Research on Europeanization in Literature:
From the Top-down Approach to Europeanization as a Multi-directional Process

Goran Bandov

Associate Professor & Vice Dean, Dag Hammarskjöld University College of International Relations & Diplomacy, Zagreb, Croatia; Associate Fellow, World Academy of Art & Science

Nikolina Herceg Kolman

PhD student in Comparative Politics at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb

Abstract

Europeanization is a highly complex phenomenon researched through various approaches, methodological frames and concepts. One of the leading discussions in literature is whether Europeanization happens as a top-down or a bottom-up phenomenon. At the same time, other approaches emerge and Europeanization is increasingly being researched as a multi-directional process, which incorporates both perspectives. This article gives an outline of three leading approaches to the Europeanization research—top-down, bottom-up, multidirectional—aimed at providing insights that might be useful in the task of designing the research. It opens with the overview of the most influential definitions of Europeanization in literature, followed by the description of three leading approaches to Europeanization research and concludes with the argument that some common challenges and pitfalls of research might be overcome by designing the research based on the multi-directional approach, using methodological frame and tools developed by researchers within that perspective.

1. Definitions of Europeanization in Literature

The definitions and conceptualizations of Europeanization in literature can be divided into a group that includes the process of political integration, and a group that strictly distinguishes the process of European integration as pre-ontological (Radelli, 2003) and defines Europeanization as a process, situation or reaction once institutions are in place. The first group defines Europeanization rather broadly.

Olsen, thus, defining it as a phenomenon with many faces, contextually classifies Europeanization into five categories (2002):

1. Europeanization as changes in external territorial boundaries—EU enlargement;

2. Europeanization as the development of institutions of governance at the European level;

3.   Europeanization as central penetration of national and sub-national systems of governance;

4.   Europeanization as exporting forms of political organization and governance that are typical and distinct for Europe beyond the European territory;

5.   Europeanization as a political project aiming at a unified and politically stronger Europe.

Grubiša (2006) expands Olsen's classification with "retrospective" Europeanization, which combines identification with cultural and political European heritage. Belonging to the European circle is defined by identifying with the common history and unity of European states in the age of countering non-European threats. This classification could further be expanded by adding a definition of Europeanization which includes diffusion of ideas and concepts, both outside and inside the EU territorial borders, and within each dimension of political research—politics, polity and policy.

Vivien Schmidt (2009) defines Europeanization strictly as a "top-down influence of the EU on its member states", while European integration is a separate, bottom-up process. Buller and Gamble (2002) ascertained five definitions or ways in which the term can be defined: 1) development of governing institutions at the EU level; 2) exporting distinctive forms of governance and organisation outside the EU territorial borders; 3) political unification of Europe; 4) process by which domestic policies become more and more subject to the EU policies; 5) "smokescreen" for domestic maneuvers.

One of the earliest concrete definitions of Europeanization as a process once institutions are put in place was coined by Ladrech (1994): "Europeanization is an incremental process reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making." Radaelli (2000) observed that Ladrech is on the right track since he defines Europeanization as a process, but saw shortcomings in his definition which placed too much emphasis on organizations and was limited to national politics and policy. Therefore, he proposed that cognitive and values components be introduced into the definition.

Based on Ladrech's definition, Radaelli (2003) proposed the most influential and most quoted definition of Europeanization: "Processes of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU decisions and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies."

Moumoutzis (2011) later revised Radaelli's definition, adding discourse to the concept. According to his definition, Europeanization is the "process of incorporation in the logic of domestic (national and sub-national) discourse, political structures and public policies of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms that are first defined in the EU policy processes."

Other influential definitions of Europeanization include Börzel (1999): "a process by which domestic policy areas become increasingly subject to European policy-making" and Risse, Cowles and Caporaso (2001): "*the emergence and development at the European level of distinct structures of governance*, that is, of political, legal and social institutions associated with political problem solving that formalizes interactions among the actors, and of policy networks specializing in the creation of authoritative European rules." (italics in original)

Another distinction between definitions of Europeanization in literature is whether researchers approach it from top-down or bottom-up standpoint (or incorporate both approaches). These approaches are analysed in the next part of the article.

2. Conceptualization of Europeanization—Three Approaches to the Research on Europeanization

2.1. Theoretical Evolution

The research on Europeanization can be divided into two phases or generations (Dyson and Goetz, 2003; Bache and Marshall, 2004) based on the shifts in theoretical frames. Europeanization is not a theory, but rather a vague, multifaceted concept, so researchers looked into the new institutionalism as theoretical foundation for research. The first generation approached Europeanization through the lenses of historical institutionalism. In that perspective, Europeanization is an explanatory variable, which influences the domestic level (top-down perspective), and the research is limited to institutions and public policy. Europeanization was approached through the basic premises of the theory—explaining changes through analyses of institutions in time sequences and with "path dependency" as the main concept.

The second generation introduced bottom-up approach and shifted the attention to political processes, with emphasis on changes in informal institutions, such as norms, values, identities, and with focus on political processes (Bache, Marshall, 2004). Europeanization is not an independent variable, but rather a process which should be explained. The second generation research focused on the perspective and the interests of actors and the values and norms framing their actions and interactions. Within that perspective two theoretical approaches to the research on Europeanization emerged—institutionalism of rational choice and social (constructivist) institutionalism.

The rational choice theory approaches Europeanization as a process in which political actors purposefully use EU institutions as a means to promote their interests and it follows the logic of consequence (March and Olsen, 1998; Börzel and Risse, 2000), according to which a misfit or an incompatibility between the research dimension (policy, polity, politics) at the EU and domestic level opens new opportunities for redistribution of power at the domestic level. Whether this new opportunity will be used and redistribution of power will occur, depends on two intervening variables: the existence of multiple veto points, which might empower actors to resist change, and on the other hand, the existence of certain formal

institutions might provide actors with recourses which enable them to use opportunities and, thus, lead to change (Börzel and Risse, 2000).

The socialist or constructivist approach focuses on the cognitive component of Europeanization, with focus on social norms, socializations, values and, most recently, discourse. The constructivist approach follows the logic of appropriateness, according to which European norms, values and policies lead to change at the domestic level because they differ and even "clash" with domestic norms, values and policies. Two intervening factors which determine the scope and degree of adaptation are: a) "change agents" that are able to mobilize and persuade the public to change and b) political culture and other informal institutions which facilitate consensus building (March and Olsen, 1998; Börzel and Risse, 2000).

Börzel and Risse (2000) point out that these two logical arguments are not mutually exclusive and can often exist simultaneously or in different phases of the Europeanization process. More recently, some scholars argue for development of metatheory in Europeanization research (e.g. Bache, Bulmer, Gunay, 2011) and others advocate incorporating social and rational choice institutionalism (Börzel and Risse, 2003) into "analytic eclecticism" (Sil and Katzenstein, 2010), which does not assume synthetizing two theories, but rather follows the logic of "multiplicity of connections between the different mechanisms and social processes analysed in isolation in separate traditions."

The following section will outline three leading approaches to the research of Europeanization: top-down, bottom-up and circular (multi-directional) approach. The top-down approach is mostly framed within the perspective of historical institutionalism, while bottom-up and multi-directional approaches use all three theories to explain Europeanization.

2.2. Top-down Approach

The top-down approach considers Europeanization as a reaction to the influence at the EU level and thus defines the concept as an independent, explanatory variable. One of the most influential conceptualizations of Europeanization from the top-down perspective is the definition by Buller and Gamble (2002), according to which Europeanization is a situation in which distinctive forms of European governments transform aspects of domestic policy. *Differentia specifica* of their definition, according to the authors themselves, is that it understands Europeanization as a "situation" rather than a process. Buller and Gamble argue that it enables researchers to define Europeanization more clearly and explicitly by answering the questions whether it even exists and how it can be detected. The other crucial characteristic of their approach is transformation—change is a necessary condition; inertia or retrenchment (Radaelli, 2000, 2004) is thus not considered as an effect of Europeanization.

Bache and Marshall (2004) define Europeanization as "redirection or reframing of domestic politics in ways that reflect policies, practice and preferences of actors and institutions on EU level". Furthermore, they determine the distinction between direct and indirect, as well as voluntary and involuntary, Europeanization. Based on thus defined distinctions they designed a top-down typology of Europeanization (See Table 1)

Table 1: Types of Europeanization Effects. Source: Bache and Marshall (2004)

	Voluntary	**Involuntary**
Direct	Intended EU influence without the resistance of dominant domestic actors	Intended EU influence with the resistance of dominant domestic actors
Indirect	Unintended EU influence without the resistance of dominant domestic actors	Spillover as a consequence of direct involuntary Europeanization in other areas

Common to all top-down definitions of Europeanization is that they view the pressure to change at the EU level as a necessary condition for Europeanization to occur. The most influential typology of EU instruments that can lead to change at the domestic level was provided by Knill and Lehkmull (1999). Their typology distinguishes between three types of pressure or "mechanisms of Europeanization". The first mechanism is "positive integration", which includes certain set of rules or criteria set at the EU level, which member states should follow or meet. The terms which explain the level of adaptation or change are institutional capacity and goodness of fit.

The second mechanism is "negative integration" which presumes removing certain obstacles in domestic legislation, i.e. liberalisation and deregulation. In this case there are no rules to follow and domestic change is produced by removing certain legal obstacles. The third mechanism is "framing integration" which happens in areas of very limited EU competences. Radaelli (2004) calls this mechanism "facilitated coordination". The mechanism is in fact an open method of coordination (OMC), which functions as a certain discussion forum and platform for policy transfer. This mechanism brings about change by changing beliefs and expectations of relevant actors in a way that corresponds to intended changes (Knill and Lehkmull, 1999).

2.3. Bottom-up Approach

The bottom-up perspective emerged as an additional research framework since, as Europeanization research developed, it became evident that the top-down approach with pressure from EU as a leading independent variable cannot explain all domestic changes.

The bottom-up approach analyses the domestic level before the EU pressure begins and then follows participation of the country in negotiations at the EU level, ending with the process of implementing EU regulation (Radaelli, 2004). Instead of starting at the level of EU policies and then following their influence on domestic policies and actors, it begins and ends at the level of domestic political interactions.

According to Radaelli (2004), by using causal sequences, the bottom-up approach analyses whether (and when) the EU level leads to changes in one of the main components of the system of interaction. As demonstrated in Figure 1, bottom-up Europeanization begins and ends at the domestic level.

Figure 1. Three approaches to Europeanization (Extracted from Radaelli, 2004)

Domestic level → EU (EU integration)
EU → domestic level (top-down)
Domestic level → domestic level (bottom-up)
↑
European variables
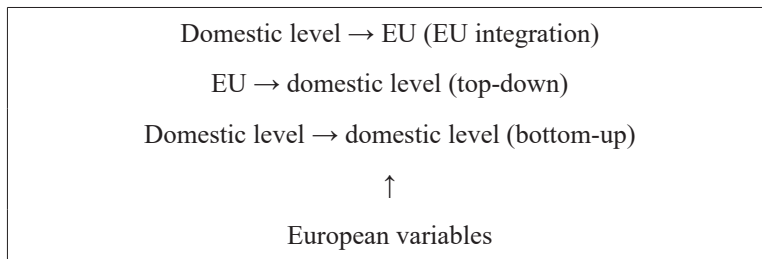
2.4. Europeanization as a Complex Multi-directional Process

In practice, bottom-up and top-down processes often take place simultaneously: on the one hand EU policies are being adopted and implemented and, on the other, domestic actors participate in policy-making and standard-development (Radaelli, 2004). That notion led to a new, more complex understanding of Europeanization as a circular process happening in multiple directions.

Jacquot and Woll (2003) define Europeanization as a result of interactions between actors and institutions at the national and the EU levels. Relying on constructivist approach, they explain how non-state actors can create Europeanization, as opposed to merely reacting by using material and non-material EU resources to produce domestic changes.

Dyson and Goetz (2003) developed the circular concept of Europeanization defining it as a "top-down and bottom-up process in which domestic polity, politics and public policies are shaped by European integration and in which domestic actors use European integration to shape the domestic arena. It may produce either continuity or change and potentially variable and contingent outcomes". They thus conceptualize Europeanization as a process broader than European integration, but point out that the two terms should be carefully separated by distinguishing "defining" properties from "accompanying" properties.

As Radaelli (2004) warns, the different approaches to Europeanization research are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, most scholars use more than one perspective. Drawing on current literature, Radaelli (2004) identified three elements crucial for designing the Europeanization research:

a. Europeanization happens when the logic of domestic political actors changes;
b. Europeanization is a change, both a reaction to pressure and the use of EU resources without the pressure;
c. Europeanization is a process which includes complex sequences and timeframes.

Basing the understanding of Europeanization on these three elements solves, according to Radaelli, the confusion between "uploading" and "downloading" in the process. Therefore, it is necessary to begin with the domestic level and include intervening time variables in order to conclude whether change is a result of Europeanization or it is brought about by the influence of other factors.

Radaelli (2004) points out that Europeanization covers both vertical and horizontal processes and dynamics. The EU provides a context, cognitive and normative frame, opportunities for the socialisation of domestic actors, who, in turn, produce mutual exchange of ideas, power and policies. Accordingly, Europeanization involves both the pressure and utilisation of material and non-material EU resources by domestic actors. However, according to Radaelli, only the bottom-up approach can give unequivocal answer to the question whether change is the result of pressure or of motives and activities of domestic actors.

"A conceptual analysis of Europeanization cannot be limited to narrow definitions."

Europeanization is, therefore, in Radaelli's concept, a multi-directional process and the crucial determinant is not direction, but rather the system of interactions at the domestic level. With or without the EU's pressure, this system of interactions is the crucial intervening variable explaining the process of Europeanization.

3. Conceptualisation of Europeanization as a Research Tool within the Circular Perspective

In the following section, the article analyses the conceptualization of Europeanization developed by Claudio Radaelli as an important methodological tool within this approach. As Radaelli and Pasquier rightly warn, a conceptual analysis of Europeanization cannot be limited to narrow definitions, even though they may be an important basis for operationalization of the concept (2007). Based on the notions of multi-directional approach to Europeanization in an analytical

"There would be no Europeanization without European integration."

frame, Radaelli (2000) designed a highly sophisticated research tool for conceptualizing Europeanization, while most other attempts mainly remained at the level of definition or broader approach to Europeanization (top-down, bottom-up). Borrowing from Sartori (1970) and his concept of the "ladder of abstraction", Radaelli defines the concept by its two basic aspects—extension and intension. Intension refers to the collection of attributes covered by a concept, while extension represents the class of entities to which a concept applies. These two aspects are inversely proportional—the more attributes are included in the concept, the less empirical cases it applies to. As Radaelli suggests, further research should give more attention to the intension of the Europeanization concept. That would minimize the risk of conceptual stretching and what Radaelli calls "degreeism", which occurs when differences in kind are mistaken for different degrees.

Radaelli further warns that it is difficult to define Europeanization without clearly demarcated borders, which means that it is necessary to determine what Europeanization does not include. Connotative precision is crucial for setting research design and establishing a causal relationship in Europeanization research. This, however, does not mean that the researcher should limit their research to only a few aspects of Europeanization. In order

to ensure that, Radaelli developed a research strategy for conceptualizing Europeanization which he, again borrowing from Sartori (1970), termed "unpacking".

Table 2: Taxonomy of Europeanization Research (Source: Radaelli, 2000)

Domain of Europeanization	Extent and Direction
	Inertia, absorption, transformation, retrenchment

Domestic Structures

   1. Political Structures

- Institutions (e.g. relations between executive and parliament)
- Public management
- Relations between national governments and regional governments
- Legal structure

   2. Structure of Representation and Cleavages

- Political parties
- Pressure groups
- Structures of socio-political cleavages

   3. Cognitive and Normative Structures

- Discourse on Europe
- Norms and values
- Political legitimacy
- Identities
- State traditions – the way of understanding governance

Public Policy

- Actors
- Style
- Instruments
- Resources
- Cognitive structures of policy
- Paradigms
- Frames
- Narratives
- Policy discourse (Legitimacy)

To answer the question what Europeanization is not, within the "unpacking" strategy, Radaelli distinguishes the term from convergence, harmonization and political integration

(2000). Convergence can be a consequence of Europeanization, which, according to Radaelli, is a process. Further, Europeanization can also produce divergence. Europeanization is not harmonization either as it presumes diminishment of differences, which is not necessarily an effect of Europeanization. Europeanization should also be differentiated from political integration, even if, as Radaelli admits, there is no Europeanization without European integration (2000). However, the concept of integration belongs to the ontological phase of research which attempts to understand the process of sovereignty transfer from member states to the EU institutions. Meanwhile, the concept of Europeanization is post-ontological and addresses the issue of what happens after the institutions are in place and produce certain effects. In the strategy of "unpacking" the concept and defining the taxonomy of Europeanization research, Radaelli poses two crucial questions: a) what is Europeanized (the domains in which the effects of Europeanisations are expected to materialize)? and b) to what extent has Europeanization happened (scope and direction)? Based on these two questions, Radaelli proposes a taxonomy as described in Table 2.

Radaelli's taxonomy provides an analytical tool, which allows for connotative precision and helps avoid conceptual stretching, without having to sacrifice and limit the scope of Europeanization research. However, Radaelli (2000) does not claim that this taxonomy is enough; Europeanization research has to further develop causal mechanisms of change.

4. Concluding Remarks: Case for a Multi-directional Approach to Europeanization

Most of the research on Europeanization in literature is still performed within the top-down approach. The reasons are many, but one of the most important is the methodological simplicity it provides. However, research design positioning EU's influence with an independent and domestic impact as a dependent variable, and with Europeanization being a one-dimensional and one-directional influence from the EU level to the domestic level, may very well be too simple. As the process allows only one direction, from the EU to the state level, the top-down approach ignores the influence of domestic actors and their interactions, and thus fails to include one of the key variables in the research. Another issue with the top-down approach is its implicit premise that Europeanization happens only if harmonization occurs with the EU's "way of doing things" (Radaelli, 2000). As Radaelli (2000) demonstrated, Europeanization takes place even in the case of divergence, inertia or retrenchment.

The alternative—bottom-up perspective—is not methodologically solid enough to be able to explain Europeanization on its own, since Europeanization inevitably entails EU—with impact at the domestic level—at one point or another. Furthermore, the bottom-up approach makes it hard to draw the line between concepts of European integration and Europeanization, which are crucial for the conceptualization of Europeanization research (Radaelli, 2000).

In order to be able to grasp the full scope and direction of Europeanization, and take all relevant factors and variables into account, Europeanization research should move beyond this dichotomy of "uploading" and "downloading". A step in the right direction is to make efforts to reconcile the two perspectives by incorporating top-down and bottom-up approaches (Börzel, 2002; Graziano and Vink, 2007, 2013) and to frame Europeanization

as a process that happens in different directions, within complex sequences and time frames (Radaelli, 2003, 2004).

The two main challenges of Europeanization research, overestimating the influence of EU over domestic policy and politics, and assuming that every change similar to the EU propositions happens under the influence of Europeanization (Radaelli and Pasquier, 2007), can be overcome with the help of the analytical frame available if Europeanization is approached as a multi-directional process. Viewed as such, Europeanization is not an independent variable explaining every change, but a process to be explained, and its research should take into account both influence at the EU level and the domestic level, analysing horizontal and vertical interactions within certain, carefully chosen timeframes. Thus defined, the method of research enables the researcher to establish a stronger causal relationship with the research on Europeanization, avoiding the risk of ignoring crucial variables.

This approach is not without challenges of its own, as it brings more complexity into the research, which can lead to methodological and analytical confusion. Major challenges arise from possible conceptual misinformation and the consequences that circular design might pose for the relationship between dependent and independent variables, as Radaelli warned (2000, 2003, 2004). That is why the researcher should take all available steps to design the research with parameters that are as clearly and as precisely defined as possible. For Europeanization research, especially in circular research design, conceptual precision is of great essence. As literature offers a wide array of concepts and definitions of Europeanization, the key to a solid research design is analytical and methodological precision and strict demarcation of the concept of Europeanization. A valuable methodological tool for this task was developed by Radaelli (2000), who offered the taxonomy for "unpacking" Europeanization into less extensive, but more precise and controllable segments.

To avoid the confusion between independent and dependent variables, which might occur due to the changes in the perspective and circular nature of research, Europeanization should be analyzed, as Radaelli (e.g. 2003, 2004) advised, in sequences, with each sequence using either the top-down or bottom-up approach. This is similar to a methodological strategy which is in literature known as "bracketing" and was initially used in the constructivist research on international relations (e.g. Wendt, 1999).

Europeanization indeed has many faces, as Olsen (2002) famously wrote. Complexity and scope of the phenomenon call for a highly sophisticated research methodology—we want to be able to research all its "faces", but with proper analytical tools. Multi-level approach, combining both top-down and bottom-up approaches in carefully designed time frames, for all its potential methodological risks, might be a promising tool in that direction.

Authors Contact Information
Goran Bandov – *Email: goran.bandov@diplomacija.hr*
Nikolina Herceg Kolman – *Email: nikolina.herceg.kolman@gmail.com*

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