

Research Project: Europeanization of Domestic Policies in Poland

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1. The Purpose of the Thesis

1.1 The Empirical Question

The thesis examines why the process of Europeanization of domestic policies in Poland progresses erratically in some areas but relatively smoothly in others. Europeanization is defined as a process whereby domestic policies are revised with a view to conforming to principles of the Community law and/or general policy discourse at the EU level.

1.2 Historical and Political Relevance

While most writing about the European Communities/Union has been primarily interested in developments at the supranational level, for some time scholarly attention has slowly refocused to explore interactions between the European dimension and the domestic context, interactions which have come to be researched under the banner of 'Europeanization'. As a parallel development, from early 1990s the Europeanization literature has been shadowed by a growing preoccupation with the impact of Eastern enlargement on the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEECs). What underpins this new body of research is a widespread realization that, while previous enlargements have been to a large extent about 'willingness', the forthcoming enlargement is more about 'ability' to fulfil the obligations of the membership.

But although research has been abundant, one may sense a growing dissatisfaction with the inferences made by the Europeanization literature, in both its western and eastern variant. Most recently, the Europeanization literature has been criticized for its bias towards showing 'a European effect', and has called for the extension of the analytical scope of the debate to account for 'the modes and processes of Europeanization' as well as alternative explanations for domestic institutional change.

1.3 Theoretical Relevance

Insofar as the existing research on Europeanization addresses similar questions, it seeks to explain erratic patterns of domestic alignment in one of four major ways:

- 'common sense' approach – this approach posits that Europeanization progresses with difficulty where financial and institutional costs of adjustment are high,
- the 'goodness of fit' thesis – this approach assumes that the pattern of Europeanization varies with the level of compatibility of regulatory styles and regulatory structure, as well as the embeddedness of these features and stability of the embeddedness itself
- 'veto points' - the key idea behind this concept is that Europeanization is punctuated by points at which agreement of different actors is necessary for the issue to proceed further. It

is hypothesised that the likelihood of adaptation is inversely related to the number of such points as well as to the number, congruence and cohesion of veto actors,

- ‘administrative capacity’ - this approach assumes that Europeanization is contingent on developing *generic* features such as a professional civil service and a policy formulation and coordination capacity at the centre of government.

Without questioning the usefulness of these accounts of Europeanization, it is important to note some of their shortcomings, in particular, when used to explain adaptation of domestic policies under pre-accession conditions. First, it must be recognized that key actors in candidate countries may perceive even relatively high costs of adapting domestic policies as manageable when compared to expected benefits. Second, the emphasis on incompatibility with domestic regulatory style and structures may simply overlook the fact that in some pre-accession countries EU policy solutions may be applied to problems that have not been yet identified endogenously. Thus, EU policies would be implemented in an institutional void where incompatibility is not an issue. Third, most of the above accounts tend to treat Europeanization as an event rather than process and as such are ill-placed to explain erratic patterns of the process over time. Finally, the ‘administrative capacity’ approaches suffer from a prescriptive bias, assuming that the collapse of Communism in CEECs has left an institutional vacuum into which new institutional designs may be transplanted. Thus, they concentrate on identifying pre-defined characteristics of the government and administration without precise understanding of the mechanics of these systems.

1.4 Proposed Alternative Theoretical Solution

In my thesis I hypothesise that patterns of Europeanization may be explained with reference to the institutional configuration of the steering function of the Polish core executive. The steering function of the core executive denotes all the structural, procedural, personnel and financial resources available to the core to induce, direct and coerce the executive administration to implement the former’s instructions. These action resources of the core executive are defined in institutionalist terms:

- structural organization – all these formal and informal elements of the core executive which are responsible for steering the executive administration,
- procedural organization – all the formal and informal procedures which link the core executive to the executive administration,
- personnel – stock of people available to collective actors, together with their skills, knowledge and availability,
- finance – the financial resources available to the core executive for the purpose of steering,

It is my assumption that such institutional configurations of the steering function may vary both across time and across policy areas, thus leading to varied patterns of Europeanization.

1.5 Theoretical Significance of the Research

The theoretical significance of this approach is twofold. First, it contributes to opening the executive ‘black box’ by linking explanations to the impact that certain institutional configurations have on policy outcomes. In doing so, it eschews the prescriptive bias of much of

the existing Europeanization literature by analyzing the underlying processes and linking them to policy implementation patterns. Second, it also contributes to the general understanding of how Europeanization progresses by focusing on the temporality of the process.

1.6 Policy Significance of the Research

The research offers insights into the underlying causes for the erratic patterns of Europeanization under pre-accession conditions. In doing so, it moves beyond the existing concepts of 'administrative capacity' to analyze a broader governance capacity of the core executive in Poland.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research design

I intend to follow a comparative research design based on two case studies. The case studies examine Europeanization of two most similar policy areas which differ with regard to the pattern of Europeanization.

2.2 Sample

The policy areas share the following characteristics:

- they are both regulatory policies of one type, either 'negative' or 'positive' measures,
- they are both characterized by either high or low costs of adaptation
- they are characterized by the same level of regulatory incompatibility or are both new policies to the candidate country

The time period analyzed is the period of 12 years from 1989 to 2001.

2.3 Data and Sources

The information will be obtained through analysis of primary materials (government documents, framework policy documents, alignment timetables, etc), secondary sources and during interviews with domestic actors.