EXPLORING DEEUROPEANIZATION

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Abstract: There is a noticeable disproportion between the research conducted on the process of Europeanization and its potential antonym Deeuropeanization. Whereas Europeanization has dominated the research agenda of European studies for already four decades, the concept of Deeuropeanization emerged only over the last decade and its conceptualization is rather in its preliminary stage. However, more and more journalists, intellectuals and scholars reach for this tempting antonym to accent on the negative trends observed within the process of European integration. The aim of this article is to identify the most common utilizations of the term, propose further extension of the concept and to reflect on its research potential. The article distills Deeuropeanization as a return to national interest, a departure from the European values, but also identifies institutional and procedural, and mimetic Deeuropeanization. With regard for these dimensions Deeuropeanization cannot be treated as a general antonym of Europeanization. Concluding, the article sets criteria for the identification of the process of Deeuropeanization. Firstly, when the Europeanization process produces worse results in comparison to the *status quo ante*. Secondly, when it leads to dystrophy of the integration consensus. Thirdly, when it facilitates the emergence of factors weakening Europeanization. Thus, the article provides a platform for the identification of Deeuropeanization as a distinct and helpful extension of the cognitive apparatus in the European Studies.

Analyzing the existing and available scarce literature on Deeuropeanization, two main strands on its conceptualization can be identified. The first one juxtaposes Europeanization and Deeuropeanization as a return to national interest or as an escape from the EU tenets. The second one considers deeuropeanization as a departure from European values.

Deeuropeanization as return to national interest

The interaction between European and national interests is the first noticeable dimension of deeuropeanization. For Michal Romanowski and Waldemar Czachur Deeuropeanization is a process, of alteration of the foreign policy of EU member state in which the balance between the national and community (European) interests shifts towards the former (Romanowski, 2015) (Czachur, 2010). Copeland follows the same track, when acknowledging in Raagmaa's paper the idea of deeuropeanization, as a declaration of "*the political establishment declaring that coherence with the EU is not a priority and that a different national interest exists*" (Copeland, 2016). Thus defined, the process of deeuropeanization accents on the natural process of discontinuity of interests between the different levels of integration (in this case the Union and national one). Importantly, this does not mean that there is irreconcilable conflict between the interests, but a calculation of the gains stemming from community and individual actions. Undoubtedly, the appearance of such process might have further implications leading to the weakening or dismantling of the dependencies/ties emerging in the process of Europeanization.

In a similar vein, the process of withdrawal from a policy conducted by the EU is also a type of Deeuropeanization (Copeland, 2016). Such de-prioritization of the EU goals can be rooted in the democratically driven process of elite change. The point of reference in this case are not interests, but the process itself, in which the national policy becomes less European than it was (Yilmaz, 2016). As Copeland notices aptly, Deeuropeanization constitutes a process of withdrawal from a particular policy teamed with the conscious decision to reverse the impact of Europeanization (Copeland, 2016).

Krasnodębski (2013) provides a relevant illustration of this conceptualization while arguing against the artificial nature of the integration process based on political engineering, which rejects "*politics as an element of struggle, antagonism, competition and rivalry, overriding it with governance and meshing of interests.*" Since "*Europe was supposed to speak in the future with one voice. The European unison was supposed to emanate the complete harmony of souls.*" Precisely, the process of rejection of this politically correct "enslavement" is nothing else but Deeuropeanization, which, according to Krasnodębski is nothing but a return to freedom (Krasnodębski 2013).

Deeuropeanization as a departure from European values

The EU values are defined in art. 2 of the TEU *"The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including*

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the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail" This framework provides the axiological fundaments on which the community is erected. It encompasses not only the sum of individual interests, but also defines the shared philosophical and legal experience. Therefore, in this case Deeuropeanization will be a departure from the thus defined values. In other words, the rejection of the axiological assumptions fostering Europeanization. Although there is no consensus on the interpretation of these European values, it is apparent that there is a general agreement on their importance.

Similar views are presented by Piotr Mazurkiewicz positioning the question of Europeanization and Deeuropeanization in the context of European identity. Mazurkiewicz defines European identity in an ideal sense (What Europe should look like?) and reality (What Europe really is?) (Mazurkiericz, 2001). As he claims "*This identity* [European – SD] referring to the continent of culture, constitutes a certain canon of ideas and values, from which the most important is the personalist view of man. Its contemporary expression in the political realm is the attachment to the idea of the democratic state ruled by law." Hence the process of strengthening or loosening the link "*between the idea and the European identity allows to speak about Europeanization or Deeuropeanization of the Old Continent dependent on the fact, whether its real identity develops towards the realization of this idea or in the opposite direction. The departure from these traditional values by the majority of the Old Continent inhabitants could be considered exactly as a Deeuropeanization of Europe.*" (Mazurkiericz, 2001) (Zimny, 2007). J. Zimny recognizes these threats in the already mentioned existing trend of departure from these values, but also in the challenges that the process of integration faces in the context of the collapse of communism and multiculturalism (Zimny, 2007).

In this context, it is worth acknowledging the tangible relevance of Central and Eastern Europe. Numerous scholars that examined the regions' historical experience over the last quarter of a century claim a direct connection between the processes of democratization and Europeanization (Agh, 2015; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005; Vachudova, 2005). Indeed, for many countries that went through simultaneous processes of democratization and joined the integration process, treat these terms interchangeably, especially in the context of the Copenhagen criteria. In this manner, Attila Agh equalizes the notions of democratization and Europeanization and de-democratization and Deeuropeanization. Recognizing the growing gap between the formal and substantial democracy, Agh underlines tendencies that overlap on the process of de-democratization and Deeuropeanization (Agh, 2015). Discerning its roots in the 2010 parliamentary elections in Hungary, Agh identifies the process of establishing a façade democracy, which he also calls a Potemkin democracy. In its essence, it amounts to one party rule, which after the 2014 elections transformed into an elective autocracy (Agh, 2015). The characteristic features of this system is the consolidation of political and economic influence and the oligarchization of the political system.

In a similar vein, although in a wider context, Nancy Borneo identifies the same process, introducing the term *democratic backsliding*, defined as a process of conscious weakening or dismantling of the existing institutions supporting democracy (Borneo, 2016). The rationale for using this term stems from the fact that it deals with the process of undermining democracy. Today, the characteristic features of this process are *promissory coups*, *executive aggrandizement* and *strategic harassment and manipulation*. The regress of democracy can lead to its collapse, or to serious weakening of the democratic institutions. Roman Kuźniar shares the same interpretation. For him the process of Deeuropeanization means a departure from the principles and the model of state established in the process of regaining independence after 1989 and the simultaneous path towards membership in the EU (Kuźniar, 2016).

In addition, the center-periphery concept reveals a similar notion of Deeuropeanization. As Jan Grzymski recognizes, the former communist countries considered the process of Europeanization as westernization that was supposed to bring "*creative/imitative linear change towards democratic, free market and western*" (Grzymski, 2010). Hence, Deeuropeanization is a process of departure from these indicators of western-ness. In other words, the return to Europe's peripheries is Deeuropeanization.

Raagmaa, Kalvet and Kasesalu's definition assumes that if Europeanization is a process of conversion of union values and regulations, then the process of Deeuropeanization means a departure from them (Raagmaa, Kalvet & Kasesalu, 2014). Following Mazurkiewicz's lead, hence Deeuropeanization is a

subjective and negative description of processes opposite to the imaginary positive status quo concerning the process of European integration.

Institutional and Procedural Deeuropeanization

As defined by T.G. Grosse, the dogmatic institutionalist perspective of Europeanization accents to the procedural and organizational level of the process (Grosse, 2012). This approach accents on the formal adoption of EU regulations and simultaneously ignores the qualitative consequences of the rule adoption. However, even in this case, we can assume that one consequence of this formal adoption can be a practical change in the operational efficiency of the local/national level of governance. Such change can lead to negative implications, such as weakening or distorting the local patterns of governance. Should these negative implications continue over a longer period, this would lead in practical terms to **institutional or procedural Deeuropeanization**. Meaning that the overall effect of Europeanization in the long run is negative in comparison with the level of governance prior to its implementation. This happens, because regardless of the pursuit for institutional unification at the EU level, the process of Europeanization might also weaken or distort the functioning of its constitutive parts (the institutional effectiveness at the national or local levels), thus weakening the process of Europeanization itself. The practical dimension of this trend is present in Thomas Schmid's argument about the EU bureaucracy's boundless pursuit of competence appropriation (Schmid, 2016). The nature of European integration offers numerous possibilities for such appropriation. The technocracy driven nature of the integration, coupled with political ambitions and a lack of democratic checks and balances creates appropriate conditions for such procedural Deeuropeanization at the EU level.

A recent example of this process is probably best visible in the case of the EU boxing with Poland and Hungary over art. 7 TEU. Although the EU's competences in this case are vague and general, the European Commission has no hesitations to overexploit their interpretation (Weiler, 2016). This is actually a symptomatic example of a larger trend of departure from the *permissive consensus* driven integration towards *constraining dissensus* resistance at the national level. There is no longer conscious and voluntary transfer of competences within the *permissive consensus* that situates the European institutions in an ancillary role towards the member states. Instead, at times there appears a dominance driven, selective, often random, and from above process of pilfering competences from the member states. Such actions trigger surprise, lethargy, apathy or irritation at a local/regional or national level that in its nature is also Deeuropeanization, if generated by the process of Europeanization.

Accommodation as Deeuropeanization (mimetic Deeuropeanization)

Another dimension of Deeuropeanization concerns the process of Europeanization understood as the transfer of national practices to the European level. However, should these practices be contradictory, or they change the process of integration in a negative way, do we still have Europeanization or Deeuropeanization?

Agnieszka Cianciara notices that "*the more the political system is authoritarian and the political elites control economy and the more these political elites benefit from this symbiosis, the transfer of EU rules is more difficult, especially of those threatening the survival of the political and economic ones.*" (Cianciara, Burakowski & Olszewski, 2015) Hence, the question is whether in political systems with unfinished transformation or facing democratic backsliding, the effects of limited/incomplete Europeanization does not lead to genuine Deeuropeanization? The premature acceptance of new EU member states with incomplete adoption of vague rules and standards led to "stalled Europeanization". Applying Agh's terminology, in this case there are simultaneous processes of formal Europeanization and informal/genuine Deeuropeanization. The former means the formal creation of appropriate institutions, incorporation of Brussels requirements and implementation of the European terminology, whereas the latter means the accommodation of pathological political practices at the national level, nurturing corruption, ineffective judiciary or election manipulations. Thus, in its essence, mimetic Deeuropeanization means that the Europeanization efforts do not lead to the adaptation of the reality but, legitimize the pathologies at the local/national level and therefore decrease the value of the whole integration process thus generating frustration among the remainder of EU members and depreciation of its achievements.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to explore the different dimensions of Deeuropeanization. The foregoing deliberations on its nature and content lead to the following conclusions. The roots of Deeuropeanization can be discerned in the intellectual limitations of the *euphoria* approach towards Europeanization that marginalizes its negative consequences that can have far-reaching implication for the whole process and its constitutive parts (administrative structures, societies or the individual). That said, Deeuropeanization is not a mirror image of Europeanization. Taking into consideration the multithreading nature of the integration process, Europeanization does not necessarily have to possess its antonym. For example, the lack of Europeanization is not its antithesis.

In the case of Deeuropeanization, just as with Europeanization, observations and empirical research shape the theoretical models. Therefore, Deeuropeanization is a process appearing in numerous dimensions, as long as it meets at least one of three criteria. Firstly, Deeuropeanization takes place when the Europeanization process produces worse results in comparison to the *status quo ante*. Secondly, it dismantles, weakens or marginalizes the constitutive elements at lower levels (national, regional, local, social) thus leading to dystrophy of the integration consensus. Thirdly, it facilitates the emergence of factors weakening Europeanization.

The value of recognizing Deeuropeanization as an integral concept in European studies can equip their diagnostics function with a transparent and measurable tool. Further efforts to identify additional dimensions of Deeuropeanization will extend the cognitive horizons of Europeanization and will release it from the traps of self-adoration and uncritical enthusiasm.

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