

## *In the embraces of Europeisation*

### *Selected examples from Central and Eastern Europe*

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European integration is an attempt to build a political and economic system in Europe. This includes forming an entity exercising power in international relationships outside European Union; it therefore serves geopolitical objectives. It also pertains to the forming of internal power relationships within the Union, which has a bearing on geopolitical issues as well, since it is related to the rivalry for leadership and the attempt to establish mutual political relationships between particular member states and between community institutions. The aforesaid processes on the one hand turn Europeisation into a tool for implementing a specific political project, while, on the other hand, it becomes a mechanism for a system of governance, both in the context of 'top-down', hierarchical modes of implementing political decisions and of the 'bottom-up' influencing of the European Union's policies. The processes of Europeisation distribute political power within the European Union. The same holds true for the costs and benefits stemming from integration. The issue as to who will hold power over the European system and will also enjoy the largest benefits from integration thus depends, to a large degree, on who will control the processes of Europeisation. A political power system is directly related to its economic counterpart. Political rivalry on the European Union forum frequently concerns economic issues and is enormously important for the distribution of benefits, as well as economic and social costs within the UE. These conclusions are some of the most important stemming from this book.

At the present stage of integration, the Union does not form an organism similar to a nation state, where clearly defined institutions of power,

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division of responsibility and interlocking checks and balances, as well as the mechanisms of accountability before the citizens, exist. The system of power is dispersed among many institutions and within a framework of quite complicated procedures. It is the member states which still perform the most important role in the Union. Their impact on its operations, including the Europeisation processes, even continues to increase. This process occurs because of the management difficulties revealed after the enlargement of the Union eastward (2004–2007) as well as being a result of the economic crisis, which began in 2008.

The extent of the political influence of particular states on Europeisation is not uniform. It depends primarily on the political strength in the Union's institutions, measured, *inter alia*, by the number of votes, experience in European politics and the ability to call on allies from other states or on community institutions. The economic power of a given state and its share in the funding of the EU budget, as well as the number of its representatives in the European institutions, are not insignificant either. It is because of this that those member states which are more influential may draw more benefits from the European integration. They may actively influence the Europeisation processes in accordance with their own national interests. In the case of other states, their possibilities of using European policies and the very processes of Europeisation itself to achieve their national objectives are much fewer.

In this book, the author attempts to demonstrate that, although the phenomenon of a loss of control over the economy by the national elites and state authorities does occur, this does not proceed in an uniform manner for all the EU members. Some states strive to maintain, or to regain, this control and the primary means of exerting such an influence is, precisely, their active participation in the Europeisation processes. Apart from this, although the transfer of power from the level of a nation state to the European institutions does progress, some states continue to attempt to maintain their influence on EU policy and remain dominant actors on this scene. Recently, they have even striven to regain an influence on European policy, *inter alia*, through changing the economic management during the Euro crisis. It is thus difficult to talk of a general crisis of the nation state in Europe. One should, rather, point to the use of Europeisation in order to re-configure the power relationships in Europe, including the relationships between the member states involved in the integration.



Another conclusion stemming from this book is that it is the strength of the nation state which is a necessary condition for obtaining long-time benefits from the processes of Europeisation. This results primarily from the fact that it is the states who are the main actors in the EU political system and they also influence the processes of Europeisation to the largest degree. The strength of a state consists, *inter alia*, of the quality of its political elites and public discourse. It depends on the skill with which national interests in European policy are identified and the long-term political strategy articulated. It also depends on the competence of the administrative structures in behaving actively in the Union's arena.

A disparate extent of particular states' political influence on Europeisation may result in part from their domestic strength and weakness. This has non-neglectible practical consequences. First of all, it raises the issue of the adequacy of regulation and the Union's policies to the development of determinants and institutional structure in a given member state. The more convergence between the European regulations and the national institutions, the larger the benefits for the national economic entities and the smaller the cost of adaptation to European solutions. This means that those states which have less influence on the forming of Union regulations may experience a problem with the inadequacy of these solutions to their own national determinants.

Second, the influence of particular states on Europeisation is significant for their national sovereignty and their possibility of retaining control over the national public space, including the retaining of control over economic processes, bearing in mind that the differentiated influence on the Union's policy means that some entities in the UE enjoy more power than others. They may thus use the Europeisation instruments with more advantage to their national interest, as well as in order to retain control over economic processes domestically and in the UE. This actually enhances their sovereignty both in their domestic politics and externally.

The author applies a systemic approach in the book and also makes use of other theoretical concepts. A systemic approach to Europeisation means that the latter performs important functions for the political power system in Europe. It forms a specific hierarchy of relationships between the main actors and answers for the distribution of benefits and costs of the operation of the system. The system of political power is also closely related to an economic sub-system. A systemic perspective assumes that there are

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objectives to the European integration, as well as a rationality of action which most frequently accords with the interest of the actors who enjoy the dominant influence on the political power.

In such a perspective, Europeisation is an instrument of shaping the political and economic system in Europe. It introduces a specific relationship, a hierarchy of power on the Old Continent. It is responsible for retaining control of public policies, including the implementation of a political decision or the disciplining of the subordinated political subjects. It is an instrument of distribution of the costs and benefits of the system's operation. This thus includes both the stage of the hammering out of the European institutions and standards at the 'input' of the political system and their implementation at the 'output' of these processes.

The book is divided into three main parts, dealing successively with geopolitical and economic issues, as well as those related to the transformation of the political system, including democratisation. The examples analysed in the book originate primarily from the Central European states. The integration of this region with the European Union is an unique example of the practical operation of Europeisation. It is unique because it accompanied a systemic transformation in this part of Europe. Europeisation has generally enhanced the directions of the political and economic changes initiated at the onset of the transformation and made them more durable, while the transfer of Europeisation has replaced, to a large degree, the earlier, communist institutions.

The enlargement of the Union eastward was probably the most important geopolitical undertaking on the part of the Community, effected after the collapse of the Cold War order. At the same time, it also provides an example of the asymmetry of influence on the Europeisation processes between particular states. It was the interests of the West European states, as well as those of the United States of America to some degree, which were of paramount importance here. The states of Central Europe were not treated as fully empowered actors. They were, rather, an object of an external intervention, even if, for them too, it was the geopolitical interests which constituted the basic motivation for their efforts to join the EU. A detailed analysis of the accession process indicates, nevertheless, that they were more a recipient of the institutions and political influences introduced by Europeisation in a top-down process than an equal partner. It is worthwhile adding that, while the Europeisation of the Central European region



undoubtedly enhanced geopolitical stability on the Old Continent, it failed to fulfil all the hopes and strategic plans of either the Polish or the West European elites and it does not guarantee long-term security and political stabilisation in Central Europe.

Europeisation also served as a tool with which to introduce an exogenous economic system in Central Europe. The foundations of this process consisted of an asymmetric relationship of political and economic power between the West European party and the states of the region. These translated into the privileged treatment of external economic interests and, in the course of integration between the two parties, a distribution of the costs and benefits favourable to the former. The exogenous model is based, to a minor degree, on an accumulation of domestic growth factors. Europeisation introduces the main economic institutions, by way of a political transfer; it sets out the directions of investment, *inter alia*, as a result of the EU policies or the interests of the investors; and it transfers the resources for development from the EU budget and from private investors.

The competitiveness of the economy is based on cheap production factors rather than on, for example, the development of innovativeness, human resources, science and research. This fits quite well the division of labour on the common market, as well as with the geographical split of Europe into the more competitive and innovative North-West and the weaker South-East. While the exogenous model brings benefits to the new member countries in the short term, in the longer term, it seems to block the opportunities to develop competitiveness.

The manner in which Central Europe has been included into the common market does not seem to be fully optimal for the European Union as a whole, either. The West European entities focused on a relatively simple economic expansion onto the new markets for their outputs, neglecting, by the same, investment in technology and the growing challenges to competitiveness on a global scale. Once the benefits resulting from the enlargement eastward have been consumed, it may transpire that the European economy hits barriers for its further growth and that its companies are less competitive compared to their largest, global rivals.

Europeisation emphasised the enhancement of the Central European states' administrative capabilities. This, however, was related, first of all, to the building up of their potential for the most effective implementation of EU law and policies. Apart from this, it was aimed at enhancing the capability

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to observe the main principles of the EU legal system, *inter alia*, regarding the enforcement of the proper application of EU regulations in domestic legal systems, by the courts.

The analysis conducted in the book proves that Europeisation exerted a strong influence on the states of Central Europe as far as democracy and the consolidation of their domestic political system were concerned. A distinctive feature of these processes was that their primary objective was not the introduction of a model democracy, one in keeping with the universally acknowledged democratic standards and values. The objective was, first of all, to stabilise the political system in the Central European states and to facilitate the integration of this part of Europe with the European Union. What was also at stake was such transformation of the political system in the candidate countries as would *facilitate* the implementation of the most important aims of Europeisation, both political and economic. Democratisation thus primarily served the inclusion of the states of Central Europe into the system operating in the EU, in a manner both efficient and devoid of conflicts, in accordance with the political and economic interest of the main West European actors.

The objectives of Europeisation dictated by these actors most often met with a favourable reception on the part of the majority of the local elites in Central Europe. They attempted to avail themselves of the opportunities provided by the European integration both in order to advance their personal careers and for public benefit. At the same time, they were generally congruous with the goals of Europeisation and the political framework set by the mainstream of this process. The maximisation of local interests was thus pursued primarily through the best possible symbiosis with Europeisation, an efficient adoption of external institutions and patterns, and through the gradual adaptation to the geopolitical and economic interests dictated by the main actors in the EU, in particular, Germany and France.