

Michael Baun and Dan Marek (eds.) *The New Member States and the European Union. Foreign Policy and Europeanization*, London: Routledge, 2013, 229 pages, ISBN 978 – 0 – 415 – 67927 – 5

Book Review by Adelin Dumitru*

Abstract: *A radical decision at the time, the 2004 enlargement constituted a critical juncture for the Central and Eastern European Countries. Although a great deal of literature has been written in regard to other aspects of Europeanization, the effects of EU membership on the foreign policy of the new member states have been rarely discussed. This is what the volume coordinated by Michael Baun and Dan Marek seeks to accomplish, namely to fill a gap in the European Studies with a series of articles explaining the more or less significant institutional and behavioural changes which occurred at the level of the new member states' political elites. Focusing on three main domains in which Europeanization purportedly occurred, namely national preferences and interests, institutions and procedures, foreign policy strategies and actions, the studies gathered in this volume provide a useful overview of the effects of EU membership on what was traditionally known as "foreign policy".*

Keywords: *enhanced cooperation, Europeanization, foreign policy, national interests, neoinstitutionalism*

The political formation of the nation state was characterized, according to one perspective, by an increasingly more efficient overlapping of authority and territory and by a juxtaposition of economic, cultural, military and political boundaries. This coincidence of boundaries also led to the dichotomy of "international relations" and "domestic politics"¹. In contrast, the European Union is permanently altering the configuration of the political system of the nation state, disjoining boundaries.² Whereas the foreign policy of a state has fallen hitherto under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

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¹ Stefano Bartolini, *Restructuring Europe. Centre formation, system building and political structuring between the nation-state and the European Union* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2005), 21-22

² *Idem*, 242-243

thus being *par excellence* a sphere of high politics, according to Hoffmann's taxonomy³, European integration led to a radical change. In regard to foreign policy, the most obvious institutional mechanism was the establishment of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (henceforth CFSP) as the second pillar of the EU at Maastricht. The Lisbon Treaty led to "merging the pillars", CFSP becoming an integral part of the EU. Furthermore, a Common Security and Defence Policy was developed.⁴

The volume *The New Member States and the European Union. Foreign policy and Europeanization*, edited by **Michael Baun and Dan Marek**, is an important contribution to a better understanding of the changes that occurred after the enlargement process reached its zenith in 2004 and 2007. A collection of case studies on the 12 New Member States, thus including Romania and Bulgaria, the book is concerned specifically with the impact of EU membership on the national foreign policies of those states (pp. 17). Its significance originates in its novelty, being the *first comprehensive comparative study* pertaining to this less studied aspect of the European integration. This review intends to present the main concepts operationalized throughout the book, as well as the analytical framework, leaving aside for the moment the empirical findings.

First of all, the two editors stress from the beginning that the dependent variable in the study is the national foreign policy of the new member states, whilst the EU membership represents the independent variable, and that what is going to be examined is the impact of the "entire experience of EU membership and integration on the making and conduct of national foreign policy" (pp. 2-3). Taking into consideration the abstruse nature of the national foreign policy, a structure of this is put forward. Therefore, it consists of three elements: national preferences and interests⁵, institutions and procedures⁶, foreign policy strategies and actions⁷. Obviously, the main theoretical frame used is that of neoinstitutionalism. However, ambiguity prevails when it comes to what type of institutionalism it is – there are moments when it seems to be sociological institutionalism, for instance when they consider that their approach opens the possibility of integrating processes of socialization and transnational learning that not only affect the elites, but also alter perceptions of national identity and interests (pp.4). Nevertheless, the comparative perspective and the usage of critical junctures (such as becoming a member state, or serving the rotating presidency of the Council of European Union) or of path dependency (in the chapter on Cyprus, Stavridis and Kassimeris talk of a "weight of the past" – the 1974 Turkish invasion of the north of the island, which led to a partial

³ For Hoffmann, high politics refers to matters of national identity and sovereignty, *i.e.* political, whilst low politics "tends to be more technocratic and much less controversial". According to this intergovernmentalist view, only low politics could be subject to cooperation at the European level. See for a more comprehensive analysis Michelle Cini, "Intergovernmentalism", in Michelle Cini and Nieves Perez-Solorzano Borraran, *European Union Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 90-92

⁴ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/institutional_affairs/treaties/lisbon_treaty/ai0025_en.htm

⁵ "Shaped by geography, historical experience, perceived national vulnerabilities, reflecting a country sense of national identity, including its basic values and perceptions of what it stands for in the world"

⁶ „Institutional structures for the making of foreign policy and the constitutional allocation of decision making authority in this area"

⁷ "The way in which a government seeks to achieve its foreign policy objectives", whether it acts alone or through international institutions

application of the *acquis communautaire* and resilient security-related issues affecting the Europeanization – pp. 142-144) allow me to conclude that the historical institutionalism framework has not been excluded. Consequently, the study represents both an innovative contribution to the European Studies, and a proof of methodological tolerance, thus “giving peace a chance” in the words of Vivien Schmidt.⁸

Another important concept, mentioned beforehand, is that of “Europeanization”. They resort to Major and Pomorska’s definition (2005) of Europeanization being “an ongoing and mutually constitutive process of change, linking national and European levels, capturing the growing interdependence of both”. However, albeit they agree with the interdependence between the top down and bottom up dimensions, Baun and Marek claim that there is a third dimension of Europeanization, horizontal, originating in the intensified interaction among countries and consisting in cross-national emulation and good-practice transfer (pp.6-7). However, the basis of Europeanization is less institutionalized in foreign policy and a “methodological challenge” appears in that it is more difficult to isolate the influence of the EU from other factors influencing decisional process in this policy area. Europeanization has as catalysts socialization and learning, the first involving internalization of norms, values, ideas and practices within an institutionalized setting, creating the conditions for interest and identity reshaping, as well as for behavioural changes (pp. 8).

Regarding the analytical framework, it is based on the three elements of national foreign policy mentioned above. The status quo is the synthesis of a dialectical process involving national mediating factors and mechanisms of Europeanization. Regarding the first component of the national foreign policy, *i.e.* institutions and procedures, these are undoubtedly incessantly prone to change due to their positioning at the core of the Europeanization process, both in its top-down and its horizontal (“cross-loading”) dimensions. Nonetheless, the dominant institutions at the national level cannot be left aside, as the bureaucratic structure and the thriving customs associated with it endeavor to exert influence. Unlike the older members of the EU, most of the new member states had to bear the burden of their communist past, this unfortunate legacy hampering invariably the process of institutional change, since they had “to adapt to CFSP at the same time as they were reforming or rebuilding national foreign ministries and bureaucracy for conducting independent foreign policies” (pp. 11). Interests and preferences, the second component of national foreign policy, are not taken as given. They are susceptible to exogenous factors, like in the punctuated equilibrium model of the historical institutionalism, bearing also resemblance to neofunctionalism in that an elite socialization process occurs, alongside a much bigger constructivist change of the national identities and perception of interest. According to the authors, “participation in CFSP can expand national foreign policy agendas and promote the emergence of new foreign policy issues and interests” (pp.14-15). The last component, the strategies and actions undertaken by the national foreign ministries, concerns issues such as: achieving equilibrium between fostering good relations with third countries and responding to the

⁸ Vivien Schmidt, “Give Peace a Chance : Reconciling Four (Not Three) New Institutionalisms”, chapter in *Ideas and Politics in Social Science Research*, eds. Daniel Beland and Robert H. Cox (forthcoming)

exigencies of CFSP, the extent to which the new member states can shape the EU foreign policy and the future of the national foreign policy (pp. 16-17).

Apart from this theoretical framework, what exactly entails the membership in the EU and the recent development of a common foreign policy? How are specific countries influenced? Irrefutably, one cannot exclude here the path dependency, the unforeseen effects of adhering to a specific institutional configuration, or, to extend the scope of the discussion, of adhering to a set of values inexorably susceptible to exert influence on the national interests and preferences to a certain degree. The case of Poland, the biggest country to enter the EU in 2004, can be considered paradigmatic, and this is why I will turn my attention to some of the findings of Kaminska, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for European Studies at the Vrije Universiteit, who applied the theoretical model put forward by Baun and Marek to this country.

Poland's ascension to the position of a "key European player" (pp. 22) was not an easy one. Instead, it was characterized by an onerous evolution from the pre-enlargement logic, when it had to align itself with EU policies in order to gain or receive benefits, to a logic of appropriateness⁹, becoming truly committed to European values and favouring a deepening of the European integration process. CFSP is regarded as an instance of enhanced cooperation, and Poland's propensity to become an active player is partially linked to the unforeseen benefits stemming from EU membership. Testing the hypothesis regarding the occurrence of the elite socialization phenomenon, the author shows that successive critical junctures have contributed to restructuring institutions and procedures – for instance, the Polish presidency of the Council of the European Union led to a better understanding of how the European Union "works within the national civil service", as well as having "a huge impact on the mentality of the Polish diplomatic corps" (pp. 26). Not only institutions have undergone substantial changes before and after gaining membership to the EU, but also preferences and national interests. Thus, the Tusk government has increasingly shown support for democracy building in Eastern Europe and Caucasus, slowly becoming what Kaminska calls "an Eastern policy agenda shaper" – a term which still shows that Poland is not yet an agenda setter in regard to the aforementioned regions. However, in terms of support for the CFSP, this has grown exponentially after the disappointment with the United States' approach to Iraq and the failure of the missile defense shield (pp. 28-29). Poland's stance in the international field led Kaminska to claim that "acting according to the logic of appropriateness within the EU has allowed for better uploading of national preferences onto the European agenda" (pp. 29). However, in regard to national strategies, Poland has not been able or willing to use all the tools at its disposal, Kaminska showing that the Visegrad Group and the Weimer Triangle have been "underexplored" (pp. 32). Switching to identifying instances

⁹ As March and Olsen name it in several papers, for instance "Logic of appropriateness", working paper for the Centre for European Studies at University of Oslo, available online at http://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-publications/workingpapers/working-papers2004/wp04_9.pdf. According to this logic, "Rules are followed because they are seen as natural, rightful, expected, and legitimate. Actors seek to fulfill the obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, a membership in a political community or group, and the ethos, practices and expectations of its institutions. Embedded in a social collectivity, they do what they see as appropriate for themselves in a specific type of situation" (pp.3)

of rationality in Poland's options, the author states that the government recognized the benefits of participation in the CFSP, such as strengthening its position vis-à-vis its eastern neighbours with "relatively low resultant costs", thus proving "to be a rational utility-maximizer" (pp. 32-33).

A different evolution had Romania – labelled "the Black Sea Atlanticist" (pp. 175) by Sorin Denca, the author of the dedicated chapter. The country which gained accession to the EU in 2007 started from a worse position than many of the former communist countries. The process of European integration entailed a set of exogenous shocks which created a framework for a tug-of-war between national institutions for resources and influence (pp. 178). The "return to Europe" political discourse led to accepting temporary costs in the "search for a project for the future". Thus, the oil embargo imposed against Yugoslavia in the early '90s affected Romania's economic interests, but the country still preferred to be in line with the sanctions imposed against its withering away neighbour (pp. 178-179). In contradistinction to those years, a complicated situation emerged once Romania supported the war in Iraq, a choice which "raised question marks about the genuineness of its support for ESDP" – the issue at hand being that policy makers in Bucharest were uncertain whether ESDP would undermine the role of NATO as a security provider. In 2007, the year of accession to the EU, the National Security Strategy maintained "the pre-eminence of NATO over the EU", according to the author. However, the complicated stance of Romania was reflected in its being a "keen contributor to ESDP development", Romanian troops being deployed in the Western Balkans, the Middle East, Georgia, Afghanistan, Libya in EU civilian and military operations (pp. 179-182). *In nuce*, what occurred was "a cognitive transformation" at the level of the political elite, augmenting the sense of belonging and the perception of importance first provided by NATO accession. On the other hand, the failure to become a part of the Schengen area showed how difficult it is to overcome problems such as corruption and organized crime (highlighted by the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism introduced by the European Commission in 2006). The opposition to Kosovo's independence in February 2008 illustrated the limits of foreign policy Europeanization (pp. 183). Romania has become to be increasingly assertive towards promoting its national interests, as it is illustrated by the partial success of its support for a new European policy framework for the Black Sea Region (the Black Sea Synergy, the new initiative of the European Commission, is developed within the framework of European Neighbourhood Policy) and its more thriving support for a European path of Moldova (pp. 184-185). Concluding, Denca highlights that the process of European integration led to a certain degree of adjusting national institutions and policy-making strategies, though not having the same influence as the inter institutional competition. So far, the Europeanization of foreign policy seems to be incomplete – however, it offered a significant platform for "the wider projection of national preferences", something which is not to be ignored.

The empirical cases studied throughout the volume show that the most important institution in terms of engagement with CFSP is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), albeit the role of prime ministers or directly elected presidents (in Poland, Lithuania and Cyprus) is not to be neglected. The MFAs of the new member states have been most of the times restructured under the impact of the new opportunities and expanded resources provided

by CFSP. However, the new exigencies presupposed by EU and CFSP membership led sometimes to institutional blockages – in Latvia, the high volume of information and the variety of new issues on the agenda represented a challenge (pp. 206-207). Some countries have undergone a process of reshaping of national interests – Slovenia, for instance, changed its position from disregard towards the problem of the Western Balkans to an assertive view with respect to the same region (pp. 91-92). Likewise, the Czech Republic mostly ignored its geographic east, but got in line with the position of the EU towards the region after 2004 (pp. 58). Nevertheless, most of the countries focused on their immediate neighbourhoods and tried to upload their priorities at the European Level as such – with Turkey and the Western Balkans being the major interests for Bulgaria, Turkey and the Eastern Mediterranean for Cyprus, relations with Russia being central to Latvia, Estonia and Poland (pp. 210).

The epitome of a country modifying its foreign policy preferences as a result of becoming a member of the EU is considered Cyprus, which even went to the length of withdrawing from the non-alignment movement¹⁰, notwithstanding the fact that its stance towards Turkey has not been modified. Slovakia's example is also relevant, the small member of the Visegrad group undertaking new development assistance projects in Kenya, Afghanistan, Sudan, or Ethiopia. The elite socialization phenomenon has invariably occurred – Estonia has “shifted from its initial preference for the intergovernmental method of decision making within the EU to the more centralized community method, and to Estonia's increased support for a more integrated Europe and a stronger CFSP role in the world” (pp. 215). While some new member states have had the perception that EU is dominated by larger member states, willing to sacrifice the formers' interests (the case of Cyprus for instance, pp. 218), most of the countries from EU-12 have acknowledged the importance of EU membership. This is perhaps why their national foreign policies were aligned with CFSP positions, their agendas encompassed new areas of the world and new national interests were developed (pp. 211).

Summing up, the volume *The New Member States and the European Union. Foreign policy and Europeanization* represents an original work, aimed at emphasizing consequences of the European integration which have been to a large extent neglected so far. The neoinstitutionalist, mostly historical, approach of the volume allowed the authors to show how an exogenous factor (the EU membership) disturbed the initial equilibrium and led to a path dependency which had unknown results. The approach is to be further appreciated for not being reductionist and for including elements derived from the rational choice institutionalism and from the sociological institutionalism, the most relevant concepts borrowed from the latter being the elite socialization and the susceptibility to change of national preferences and interests. CFSP represents a unique development inside a *sui generis* entity and this volume covers exactly those aspects of it that have mostly challenged the way foreign policy was usually made.

¹⁰ The Republic of Cyprus was a participant at the Belgrade Conference, which represented the formal establishment of the Non Aligned Movement: <http://www.mfa.gov.cy/mfa/mfa2006.nsf/0/11E2EC1C0EE098C6C225727C002A04A8?OpenDocument>