programme of market liberalisation and so Germany was able to apply these existing methods to the externally imposed reforms in order to limit the inconvenience and maintain a degree of control over the changes. In instances such as this the usefulness of the 'top-down' theory of Europeanization can be judged to be severely limited in that it is incomplete; whilst it recognises areas where pressure on states to reform is high or low, it fails to fully account for how the states in question respond to such pressure. However, it should be noted that instances such as this are uncommon as it would be impossible for a member state to have routines in place to cater for every eventuality; for example the EMU demanded unique domestic institutional and policy reforms, the likes of which member states could not have predicted and fully prepared for without direction from EU officials.

Indeed, the effect of 'top-down' Europeanization is not to be underestimated. In particular, 'top-down' Europeanization is extremely useful in emphasising the significant influence the EU has in instigating changes in domestic politics where member states have not pre-empted external pressures for reform. This proves most common where the EU is expanding its competence to new policy areas. For example, it has been noted that 'an impact can ... be detected in the domains of health and social care ..., areas which have traditionally been untouched by EU intervention' (Quaglia *et al*, 2007: 414) as well as 'core areas traditionally associated with state sovereignty': a single currency; European defence; and internal security and citizenship' (Wallace, 2000: 380). Here then, Europeanization picks up where neo-functional studies leave off; neo-functionalism theorises that cooperation between member states and the EU in one policy area inevitably leads to spillover to cooperation in neighbouring policy areas (Jensen, 2007: 87). So for instance, whilst neo-functionalism might explain *why* EU competence

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extended into energy policy from environmental policy, 'top-down' Europeanization adds to this understanding by determining *how* this extension results in additional pressure on individual member states to effect domestic change. Europeanization might have been used, then, to predict the struggle Germany had initiating the second trading period of the EU's Carbon Trading Scheme (Stumm, 2008) even though Germany is considered to have among the largest degrees of 'fit' between national and European environmental policy (Knill and Lenschow, 1998).

The 'top-down' explanation of Europeanization has also proved extremely useful in explaining the enormous pressure for changes to domestic politics and institutions exerted by the EU on the Central and Eastern Europe Countries (CEECs), most of whom have recently joined the EU or are seeking to join. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier note that:

'The desire of most CEECs to join the EU, combined with the high volume and intrusiveness of the rules attached to membership, allow the EU an unprecedented influence in restructuring domestic institutions and the entire range of public policies in the CEECs' (2005: 1).

In other words, the fact that the joining the EU is conditional on states meeting certain standards, namely the Copenhagen Criteria, there is pressure for reform on candidate countries even before they are members. This instance of EU influence in effecting domestic change is particularly effective as it works via incentive with the affected states being rewarded with full membership status and funding through the Council of Minister's instrument for pre-accession assistance for enacting political and institutional reform. This also shows that 'top-down' Europeanization is greatly useful in demonstrating how the EU's ability to influence domestic change is not limited to its member states and so as a concept it can be applied to studies of all European states to assess the role of the EU in shaping their policies and institutions. Prominent examples of this can be seen in Croatia which has completed extensive economic reforms in order to meet the Copenhagen Criteria, yet it continues to be pressured to make judicial and administrative changes (EurActiv, 2009).

The pressure to adapt to EU integration remains consistently high in the years following accession and Avery holds that this is because accession negotiations between the EU and candidate countries 'can in no way involve amendments to Community rules' (1995: 5). In other words, the *acquis communautaire*, the collective body of the EU's extensive regulations and legislation, must be accepted and adopted over a specified period of time before and after an applicant state becomes a full member. For instance, '[i]n Hungary's June 1999 parliamentary session ... 152 of the 180 laws passed were not subject to any debate because they were part of the *acquis*' (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005: 2) and adopting the *acquis communautaire* was still on Hungary's political agenda when they attained EU membership in 1994 (Konrád and Vándor. 2004: 9).

In light of the above evidence it has been suggested that when it comes to accession:

'It has never been the integration itself which was adjusted to the new members, but rather the latter ones have to adapt to the community' (Konrád and Vándor. 2004: 9).

Whilst this may be true of states outside the EU and that an understanding of Europeanization as a 'top-down' process has its use in emphasising the importance of the role of supranational institutions in shaping the domestic policies and institutions of member states and isolating such areas of influence for study, Mair has pointed out that:

'Europe is not only an external order, but also a political system in its own right, as well as being institutionally part of the national political systems of the member states' (2004: 339).

Therefore, as far as member states are concerned, each with their individual policy preferences and goals, an intrinsic part of the European Union system, it stands to reason that they will also play a part in determining the content of its policy outcomes and the functioning of its institutions. As far as member states are concerned, Europeanization is not simply a unidirectional process imposed from above, but one which member states affect from below and this brings us to a second conception of Europeanization.

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## Europeanization as a 'Two-Way Process'

This theory explains Europeanization as the result of a bidirectional process where member states shape EU policies and institutions by 'uploading' their own policies and institutions to the European level and then adapt to outcomes made at the EU level by 'downloading' EU policies and institutions into the domestic arena (Quaglia *et al*, 2007: 406). In this respect it is a synthesis of the 'top-down' Europeanization theory and the 'more traditional perspective in which domestic factors were analysed for their impact on international actors, policies and institutions' (Mair, 2004: 338). Therefore, from the start the theory that Europeanization is a 'two-way process' incorporates all of the usefulness of the 'top-down' theory and expands upon it with new insights.

This conception of Europeanization is especially useful in accounting for a neorealist view of international relations in which international organisations are said to constrain and thereby influence the actions of states (Waltz, 1979) since it would follow that member states of the EU would seek to limit the constraints imposed on them by the EU whilst enjoying the benefits of membership and preserving the extent to which they are free to pursue their national interest. Indeed, Börzel has argued that this 'two-way process' of Europeanization is a competitive one in which executives of member states aim to minimize the costs of implementing, or 'downloading' European norms and rules to their domestic constituencies whilst seeking to maximise their influence in shaping policies at the European level (2002: 194).

Evidence of this theory in practice can be seen by returning to the example of the EMU made earlier; the French pushed hard for EMU because it would mean a potential decline in German influence in European economic affairs since the Bundesbank had considerable influence in determining monetary policy under the existing European Monetary System (Anderson and Goodman, 1997: 52). Therefore, whilst it is certainly true that EMU put pressure on France to decentralise the Banque de France, this did not mean that France was powerless to influence what seemed an inevitable process; in viewing Europeanization as a 'two-way process' it becomes clear that member states do not passively adapt to EU integration whilst bearing the burden of the subsequent inconvenience, but instead they may actively use the integration process to their advantage.

A more recent example would be carbon tariffs negotiations occurring at the moment; after integrating the EU's environmental policies into their domestic environmental policies, some member states are pressing for an EU carbon tariff on imports from countries who lack such stringent environmental measures in order to limit the negative impact the EU's environmental policies has had on the competitiveness of domestic production (EurActiv, 2010). One country in favour of the tariffs is Germany which, as a mass exporter of domestic products in the automotive and aeronautical markets, seeks to protect its home businesses. It is evident that the theory of Europeanization as a 'two-way process' is useful in demonstrating how member states can 'upload' domestic policies and goals to the EU level in order to ultimately limit the extent to which they are inconvenienced by the adaptation pressure caused by the 'misfit' between domestic and 'downloaded' of policies.

This theory also helps to explain the point made earlier that Central and Eastern European Countries have a strong desire to join the EU (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005: 1); in addition to missing out on the benefits membership, from outside the EU non-members suffer because member states 'trade with each other much more than they trade with the rest of the world' and 'deal multilaterally with each other much more than with the rest of the world' (Wallace, 2000: 381). Also, non-members can in no way influence the EU policies that sometimes affect their own domestic systems, such as how the discussed proposition of a carbon tariff on non-EU members will undoubtedly affect their trade, and so are in some instances under more pressure to instigate domestic change than members.

This is not recent idea and shows that, although not explicitly referred to, the concept of 'two-way' Europeanization has been used to determine states' motives for joining the EU for decades; as far back as 1962 former Prime Minister of the UK, Harold Macmillan, stated:

'If we [the UK] remain outside the [then] European Community, it seems to me inevitable that the realities of power would compel our American friends to attach increasing weight to the views of the Community, and to pay less

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attention to our own.' (Macmillan, 1962: 2)

The fact that Europeanization as a concept, if not so labelled, has been engaged in political thought for a considerable length of time is surely evidence of the fact that it is not merely a 'faddish' idea but is rather a concept that has stood the test of time and has risen to prominence in recent years for its usefulness in assisting academic studies of European integration and its impact on domestic politics and institutions.

Macmillan's quote serves to prove that not only does membership of the EU enable the 'uploading' of domestic policy to minimise to the adverse affects of 'downloading' European policy, but also that 'two-way' Europeanization grants member states an opportunity to achieve things that they could not have achieved alone. In the UK's case this was using membership of the EU as a platform to have more influence over America's policies than it would had it acted in isolation, and in 1987 Turkey applied for full membership of the then European Community as Turkish leaders believed that pressures from the supranational European institutions would 'reinforce modernizing and democratic tendencies in Turkey' (Huntington, 1991: 282).

States continue to use policy 'uploading' to their advantage long after they become members and so the practical use of Europeanization theory continues to be relevant. For example, it has been noted that once Germany had joined it used the EU to pursue the development of the internal market, the completion of which Germany policymakers saw as imperative to 'the nation's capacity to prosper, to finance its new foreign policy objectives in the east, and to pay the unification bill at home' (Anderson and Goodman, 1997: 51).

Following on from this, Wallace suggests that 'the creation and development of the EU are themselves the result of Europeanisation' (2000: 371) and reflects the will of member states to utilise Europeanization forces in a way intended for individual gain in a collective environment. This argument holds a certain appeal, and certainly demonstrates the usefulness in using Europeanization theory to understand the EU as a regional political organisation like the Association of South-East Nations, created through the sacrifice of state sovereignty in exchange for the achievement of goals that could not be achieved alone.

To an extent, both the composition and 'ordinary legislative procedure' of the EU's institutions lend themselves to such an understanding of the EU and show how the EU might be manipulated, to a degree, by member states to serve their interests through Europeanization. If the composition of the Council of Ministers is considered, for instance, it is made up of a minister from the national executives of each member state and is one of the EU's two legislative bodies and so it is here that member states are able to exercise most influence over the EU regulations which they will ultimately have to adopt. Furthermore, the view of 'two-way' Europeanization would explain why Italy fought so hard to ensure it maintained a large proportion of the seats in the European Parliament (EP) in the negotiations leading up to the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty (Goldirova, 2007); under the 'ordinary legislative procedure' of adopting EU legislation in which the Council of Ministers and EP work together, the EP arguably gained increased powers of amendment and influence in an increased number of policy areas (Voermans, 2009) and so the Italian government wanted their domestic interests to be represented as much as possible in this increasingly influential institution by pushing for as many Italian as they could get, even if in theory members of the EP are intended to vote with their electors', not national, interests in mind.

However, Wallace's theory fails to fully account for the large degree of influence the EU has to cause domestic change as an individual organisation with its own agenda and policy goals which can be viewed as separate from those of its member states; although it is true that 'two-way' Europeanization is useful in understanding how member states hold a certain level of influence of EU policy, there is no evidence to suggest that this influence is so great as to remove the autonomous aspect of EU policy formulation and the subsequent pressure it puts on member states to reform their domestic politics and institutions. In fact, 'two-way' Europeanization theory is useful in clarifying the limits of influence of member states because it works on the basis that after domestic policies are 'uploaded' to the EU level, they are debated and amended before being 'downloaded' with the result that member states are not able to directly influence the policy outcomes of the EU.

This does mean, however, that in an indirect manner states are able to 'upload' their domestic policies so that they

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will be 'downloaded', admittedly in an altered form, to other European states, and it is in explaining this process of member states influencing domestic change of each other through the EU that the horizontal theory of Europeanization is useful.

### Horizontal Europeanization

Radaelli *et al* claim that 'Europeanization covers both vertical processes ... *and* horizontal dynamics'[1] (2006: 62), with the horizontal element coming from the theory outlined above that states can export their domestic policies via 'uploading' them to the EU in order to have them 'downloaded' elsewhere.

Evidence to support this theory seems to strongly suggest that horizontal Europeanization is change driven by the economically wealthy, urbanized Western states, most of whom joined the EU early on, to impose their own values and methods on less wealthy, less urbanized Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) to serve their own interests (Börzel, 2002; Schimmelfennig *et al*, 2005). As noted earlier, these CEECs tend to have recently joined the EU or are in the process of joining.

A prominent example of this appears to be environmental policy. This is because rich, highly industrialized states, such as Germany and the Netherlands, have the access to resources necessary to 'upload' their strict environmental regulations to the EU level, whereas poorer or less industrialized states, such as Hungary and the Czech Republic, lack both the resources and the policies to 'upload' (Börzel, 2002: 196-7). The result then is that these richer member states successfully create a great deal of 'misfit' between EU environmental policy which is subsequently imposed on the poorer member states via 'top-down' Europeanization. Because candidate countries and recently joined member states tend to fall into the poorer, less industrialized category, Andonova has concluded that:

'Not surprisingly, the alignment with the EU environmental *acquis* is typically presented as a bitter pill that candidates have to swallow to advance their broader strategic objective of EU membership.' (2005: 135)

This quote truly demonstrates how powerful the process of horizontal Europeanization can be.

Furthermore, the fact that 'The extension of institutional rules to east European countries implies that western countries see some advantage in doing so' (Haggard *et al*, 1997: 189) has led Haggard and Moravcsik to suggest that, because western governments control the resources CEECs desperately need, CEECs become 'regime-takers' (1993: 273) through horizontal Europeanization which occurs to an extent as a result of 'anticipatory adaptation' because CEECs reform their domestic policies and institutions in order to gain access to these resources.

However, horizontal Europeanization does not only pressurise the poorest, less industrialized states to accept domestic reforms; the Qualified Majority Voting system used to pass the majority of decisions in the Council of Ministers grants more Europeanizing power to the largest states because votes are allocated based on population size. This would explain why France was so adamant as to have the same number of votes as Germany (despite a difference in population of 18 million) so that France held equal sway in deciding what became the EU policies to be 'downloaded', whereas smaller states have less influence and are more likely to have to adopt policies preferred by the larger, more influential states.

Nevertheless, as noted previously, the EU is a complex political system and so even where it may appear that member states have considerable influence to export their own policies through horizontal Europeanization, the effect of 'top-down' Europeanization is always present and so the EU as an autonomous body will adjust the 'uploaded' policies and limit the pressure influential member states can apply to more impressionable states. Ultimately, the three theories of Europeanization interact to bring about domestic change.

### Conclusion

'There is no one theory of Europeanization' (Quaglia *et al*, 2007: 410), nor should we expect one; the differences between member states, and even between policy areas between states are immensely complex when considered

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and so any attempt to construct a single theory of Europeanization explaining the intricate EU-member state interplay across all policy areas and all member states will produce nothing more than a useless 'catch-all' (Mair, 2004: 338) explanation that can be applied even where Europeanization does not. Therefore, the negative connotations conjured when academics talk of Europeanization as a 'fashionable' (Olsen: 921) and 'faddish' (Featherstone, 2003: 3) concept should be abandoned as the term's increased and diverse use is simply a reflection of the ever-rising importance of different integration methods and pressure for domestic political reform occurring as a result of the widening and deepening EU-member state relationship. Taken in isolation, the three theories outlined in this essay have their individual usefulness in demonstrating the various responses member states make to adaption pressure from the EU and how they might seek to use this pressure to their own gain. Not only this, but when considered collectively, these studies of Europeanization as complementary, yet different phenomenon are useful in understanding how the EU provides gives direction to the process.

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[1] Emphasis added.

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