

# CONCEPTUALISING EUROPEANISATION.

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*Let it be stressed therefore, that long before having data, which can speak for themselves, the fundamental articulation of language and of thinking is obtained logically – by cumulative conceptual refinement and chains of coordinated definitions – not by measurement. Measurement of what? We cannot measure unless we first know what it is that we are measuring (Sartori, 1970, p.1038).*

**Abstract.**

This article subjects the existing literature on the concept of Europeanisation to critical scrutiny<sup>1</sup>. It begins by providing a general discussion of the methodology of concept formation. It then goes on to assess five current usage's of the term Europeanisation, before providing an alternative definition. The main argument pursued here is that academics have been too quick to conceptualise Europeanisation as a process which is capable of producing certain effects. Conversely, not enough time has been spent on the subject of what Europeanisation actually is (and, indeed, whether it exists). Unless scholars refocus their efforts towards the subject of Europeanisation, there is a danger of misrepresenting or reifying its supposed effects.

## **Introduction.**

The language that academics use is important to theoretical progress in any field or discipline. Whatever we know is mediated by language, yet no language is neutral. In many instances, the words we employ are culture-bound and they can lose their meaning outside a particular group, organisation or territorial space. What makes things more complicated for social scientists is that the behaviour we observe is partly influenced and constituted by social conventions. In many cases, we are studying subjects who are, in turn, capable of reflecting on the world in which they live and developing their own narratives to make sense of this existence. Indeed, some go further and argue that no reality exists outside of the linguistic patterns or discourses we construct. Whether we choose to accept this position or not, it remains the case that we all consciously or (more likely) unconsciously make semantic decisions which affect the direction of our research. One of the central tenets of this article is that we

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<sup>1</sup> The authors would like to thank two anonymous reviewers and Maura Adshead for comments on

should be careful and, if possible, explicit about the reasons behind the choices we make.

These opening remarks are especially pertinent to the issue of concept formation. As Sartori reminds us, to observe is not just to register. We need to create and apply concepts if we are to make sense of the things that we see. In undertaking such a task, we normally begin by providing an initial definition aimed at summing up the main elements of the concept. Faced with the problem of empirical work, an attempt will then be made to operationalise this term by constructing a set of indicators for research in the field. These will help to ‘test’ a theory and make a connection between abstract working hypotheses and concrete empirical results. Of course, there is always an element of intuition and judgement involved in concept formation and we should not expect to establish a settled or final meaning for any given term. That said, the ‘facts’ don’t speak for themselves. They will always need to be interpreted and concept formation is an important aspect of constructing interpretations.

To make these initial observations is one thing; to act upon them is quite another. Indeed, it is sometimes said that concepts employed in the social sciences lack the clarity and precision of the terminology in the natural sciences (see for example, Nagel, 1961, pp.505-8). This problem may stem from a number of sources. It has been argued that social scientists can make the mistake of ‘concept stretching’. This refers to a practice where they choose a strategy of least resistance by adapting existing terms to new situations for which they were not designed or suited. Conversely, academics can go to the other extreme and become hyperactive inventors

of unnecessary concepts. Whatever the exact reasons, a lack of thought concerning why we need new terms and a lack of precision concerning the language we employ, can lead to more of our concepts becoming ‘essentially contested’ than is necessary (Connolly, 1974) Academics working on the same subject may talk past each other as they employ different words to study the same phenomena. As a result, theoretical knowledge in this area will fail to accumulate (Gerring, 1999, pp. 360-61). As we shall see, this charge is one which can be levelled at the existing work on Europeanisation.

This article makes two claims. First, it suggests that current scholarship on Europeanisation has suffered in part because, with one or two notable exceptions, the majority of this work has not been reflexive about the concepts it is employing. Second, after reflecting on some of the issues involved in concept formation, this article proffers a definition which is somewhat different from its current usage. More particularly, the understanding of Europeanisation as a *process* whereby domestic politics is increasingly being affected by EU membership is rejected. Instead, it is argued that that we must first devote more time to the question of what Europeanisation actually is, before assigning to it any causal properties. The alternative definition outlined here reflects this position.

### **The Methodology of Concept Formation.**

Perhaps the first question to ask is what is a concept? In general terms, it has been argued (Gerring, 1999, pp. 357-58) that a concept is made up of three elements. First,

there are the properties or attributes which distinguish one concept from another (its *intension*). Second, there are the events, circumstances or phenomena to be covered (its *extension*). Finally, there is the term or *label* summarising these various elements or dimensions. In its simplest sense, concept formation refers to the management of this interdependent, tripartite relationship. Such an operation will necessarily be at times indeterminate and imprecise. There is no privileged sequence to this process (do we start with the concept's label, its properties or the events/circumstances to which it will be applied)? Instead, creating or re-defining a concept is a holistic experience. The researcher must try to strike a reasonably equitable balance between these three tasks.

What issues are involved and what methods are available to a student interested in the problem of concept formation? Generally speaking, there appear to be two broad approaches to this task. The first, associated with the work of Sartori (1984) emphasises the importance of each new concept adhering to a number of set rules. Among other things, these guidelines include: the importance of consistency when employing key terms throughout a piece of work; paying careful attention to establishing the boundaries of a concept and showing how it is distinguished from others; giving consideration to the issue of how the introduction of a new concept may disturb the existing 'semantic field' which will contain related concepts; and the necessity of avoiding synonyms. Sartori provides ten rules in all and lays down that it is the responsibility of the researcher to respect each one in turn.

In contrast, John Gerring (1999) takes what might be termed a more discretionary approach to this issue. Rather than employing Sartori's rule-based methodology, he

argues that concept formation is a more variable and open-ended process. Concepts can play quite different roles in social science explanation and it would be a mistake to apply the same fixed criteria every time we attempt to (re)invent new terminology. In other words, while all Sartori's rules might be applicable and relevant for judging concepts, the balance between them will vary depending on the purpose that the term was designed for. It follows that we are better off not thinking about social science concepts as permanent fixed entities. Choices concerning the definition, intension and extension of a concept will involve trade-offs which may very well result in less than perfect outcomes. Concepts evolve, so that alterations and reform at a later date will always be a possibility.

In practice, there would appear to be much less difference between these two approaches than this formal distinction suggests. To begin with, Sartori would probably not dissent from the view that there are different types of concept which can play different roles in social science explanation. For example, his discussion certainly distinguishes between 'denotative', 'precising', 'operational' and 'ostensive' definitions of concepts. Furthermore, Sartori insists that his rules are only there to guide work in this area. Any notion of legislating for or enforcing meaning is explicitly ruled out. Indeed, he goes further: during the course of research, it may be that new rules will have to be added and that some may even have to be 'dismissed' if they prove to be unhelpful. In short, either approach could be employed for the purpose of concept formation and revision. Gerring's is preferred here, if only because he provides a more explicit and developed discussion of this discretionary perspective.

In this context, Gerring (1999, pp. 366-83) outlines eight criteria which he suggests will be relevant when it comes to judging the utility of a concept. These may be briefly summarised as follows.

(a) *Familiarity*. This criterion refers to the degree to which a new concept conforms or clashes with established usage. The further from such usage that a new concept strays, the less likely it is to be remembered and accepted by the relevant academic community. More generally, the lesson would seem to be: avoid inventing or re-defining new concepts unless absolutely necessary and then, always provide an accompanying justification for doing so.

(b) *Resonance*. In simple terms, the ‘catchier’ the concept, the better. Whilst this criterion may not appear to be as salient as some of the others listed here, it is important not to underestimate the significance of something like resonance in accounting for the acceptance of a term by a group of scholars. However, a word of caution is in order. The search for a label with (what Gerring memorably calls) ‘cognitive click’ may lead the researcher to violate one of the other eight criteria. Trying to be witty or trendy may lead to a choice which confuses rather than clarifies.

(c) *Parsimony*. The formal definition of a concept (as opposed to its properties and attributes) should be as simple and concise as possible. Endless qualifications, footnotes and sub-clauses should be avoided.

(d) *Coherence*. For Gerring, internal coherence is ‘arguably’ the most important criterion in concept formation. It refers to the extent to which the properties of a

concept (intension) and the phenomena it covers (extension) 'belong to one another' or are logically related. As Sartori (1984, pp. 55) reminds us, establishing such coherence can sometimes be a tricky process. Some concepts may have a large number of properties, raising the question of how one handles their organisation. One answer might be to make a distinction between a concept's 'defining' properties, which are true by definition and 'bind the concept extensionally' and its 'accompanying' properties, which will vary at any point in time and have to be confirmed through investigation.

(e) *External Differentiation*: Internal coherence can be contrasted with the external differentiation of a concept. If the criteria listed above are partly about outlining what a concept is, external differentiation helps to clarify what a term *isn't*. It is about establishing the limits or boundaries beyond which a concept should not be extended. Attention to this variable is important if we are to avoid the problem of concept stretching outlined earlier in this article.

(f) *Depth*. As already suggested, concept formation is partly about grouping characteristics that are normally found under one heading. For Gerring, the utility of a concept should partly be judged according to the amount of characteristics it can 'bundle together'. The greater the number, the greater the 'depth' of a concept and, the greater the depth, the better.

(g) *Theoretical Utility*. This criterion simply means that concepts should help in the formation and development of theories. It reminds us that concepts and theories are inherently related.



(h) *Field Utility*. This final criterion refers to the disruption that concept formation can do to the rest of the ‘semantic field’ in which academics are working. Defining a concept is partly about establishing relations with other terms. One cannot create or re-define concepts without being prepared to ‘repair’ the terminological damage that may have been caused elsewhere. It follows that those concepts which bring the least amount of disruption to their neighbours are more desirable.

In short, the utility or ‘goodness’ of a concept depends on its performance in relation to these criteria. The rest of this article goes on to survey the existing literature on Europeanisation with reference to these guidelines, before outlining an alternative definition of the concept. The main argument to follow is that, conceptually, we should focus less on Europeanisation as a process with causal properties and first ask what Europeanisation is. In other words, the task here will be to form a ‘denotative’ concept – that is, to create a definition of Europeanisation designed to ‘seize the object’ that it is trying to explain (Sartori, 1984, p. 30). It follows that some of Gerring’s criteria will achieve a more prominent position in the discussion than others. In particular, attention will be paid to issues of internal coherence, external differentiation, depth, and field utility.

### **Conceptualising Europeanisation: The Existing Literature.**

It follows from Gerring’s eight point list that perhaps the first question we should ask is why it is necessary to create a new concept like Europeanisation at all. Or to put the

point in a slightly different way, what is wrong with the existing concepts (and, by implication, the theories) that we have? What of the well-established terms such as 'European integration' or 'spillover'? Why can they not fulfil the functions that Europeanisation has been brought in to address? Even if we accept the need for a new concept, additional questions remain: what is the relationship between Europeanisation and these existing concepts? Indeed, what is the connection between Europeanisation and existing theories of European integration more generally? Does this heralding of a new concept mean that we also need new interpretations of the EU? To return to Gerring's criteria, these are clearly issues of theoretical and field utility, not to mention familiarity.

It could be added in passing that the creation of concepts which result in new 'izations' contain their own particular hazards. As Taylor (2000) has argued, constructing a noun out of a verb in the English language by adding an 'ization' can have the effect of creating a double meaning. The new label will denote the process described by the original verb, as well as the end-state that results from the culmination of such a process. In this sense, Europeanisation would come to depict a state of being like 'Europe' (or the European Union) as well as the process whereby other territorial units (such as the nation state) are either affected by or imitate Europe/the EU. It maybe that such a definition is perfectly acceptable. However, if you want to keep the process and end-state of a phenomena separate, the danger is obvious. 'Izations' create the possibility of conflation of meaning and we need to be very careful how we delimit the definition of our terms. This issue will be returned to below.

Having raised these points, the literature to date on Europeanisation does contain an academic justification for this conceptual development. The case runs broadly as follows. While there is now a substantial body of work on the origins and development of the EU over the last 50 years, its main focus is on the process of institution-building and political integration at the *European* level. Much less attention has been paid to the reverse relationship: how European integration might be impacting on the *domestic* politics of EU member states. However, with the re-launch of the integration process from the mid-1980s onwards, and the gradual interpenetration between the EU and domestic levels since then, such a perspective is now ripe for investigation (Borzel, 1999; Knill & Lehmkuhl, 1999; Hix & Goetz, 2000; Cowles, Caporaso & Risse, 2001). At the same time, this shift in analytical focus also reflects a broader movement away from what some academics now regard as a tired and fruitless debate about whether the EU is a fledgling superstate or an intergovernmental regime (see for example, Hix, 1994; Peterson, 1995; Risse-Kappen, 1996; Jorgensen, 1997; Rosamond, 2000, pp.105-22). In reality, the EU is a more complex and multi-level organisation. It represents a new kind of state, a new form of political association which has no exact parallels or precedents, and whose outcomes are therefore more contingent and uncertain (Ruggie, 1998, ch. 7).

Not surprisingly, these new empirical developments have been accompanied by calls for theoretical innovation. If the new challenge is to research the domestic effects of European integration, as already noted, the problem with traditional theories is that they do not give analytical primacy to the domestic level. This is not to say that such work is completely silent on the impact of the integration process on national politics. For example, Neo-Functionalists were interested in studying the effect of integration

on the organisation and behaviour of interest groups (believing that a transfer of loyalty to the European level would eventually take place). Alternatively, Intergovernmentalists have asserted that European integration ‘strengthens’ or insulates the state from societal pressure. However, the main problem with this literature is that such propositions are largely by-products of the main task in hand: that is, to explain what is going on at the European level (Hix and Goetz, 2000). In short, there is a need to bring the domestic level back in to the analysis of European studies. The Europeanisation literature represents a response to this challenge.

If a reasonably clear and coherent story can be told about the reasons for the introduction of the new concept of Europeanisation, the same cannot be said for the body of literature which has attempted to provide a definition of this term. As some academics have already observed, Europeanisation is an ‘essentially contested’ concept (Kassim, 2000, p. 235). Bearing in mind earlier comments in this article concerning the more general state of social science terminology, we should not be unduly surprised by this finding. On the other hand, the fact that this relatively young concept is already exhibiting the sort of troubling symptoms associated with older terms in the social sciences should perhaps be a matter of some concern. In this context, it is tempting to call for the abolition of Europeanisation now, so as to avoid inflicting even more conceptual confusion on the discipline. This strategy is rejected for two reasons. First, as Olson (2001) points out, because the term is relatively new, few systematic attempts have been made to map and compare its different usages. Second, if we abolished every social science concept that was essentially contested, we would rapidly find ourselves with very little in the way of academic terminology at all. Instead, the strategy here is to submit this contested literature to critical survey

in the hope we can further clarify the core meaning of the term. It would appear that Europeanisation is employed in at least five different ways by academics working on this subject.

First, Europeanisation has been defined it as *the development of institutions of governance at the European level*. For example, Risse, Cowles and Caporaso (2001, p. 3) see it as:

*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 formalise interactions among the actors, and of policy networks specialising in the creation of authoritative European rules.*

In this sense, Europeanisation characterises the creation of a new institutional centre. Such a process may reflect the importance of purposeful choices as these new structures are consciously designed for reasons of utility or legitimacy. Alternatively, this institutional change may develop a momentum of its own, leading off along trajectories or 'paths' not anticipated by the original designers. Finally, Europeanisation may reflect a more contradictory or incremental process as a wide variety of actors with competing objectives and strategies interact in an environment they neither totally understand or control (Wincott, 2000). It follows that if Europeanisation refers to the emergence of common mechanisms of governance, we would expect some sort of convergence at the European level. This may not necessarily be the same at the domestic level, whereby the impact of these common institutions of governance may differ quite significantly (see also Lawton, 1999).

Second, Europeanisation has been employed to refer to examples where *distinct European forms of organisation and governance have been exported outside Europe's territorial boundaries*. Put in different terms, Europe's various institutions, policies, procedures and governing style may become attractive to non-European governments looking to institute or legitimise reform within their own jurisdiction. It should be noted that some authors have included within this approach cases where certain EU states have copied programmes from other EU states during the development of European integration (Cole and Drake, 2000, p. 27). As an example, one could point to the influence of the German model of monetary policy on the outcome of the Single Currency project of the 1990s. Whatever the distance involved, it is important to note that this sort of emulation rarely leads to the complete or wholesale cloning of institutions or policies. Instead, decision-makers will prefer to pick and choose certain 'bits' which suit their particular purposes. Of course, such partial transfer has its own dangers. Institutions or policies may not work if they are randomly broken up and re-applied in a different context. In such instances, policy failure can occur.

Third, Europeanisation has been used to denote *the achievement of the political unification of Europe*. Whereas the first two definitions of the term refer to a process, Europeanisation in this sense is taken to mean the putative end-state of this development, whereby sovereign member states are finally federated together in a single polity. In such completed form, not only will this entity have developed its own autonomous institutions of governance. Beyond these would exist a shared popular culture and identity giving direction to collective action from above (Olsen, 2001). One obvious methodological drawback with Europeanisation as understood in this

way is that one may be reduced to trying to conceptualise and operationalise something that does not yet exist. Instead this approach may be better conceived as an ideal-type; an example of what pure Europeanisation would look like as and when it emerges.

If we apply Gerring's criteria to this list of definitions, certain problems become immediately apparent. Most obviously, many of these terms seem synonymous with other words or concepts already in use in the study of politics. In other words, it is very difficult to differentiate the boundaries of Europeanisation externally as described above. For example, it is not immediately clear why Europeanisation as political unification cannot simply be called political unification. Second, Europeanisation as the export of distinct European modes of organisation or governance would appear to be a particular example of the generic concept of 'policy transfer', which has been developed in the study of public policy over the last twenty years or so (see for example, Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996). This term as employed by its supporters is used to describe:

A process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions etc. in one time and/or place is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements and institutions in another time and/or place (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996, p.344).

To be fair, the language used by the two definitions is slightly different. However, academics have asserted that transfer can take place both within and between different countries. Indeed, it has been suggested that this flow of knowledge about institutions,

policies or delivery systems *across borders* is precisely the conceptual property which differentiates policy transfer from other perspectives on policy-making (Evans & Davies, 1999).

More significantly for the argument below is that a similar problem exists with the more popular definition of Europeanisation as the development of institutions of governance at the European level. This usage would appear to be almost identical to the concept of European integration as pioneers of the subject understood it. A couple of sample quotes from the 'early years' is sufficient to make the point. According to Haas, European integration denoted a process:

Whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalty, expectations and political activities towards a *new centre*, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states. The end result of a process of political integration is a new political community, superimposed over the pre-existing ones (quoted in Pentland, 1973, p. 101) (authors' emphasis).

Lindberg's preferred definition of European integration saw it as:

the development of devices and processes for arriving at collective decisions by means other than autonomous action by member states (Lindberg, 1963, p. 102).



It should be noted that Haas, in particular, continually readjusted his definition of European integration as his thinking developed on this issue. By the mid-1960s, his understanding of this term had come to centre on the idea of supranationality as a distinct method or style of decision-making (Pentland, 1973, pp. 102-3). That said, the way Haas and Lindberg employed the concept of European integration is similar to the current usage of Europeanisation documented in the third definition.

This duplication would be less problematic if we could construct a justification for why Europeanisation is preferred to these more established terms. On closer inspection it would appear to be possible to construct a case for distinguishing Europeanisation from European integration and political unification. It might be observed that, used historically, the term European integration referred not only to a process of change at the EU level, but also to the inevitable establishment of a unified political community. On the other hand, (as already suggested above) Europeanisation can be differentiated from integration because its variable and contingent nature denies such teleology. The problem with this particular argument is that it can be disputed. As Lindberg himself has asserted, there is no reason why the concept of European integration should stipulate a predetermined end-point. Indeed, integration in the 1960s was vulnerable to counter-tendencies such as ‘spill-back’ and ‘spill-around’. In short, there are problems of both ‘external differentiation’ and ‘field utility’. Unless we are more careful there is a danger that scholars associated with the new subject of Europeanisation will gain a reputation for mindlessly trampling around an already crowded semantic terrain, muscling in and stealing properties from many older, established concepts

An additional criticism worth raising relates to what some authors have termed the 'level of analysis' problem (see for example, Singer, 1961). Although separate from the issue of concept formation, it has already been mentioned implicitly and remains relevant to the question of methodology which concerns us here. Initially conceived in the discipline of International Relations, the level of analysis problem is how to treat different types of location in which sources of explanation can be found (Buzan, 1995). As already noted, ontologically the EU can be thought of as a complex polity, within which power is diffused throughout it at a number of different levels. At the same time, the task of the present Europeanisation literature is to shift focus from the European level and give analytical priority to the impact of integration on domestic politics. The problem with the existing conceptions of Europeanisation as discussed above is that they continue to define it as a European level process. As a result, these definitions lack explicit referents which may be used to operationalise research at the domestic level. It should be stressed that the *analytical focus* of Cowles, Caporaso & Risse (ed.) (2001) is on the way that Europeanisation impacts on domestic structures, which has probably become the most popular way of describing Europeanisation (see below). However, strangely, this analytical focus is not actually signified in their definition of Europeanisation. Rather, the impact of Europeanisation at the domestic level is captured by the theoretical approach, a slightly amended form of Historical Institutionalism.

If the theoretical and empirical challenge is to research the domestic impact of Europe, we can turn to another body of literature which conceptualises Europeanisation in a more helpful way. In essence, this work defines Europeanisation as a *process whereby domestic politics becomes increasingly subjected to European*

*policy-making*. It should be noted that a number of slight variations on this definition exist. Some authors prefer to focus on how Europe becomes part of the ‘organisational logic’ or administrative practices of governments (e.g. Ladrech, 1994; Knill, 2001). Others want to broaden out our understanding of the domestic to include informal rules, beliefs, paradigms, styles, ideologies and culture (Dyson, 2000; Radaelli, 2001). These differences aside, the advantage of this concept is clear. European integration represents a process of convergence at the EU level, whereas Europeanisation denotes the consequences of this process which may have a variable impact at the national level. At the same time, the analytical bias moves from the European to the domestic, allowing the researcher to shift his or her focus towards charting and explaining how national governments have adapted to Europe.

An increasing amount of empirical work is now being produced using the concept of Europeanisation as a process whereby Europe affects domestic politics. Not surprisingly perhaps, a common theme running through these findings is that Europe has impacted on domestic politics in a highly differentiated way. Authors note contrasts not only between countries, but also between policy areas within the same country (not to mention differences within the same policy area). Such variability appears to be the result of two sources. First, institution-building and policy-making is unevenly developed across Europe. As a result, adaptive pressure generated from this level will also vary. Knill and Lehmkuhl (1999) have introduced a three-fold distinction to account for this different type of European influence. The first has been termed positive integration and it represents the most ‘direct’ or ‘coercive’ form of adaptational pressure. Faced with these constraints, domestic change can take place as the result of European prescriptions for certain concrete institutional requirements.

Second, negative integration can help bring about domestic reform, not by being prescriptive, but through the alteration of opportunity structures which can, in turn, empower domestic actors. Finally, framing integration represents the 'softest' form of adaptational pressure. Here, changes at the European level may indirectly feed into the beliefs of domestic decision-makers, thus leading them to pursue different strategies through the adaptation of existing institutions.

If the variability of Europeanisation is partly due to the uneven spread of integration in Europe, it is enhanced by the way that these adaptational pressures are 'refracted' by differing domestic circumstances. Academics have coined the phrase 'goodness of fit' to refer to the degree of compatibility between domestic and European policy processes. That said, there are differences of opinion concerning the likely outcome for a country which has a political system deemed more or less congruent with European practices. For some, Europeanisation is more likely to occur the greater divergence there is between domestic and European arrangements (Cowles, Caporaso & Risse, 2001; Radaelli, 2001). For example, in a study of the Europeanisation of social policy, Caporaso and Jupille (2001) have argued that integration in the area of gender equality has generated more change in the UK than France, because of a less good fit between European and British institutions in this area. However, Knill and Lehmkuhl (1999) assert that domestic institutional change is more likely in cases where Europe requires incremental rather than substantial departures from existing arrangements, certainly in instances of positive integration. Their recent study of Britain and Germany's administrative responses to EU environmental policies illustrates this argument.

While most would agree that institutions are an important influence on political outcomes, some academics have introduced further intervening variables into the debate concerning the variable impact of Europe on domestic politics. For example, ‘veto players’ can exist and use their position to frustrate attempts to introduce EU induced change. Such actors are more likely to be present in institutional settings where power is diffused and where decisions reflect widespread patterns of consultation and bargaining. Timing can be another important intervening variable. For example, those governments who have or are in the process of experimenting with policies also being introduced at the European level, will find it easier to adapt to such European pressure as and when it materialises. Finally, the belief systems or paradigms of a domestic policy-making community can also affect the likelihood of Europeanisation. For example, those governments with an attachment to the ‘European idea’ may find it easier to accept change from the EU than those countries with different political cultures (for a more general discussion, compare Radaelli, 2000 with Risse et. al., 2001; see also Haverland, 2000).

In short then, this definition of Europeanisation (as a process whereby domestic politics is increasingly subjected to European policy-making) seems better suited to our analytical needs. However, it too is not without its problems. First, a definition which emphasises Europeanisation as a process can neglect the subject of what Europeanisation actually is. In other words, we know (or we think we know) that Europeanisation is influential as a force for change (independent variable), but at times we find it difficult to conclude with any certainty that Europeanisation actually exists (dependent variable). Take for example, Borzel’s (1999) article comparing the different ways that developments in regional policy have impacted on the strategies or

regional governments in Germany and Spain. For Borzel, existing domestic institutional arrangements are the key intervening variable mediating the impact of European pressure. In Germany, EU institutions had little impact on territorial governance, with the Lander absorbing changes successfully through a strategy of co-operative federalism. However, Borzel does note a subtle change in the domestic institutional arrangements in Spain. Whereas the Spanish Comunidades Autonomas began by adopting a traditional confrontational strategy towards the EU, when this strategy failed to produce the desired results, a shift towards the tactics of the German Lander took place. The question raised by these empirical findings is whether this example of change in the Spanish case represents an occurrence of Europeanisation? We can certainly say that it represents a process whereby a strategy of co-operative federalism is being reproduced in other countries, but does this convergence amount to Europeanisation? Unfortunately, because Europeanisation is conceived of as a process, this question is not explicitly raised, let alone addressed.

Another example which might be cited in this context is the work of Harmsen (1999). He is concerned with the impact of European integration on national administrative structures and practices and also concludes that the process of Europeanisation is mediated by a pre-existing balance of domestic structures. Harmsen compares France and the Netherlands because they represent different administrative traditions. In France, the experience of processing European business over the years has led to the reinforcement of the centralised nature of policy-making in this area (although for a different interpretation, see Cole and Drake, 2000). Conversely in the Netherlands, EU membership has produced some change in the government's administrative structure. More specifically, Harmsen argues that there has been movement away

from Dutch traditional of pluralistic and consensual decision-making, to a more Prime Ministerial executive style, although Harmsen wants to play down the significance of this change.

Again, the question here is whether this change at the Hague (no matter how small) can be considered evidence of Europeanisation? We can certainly assert that it represents some sort of convergence towards a more centralised pattern of administration, which has resulted from continued EU membership. But is this the same as Europeanisation? Harmsen does go some way towards addressing this question. He implies that Europeanisation in this area would signify the existence of a common institutional model, whereby national administrations would either come to resemble one another, or some sort of 'synthetic EU prototype' (Harmsen, 1999, p. 82). However, measured against his empirical results, Harmsen only feels able to talk of 'an uneven process of Europeanisation' and does not really elaborate on how he arrived at this judgement. The question remains: what would a 'common institutional model' of European administration look like in practice once the empirical research had been done? Or to put this point in a different way: does centralisation characterise such a model in practice? If so, what is peculiarly European about centralisation?

Fifth and finally, Europeanisation has been defined as a *smokescreen for domestic policy manoeuvres*. Put in different terms, it describes the process whereby certain actors at the domestic level will encourage or at least acquiesce in European integration as a way of either implementing domestic changes, or legitimising the status quo at home. For example, Dyson and Featherstone (1999) have demonstrated how governing elites in a number of European countries were happy to promote or to

at least accept the Single Currency project as a way of pushing through domestic economic reform. Similarly, Buller (2000) has argued that the Thatcher Government played a more constructive role in the negotiation of the Single European Act because the Single Market strategy at the heart of this treaty amendment would help to entrench its neo-liberal economic statecraft. Characterised in this way, Europeanisation represents a complex phenomenon, passing through European and domestic levels over time. The dialectical nature of this process reminds us that when it comes to studying Europeanisation, we are always trying to hit a moving target.

This definition of Europeanisation certainly raises significant questions. As already implied, it highlights the rather one dimensional nature of Europeanisation understood as a top-down process affecting domestic politics. Here, the causal relationship between the two levels appears only to go one way: from the European to the national (and sub-national). However, under this definition, what would we call instances where domestic actors in one country at one point in time (t1) encouraged the process of European integration (t2) which then impacted back on the domestic politics of that same country (t3)? If we only label what goes on between t2 and t3 as Europeanisation, we may be in danger of neglecting important causal mechanisms further back down the temporal chain. There is no doubt that this is an important issue which cannot be ignored. But again, we appear to be mistaking the subject of Europeanisation for its process. Understanding the dialectical interplay between domestic and European levels will be crucial to explaining how and why Europeanisation takes place. However it remains a part, but only a part, of the answer to the question of what Europeanisation is in the first place.



One final and more general criticism of Europeanisation is the inability of this literature to produce cumulative research about this subject (Wallace, 1999; Olsen, 2001). There may be a number of reasons for this state of affairs. One could point to the relative newness of the area. Alternatively, the popularity within policy analysis of a methodology which prefers to study the 'parts' of the system rather than its whole, could also be cited (Bulpitt, 1995). However, this article highlights a further point which relates to the argument developed above. We find it hard to generalise about the domestic effects of Europeanisation because those academics who do think about the concept as a subject as well as a process, do so in a wide variety of different ways. As we have already seen, Europeanisation can refer to territorial politics or a common European administrative system. Others have used the term in relation to a model of internationalisation (Laffan, O'Donnell & Smith, 2000); a conception of European citizenship (Checkel, 2001); or a distinct European identity (Risse, 2001). These examples beg further questions: can the meaning of Europeanisation be reduced to developments in a single policy area? Or should the definition be broader, referring to a single style or cultural attribute which is distinctively European? In short, those of us who are undertaking research on Europeanisation are not starting from the same point. It should not be surprising then that generalisations on the subject of Europeanisation are hard to come by.

To conclude, too much research on Europeanisation has moved too quickly to consider it as an independent variable (process) which causes certain effects. Conversely, not enough attention has been paid to the question of what Europeanisation actually is, whether it exists and how we might conceptualise this subject. However, as Hay and Marsh (2000) have noted in a different context, unless

we redefine our focus in this way, there is a risk that we will reify the supposed effects of this process (see also Held and McGrew, 2000). Of course, such an exercise has its own awkward problems. For example, is it going to be possible to address this issue of what Europeanisation is without constructing some sort of model or ideal type? If so, how might we go about constructing such an abstract entity? Will it be possible to utilise insights from what we know about the nation state, or is the EU *sui generis* and in need of its own unique methodology in this respect? To raise these questions is to remind ourselves of the problems experienced in conceptualising European integration 30 years ago. However, while the responses produced at this time have gone out of academic fashion in recent years, it is important to remember that certain difficult theoretical problems do not necessarily go away just because we shift analytical focus and invent new labels for a subject.

### **Europeanisation: An Alternative Definition.**

In light of the comments raised above, this article defines Europeanisation as:

A situation where distinct modes of European governance have transformed aspects of domestic politics.

While sharing similarities with some earlier definitions examined above, Europeanisation as conceptualised here can be contrasted with this work in a number of ways. The first difference is that Europeanisation is not defined as a process, but as a situation where certain effects can be shown to have occurred. In other words, the

concept directs us to think more explicitly about what Europeanisation is, whether it exists and how it might be found at the domestic level. It should be stressed that this usage of Europeanisation does not imply that its occurrence is in any sense inevitable. Indeed, (in line with earlier definitions) its contingent nature will in part reflect the uncertain outcome of new kinds of social interaction which generate pressure for this phenomenon to emerge. At the same time, it is hoped that this definition has some theoretical utility (to bring back Gerring's criteria). At the very least it ought to encourage us to clarify exactly what we mean by Europeanisation before we go onto examine how and why it emerges. At the same time, the definition continues to give analytical primacy to the impact of European developments at the domestic level, therefore retaining one key feature which distinguished Europeanisation from European integration in the above discussion. In other words, the concept displays some field utility in the sense that it involves minimal disruption to related terminology.

A second distinctive feature of this definition of Europeanisation as a situation where distinct modes of European governance transforms aspects of domestic politics, is that it is exclusively associated with change. In other words, the definition rejects the view that Europeanisation (at the domestic level) can be described as *inertia* (lack of change); *absorption* (changes in non-fundamental aspects of the system, but the core remains undisturbed); or *retrenchment* (successful resistance to change). If, in its crudest sense, Europeanisation is to denote a condition of becoming 'like Europe', then the term must at least imply some sense of transformation 'in the logic' of domestic politics, be that through 'positive', 'negative', or 'framing' integration. Otherwise, the concept would have no point. At the same time, it is hoped that this

attempt to clarify the conceptual boundaries of Europeanisation will help to accentuate its external differentiation. This in turn will help when it comes to operationalising the term for the purpose of empirical research.

However, this definition of Europeanisation still raises significant questions. First, the phrase ‘distinct modes of governance’ needs to be clarified and justified. A mode of governance is defined here as the processes, methods or style of governing which bring about conditions for ordered rule and collective action (see Kohler-Koch, 1999; Pierre and Stoker, 2000). Modes of governance are broader than institutions and policies, although a particular governing style might be decisively influenced by these aspects of the decision-making process. At the same time, modes of governance are preferred to a more specific focus on institutions or policies for two reasons. First, the term offers a sterner test of whether there is a European-level phenomenon which is actually having an effect at the domestic level (Dyson, 2000). While it is clear that individual European policies or institutions exist, it is not so obvious that Europe possesses a particular governing style or styles. Second, this definition begins to narrow the potential dimensions of the subject area. Of course, it is likely that more than one mode of governance will co-exist at the European level, but it seems reasonable to assume that these will be less in number than the multitude of different policies that exist. In other words, conceptualising Europeanisation in this way will hopefully help to bring the analytical focus of researchers further together, leading to a greater cumulation of findings.

A different thorny issue is how to operationalise the phrase ‘transformed aspects of domestic politics’. Perhaps the first point to note is that ‘domestic politics’ is

deliberately intended to be broad. It covers both the subject of formal institutions, as well as informal norms, beliefs, discourses as well as policies. As such, it is designed to remain in line with existing definitions cited above (familiarity) and to try and accommodate the research interests of as many scholars as possible working both within and outside the subject area of public policy. That said, as already noted, the word 'transformation' is associated with change, and the question remains: how much change is enough? We might begin by saying that such change should not be trivial, although what does and does not count as 'trivial' may depend as much on subjective perceptions as it does on objective reality. Moreover, transformation implies something more than temporary reform or adjustment. It suggests an alteration of one or more aspects of domestic politics which is relatively enduring. It follows from this statement that future research on Europeanisation should incorporate a temporal perspective.

Issues of conceptual terminology aside, other problems remain when it comes to operationalising this definition for the purposes of empirical research. As many authors have noted, the EU (for example), represents a system where domestic and European levels are now increasingly intertwined and intermeshed (although differences remain concerning the precise intensity of these links). At the same time, as Wallace (2000) reminds us, Europeanisation should not only be distinguished from the national, but also from the international and global. While processes of European integration may be penetrating the domestic level in many states, we should not forget that Europe is also not impervious to external influence. One obvious question is how is it possible to isolate distinct modes of European governance from this complexity? One response is to emphasise that the definition of Europeanisation offered here does

not require a total separation of the European from the national or international. Indeed, it seems foolish to deny that distinct modes of European governance will be in some sense influenced by national interests and global forces. Instead, such modes of governance (certainly in the context of the EU) refer to a situation whereby they cannot be *reduced* to activity on these two other levels. Put in these terms, operationalising this concept is perhaps not quite as demanding as first thought, although the process of collecting evidence is still likely to be difficult. It follows from this observation that modes of European governance are more likely to exist in areas where the EU (or other European organisations) have a stable institutional presence and enjoy policy competence.

This article concludes by briefly considering an example of the Single Currency and its impact on eurozone countries to highlight some of these issues in slightly more detail. When it comes to detecting a distinct mode of governance, one interpretation might be to point to the following features: (1) a normative belief in the importance of economic stability through central bank independence; (2) a widespread acceptance of the view that a credible monetary framework incorporating low inflation and balanced budgets is the chief objective of economic policy; (3) and a conviction that this monetary framework should be accompanied by the liberalisation of markets in goods, services, and labour if it is to function effectively. Clearly this mode of governance is in part driven by the rapid development of global financial markets which can punish national economies that depart from these particular doctrines. That said, problems also exist with this interpretation of a distinct mode of European governance. Arguably, there is nothing distinct or European about it. Rather, this Single Currency regime as understood here is reducible to the more general paradigm

of neo-liberal economics, which has achieved a dominant position in the debates about economic policy in many parts of the world.

A second, more fruitful approach might be to focus on the eurozone's specific monitoring, surveillance and enforcement system when it comes to isolating this distinct mode of governance. Indeed, this method of solving the problem of fiscal free-riding in currency areas has been described as 'peculiar' in comparative terms (Campanella, 2001, p.168). This distinct mode of governance is encapsulated by the Stability and Growth pact and is characterised by the following features: (a) a specific target or benchmark against which the fiscal performance of governments is to be judged annually (general budget deficit not to exceed 3% GDP); (b) an Early Warning System whereby the Commission (in agreement with the Council of Ministers) writes a letter to a country which appears to be heading for such a budget deficit; (c) an Excessive Deficit Procedure under which the Commission and Council of Ministers can recommend courses of action to those governments whose economies are in breach of this target, as well as being able to compel certain sanctions if this advice is ignored. Interestingly, this mixture of benchmarks and peer review is being adopted as a style of governance in other EU areas as well, most notably employment policy.

If this mode of governance is distinctively European, to what extent can it be held responsible for transforming aspects of domestic politics within the countries involved? Despite certain doubts concerning the extent of change in some cases<sup>2</sup>, it seems churlish to deny that member states have significantly altered aspects of their

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<sup>2</sup> For example, in 1996 the French Government were widely criticised for accepting a one off payment from France Telecom as a way of meeting the convergence criteria (*Financial Times*, 30 October, 1996). In 1997, the Italian Government also faced rebuke for relying on similar 'creative accounting' techniques (*Financial Times*, 27 March, 1997).

economic policies in order to meet the convergence criteria for the Single Currency. However, if we extend our analysis to include the period after 1999, evidence exists to question whether this change has been relatively enduring. In the first half of 2002, the German, Portuguese and French governments announced a significant deterioration in their budgetary positions, yet were able to mobilise enough support in ECOFIN to avoid an early warning from the Commission (*Financial Times*, 13 February, 2002; 22/23, June, 2002). Just as important have been the growing calls by member governments for the Growth and Stability Pact to be reformed to take more account of the economic cycle (*Financial Times*, 19 October, 2001). Faced with this evidence, it is difficult to argue that Europeanisation has taken place in the sense that European modes of governance have transformed aspects of domestic politics in this particular issue area.

## **Conclusion.**

This article has sought to bring some clarity to the burgeoning literature on Europeanisation. But the authors are only too well aware that the net result may only be to add to the 'essentially contested' nature of the term. We accept (in line with Gerring's approach) that the definition of Europeanisation outlined here is tentative and open to revision at a later date. What we have tried to do, utilising an explicit discussion of the methodology of concept formation, is to move the debate forward by proposing a definition of Europeanisation that builds on the existing literature, rather than simply being another arbitrary addition to the field. If the article succeeds in



persuading researchers to reflect on Europeanisation as a concept, it will have done its job.

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