Book Review

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The European Union and South East Europe: The Dynamics of Europeanization and Multilevel Governance
by Andrew Taylor, Andrew Geddes and Charles Lees

The branch of Europeanization that studies the EU's impact on the transformation of domestic politics (see, for example, Héritier et al. 2001; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (eds) 2005) has regularly been confronted with the criticism of concept stretching (see, for example, Radaelli and Pasquier 2006). Despite this, Europeanization-based research has only moved further in both geographic and substantive terms, for example reaching out to study the EU's impact on other world regions (Börzel and Risse 2012).

Cautious readers may recall such criticism when having a first look at the subject of this volume. It studies the impact of engagement with the EU on four South-East European states – Greece, Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia –, covering the period from 1995 to 2010 and different accession modalities. It does not just focus on the top-tier of national administrations; instead, Taylor, Geddes and Lees dig deeper and analyse how the 'multilevel-ness' of modes of governance (their dependent variable) changes as a result of EU engagement (their independent variable). They are interested in discovering how and to what extent capacity, competence and power have shifted between the different layers of administration as the countries adapt to the EU. In doing this, they cover not only the different levels of domestic policy-making and the supranational EU level but also cross-border interactions. After reviewing the different national state-building processes and the character of governance in the four countries, Taylor et al. focus their analysis on three policy fields: cohesion policy, migration and border security, and environment policy; all potentially under strong adaptational pressure from the EU. Despite this breadth, fears of concept stretching are unfounded. In fact, the opposite is true.

Using Social Network Analysis (SNA), the authors add specificity and clarity to the often under-specified concept of Multi-Level Governance (MLG). SNA does not simply identify the different layers of administration and actors theoretically involved in policy-making but also unveils their relative power and the intensity of the interactions between each actor. As a result, we see which actors are the relevant ones in the three policy fields. This already shows us two remarkable results. Firstly, while the EU promotes wider participation and subsidiarity in the decision-making and implementation of these policy-fields (most notably in cohesion policy), this adaptation to EU requirements results instead in more centralised decision-making at the national level. MLG has grown in all cases and countries studied and the networks have become more and more complex over time, but the power to take decisions and to mobilise resources is concentrated at the core of the network (pp. 109, 206, 214), possibly as a result of that growing complexity. Secondly, while the EU emphasises regional cooperation in South-East Europe as central to the accession of the involved states, the networks show that the regional actors play a role, but not such a vital one (with the exception of migration and border security), perhaps because of a lack of capacity to mobilise resources (pp. 136, 170, 203). Although some of the differences may arise from the different modalities of accession (i.e. Macedonia is subject to stronger surveillance and conditionality than

Greece was at the time of its accession), both results point to the persistence of traditional governance structures in historically rather centralised polities, which are sticky and only change gradually over time.

Up to this point, the volume of Taylor et al. is descriptive in the best sense of the word; guided by analytical concepts it depicts the evolution of policy fields and their different actors and tiers of governance as they become more multi-levelled over time. It adds clarity and sound empirical testing to often fuzzy concepts such as Europeanization and MLG. The authors achieve this through extensive interview material and questionnaires gathered with the help of local researchers in each of the four countries. In their explanatory analysis, Taylor et al. survey the reasons behind the specific development of the networks. Their central explanatory device is the so-called capacity bargain. Derived from Mattli's (2002) concept of a sovereignty bargain, the capacity bargain represents an exchange in which the candidate or member states trade in decision-making power for EU-provided norms, resources and broad administrative templates (i.e. capacity) to tackle policy challenges. The specific capacity bargains differ from policy sector to policy sector (for example as a result of the amount of involved funding or the perceived urgency) and are also determined by the local governance structure and history. Unfortunately, the hypothesised nature and role of the capacity bargains only becomes evident in the policy chapters of the book. The theoretical chapter, probably as a result of space constraints, devotes more emphasis to enumerating the individual theoretical pieces of the model than to putting them into a clear relationship with each other. Notwithstanding this, the different capacity bargains do explain the diverging nature of MLG in the countries and across the sectors. Although the specific nature of the networks varies, Taylor et al. find that they function in similar ways (e.g. managed from a strong central government institution) across countries and across policy fields. This comparative finding confirms the effect of the EU in shaping and transforming the modes of governance of the countries, while still showing that their specific appearance is dependent on the legacy of the respective state.

Taylor et al.'s volume will be appealing to readers interested both in the specific policy fields that they tackle as well as in the Europeanisation of South-East Europe more generally. The detailed governance networks derived by them through intensive empirical research can also serve as a useful background for researchers who want to study one of the specific policy fields in more depth. Furthermore, Taylor Geddes and Lees's fine-grained empirical analysis makes an important contribution to specifying the nature of concepts such as Europeanization and MLG and dispels any criticisms of concept stretching.

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