

INTRODUCTION

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This collective monograph is a result of the cooperation of the Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University's team and our partners from the universities of Italy, Malta, and Turkey during the realisation of the module "The Ring of Mediterranean: Regional Studies" — ERASMUS-JMO-2021-HEI-TCH-RSCH (101047919) (MEDITERreg).

The ONU-led MEDITERreg includes a set of diverse partners from EU Member states, their Mediterranean partners, and Ukrainian partners. The Module's framework emphasises coherently and synergically integrated innovative teaching methods, bi-directional interactivity, and blended learning. The combination of 4 new courses with other essential activities creates a complex and comprehensive approach toward the Mediterranean as a heterogeneous region, which includes a variety of countries, cultures, traditions, political evolution and experiences. The module also significantly strengthens the Regional and EU Studies in the Faculty's research with a specific and detailed understanding of the Mediterranean region and this dimension of The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The MEDITERreg focuses on its various online activities and resources. Online e-books, audio recordings and other digital materials are readily available to different groups of participants on the project's website, ONU domain. These activities and resources ensure the successful realisation of all project objectives in the time of Russian aggression in Ukraine when the physical movements of individuals are limited. The partnership with NGOs and think tanks within and outside Ukraine contributes to disseminating the results of the module and its related best practices beyond the context of the ONU. Moreover, the partnership with the Diplomatic Academy of Ukraine at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine (DAU) provides the chance to expand, in the Ukrainian context, societal awareness of the Europeanization process and its fluid connection to the

enlargement process and the dimension of the neighbourhood. Project goals and specific tasks are revised course “Country Studies through Language”; new courses “Regional Studies”, “EU policy towards Mediterranean region”, “Regional Politics and Security in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean”, and “Migration Process in the Mediterranean”; new MOOCs “Regional Studies”, “EU policy towards Mediterranean region”, “Regional Politics and Security in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean”, and “Migration Process in the Mediterranean”.

The monograph aims to identify the main trends in the prospects for the development of regionalism in Mediterranean. Among the tasks are to build the theoretical foundation of the development of modern regionalism, to reveal the best practices of regionalism in the Mediterranean, to demonstrate the role of external actors, first of all, the most active ones in the region, to understand the perception of Ukraine in Mediterranean countries and to find joint base for our future cooperation. The hypothesis is that such common ground may be that Europeanization is equally important to Ukraine and most Mediterranean countries.

The Mediterranean region is the most important for the EU, although the EU also has a strong presence in the Baltic and Black Seas. However, the Mediterranean is the cradle of European civilisation and is now the source of the most significant challenges for this organisation. Therefore, interest in EU policy in this region will only increase. As the North-South abyss grows, it will become increasingly relevant for the real politics of states and international organisations. For Ukraine, the experience of relations between the Mediterranean countries and the EU has become even more relevant today because we could not enter the EU quickly due to the conflict with Russia. It is crucial for scientists and the entire Ukrainian society to understand how to build relations without the hope of full EU membership. What can the EU give Ukraine? What dangers does the future hold for us? As the instability in Ukraine increases, these problems are becoming more and more critical for the EU. These factors determine the practical significance of the proposed study.

The theory of Europeanization, from which all the authors of the proposed monograph proceeded, helps to answer these questions. The abovementioned does not mean that the study's theoretical basis is limited to Europeanization, but no one today can afford to ignore it because of the following arguments.

From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, researchers gradually moved away from viewing European integration exclusively as a process of EU expansion and deepening cooperation among member states within supranational structures. As European integration was reconsidered at the turn of the century, Europeanization gained increasing independence as a scientific term, gradually separating from traditional EU studies. The main focus gradually shifted from examining the effects of enlargement on the EU's nature – namely, the formation and functioning of its institutions (*uploading* of norms and rules or the *bottom-up approach*) – towards a greater emphasis on the direct downloading of EU norms and rules (*downloading* or the *top-down approach*) and their incorporation into the legislation of member states or potential member states. The consequences of such downloading for the domestic political, economic, and legislative systems in countries that, by becoming members (or candidates), have agreed to adopt EU norms and rules are the primary subject of study in Europeanization.

Topics of growing interest to scholars include the impact of EU integration on the political process in member states (such as changes in the distribution of power and party structure), institutional transformation, economic adaptation, cultural exchange, identity shifts, and more. However, the most central issue that remains at the core of all works on Europeanization is the exploration of situations in which convergence occurs between the EU's demands and the member states' ambitions to protect their national interests. In other words, the key questions are: What are the conditions for the successful adaptation of European norms in a general sense, and which specific domestic social, economic, and political factors exert a decisive positive or negative influence on a country's Europeanization?

The pioneers in Europeanization research who laid the theoretical groundwork for future academic studies include Johan Olsen, Tanja Börzel,

Andrew Moravcsik, Kevin Featherstone, Claudio Radaelli, and Simon Bulmer. Most of these scholars adhere to the new institutional approach in explaining the effects of Europeanization. For instance, Simon Bulmer and Claudio Radaelli note that the rational choice model is the most developed (Bulmer, & Radaelli, 2004, p. 50). This model pays attention to the behaviour of actors within national states. These actors – from national governments and political parties to civil society representatives – are viewed as pursuing their interests, with all decisions motivated by rational calculations. This model is not new, as American behaviourists developed it in the mid-20th century. However, in Europeanization studies, it was first applied to explain the political behaviour of European states in their relations with the European Union.

Thus, at the core of the rational choice model lays the assumption that, firstly, Europeanization – as a process of the dissemination and institutionalisation of European norms – is characterised by a high transformational potential, enabling the fundamental alteration of rules, procedures, and political paradigms at the level of individual countries. Secondly, suppose compliance with EU requirements brings a country benefits that align with its national interests and outweigh the losses incurred due to compliance. In that case, the transformational effect will be maximised. Thirdly, transformations will be most comprehensive and pronounced if a so-called misfit exists between EU requirements and the internal (institutional, political) realities within the country. These and other principles of the rationalist approach were presented in many early works dedicated to the theory of Europeanization (Börzel, & Risse, 2003; Freyburg, & Richter, 2010).

In Europeanization research, alongside rationalist institutionalism, the principles of sociological (or constructivist) institutionalism play a significant role in the academic discourse. Scholars in this area, guided by the “theory of social learning”, adapt the principles of this theory to the relations between the EU and its members. This theory, originally borrowed from psychology, was developed by Albert Bandura in 1977 and has since been applied across various scientific disciplines, from criminology to political science. Its central premise is that people,

as social beings, adapt to the social context and learn within it based on specific generally accepted models and norms of behaviour. In other words, by observing their surroundings and identifying specific patterns, individuals attempt to replicate them to achieve social approval.

As Tanya Börzel and Thomas Risse note, sociological institutionalism operates with a fundamentally different logic to explain actors' behaviour compared to the rational approach. Instead of the rationalist logic of consequences, it proposes interpreting actors' actions as motivated by the logic of appropriateness (Börzel, & Risse, 2000). As social collectives, political actors are guided not only by their self-serving interests but also by generally accepted norms of behaviour. Thus, decisions to adopt certain norms are made based on how well these norms align with the deeply ingrained societal understanding of what is considered "right" or "acceptable". In addressing the question of why motivation to comply with EU requirements arises at the national level, sociological institutionalism again appeals to the "acceptability" of European norms. Thus Europeanization often leads to identity changes (Börzel, & Risse, 2003).

So, the key is the socialisation of European norms as the pressure leading to compliance comes directly from society: civil associations and individual public figures. For the social learning model, as well as for the rational choice model, the existence of a misfit is an essential factor: the more significant the difference between the proposed rules and mechanisms and those existing in a given country, the more likely their adoption as a result of adaptive pressure from society. Thus, this monograph focuses on the political, economic and other consequences of *downloading* for the Mediterranean countries, which, to varying degrees, have agreed to adopt EU norms and rules and to pay a price for the creation of the Wider Region connecting the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean.

The monograph focuses on those directions of development of Mediterranean regionalism, which employees of the Department of International Relations of Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University have spent years investigating in their scientific searches. This book is structurally divided into three

blocks (internal development in the Mediterranean, external factors, and the relations of Ukraine with Mediterranean countries) and twelve chapters, each highlighting a separate direction of the regional development in the Mediterranean.

The work is designed for everyone who is interested in foreign policy and international relations – from students to experts.

References

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