**The Europeanisation of Foreign Aid Policy. Slovenia and Latvia 1998-2010**

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The ten year anniversary of the EU’s ‘big bang’ Eastern enlargement has prompted many scholars and policy practitioners to ask questions related to the net effect of accession on the region. One often overlooked policy area in these exercises is international development (or foreign aid) policy. Most scholars agree that the EU played a key role in pushing the East Central European (ECE) countries to start (or in some cases re-start) their international development policies in the run-up to accession, and has thus successfully contributed to turning these countries from recipients of aid into donors. But, there is less agreement on the impact of the Community on the evolution these policies have undergone in the decade after the enlargement. The main dilemma relates to the fact that EU legislation in the field of international development is predominantly in the field of ‘soft law’, leaving the Commission little possibilities to foster compliance among member states if they have different priorities.

*The Europeanisation of Foreign Aid Policy*, Peteris Timofejevs Henriksson’s PhD dissertation at the University of Umeå, aims to explore the role of the EU and domestic conditions in influencing the evolution of foreign aid policies in two 2004 accession countries, Slovenia and Latvia, both in the pre- and post-accession periods. These two countries offer excellent possibilities for an insightful comparative case study as there are both strong similarities, but also key differences between them. Both of them are new aid donors without the burden of Communist-era policy legacies: unlike other ECE countries like Poland or Hungary, Slovenia and Latvia only experienced contacts with the developing world indirectly, as parts of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. They also faced similar adaptational pressures from the EU, both before and after accession. However, foreign aid policy outcomes seem to be rather different in the two countries in a sense that Slovenia has clearly placed a greater emphasis on the policy and has done more to approximate its rules to those embodied in the EU’s relevant *acquis*.

The volume seeks to explain these different outcomes, and to do so it uses a framework based on Europeanisation. The concept of Europeanisation has been called by some ‘fashionable but useless’, especially for analysing foreign policy and related fields (like international development), but it seems to work rather well in the case of this book. As both countries faced rather similar pressure from the EU, the different outcomes can be explained by differences in the domestic mediation of this pressure, and this is exactly what the monograph focuses on. Out of the several approaches identified in the literature to understanding and operationalising the concept of Europeanisation, the volume adopts a rationalist-constructivist synthesis approach, and argues that cost-benefit analysis based on a logic of consequences, and social learning based on a logic of appropriateness are complementary, rather than competing explanations. Against this backdrop, the volume develops a set of variables based on both the rationalist and the constructivist literatures to explain the EU’s impact on international development policies.

This theoretical framework is implemented in careful detail in the two country case studies, which follow a process tracing logic. The in-depth description of international development policy making processes, embedded into wider foreign policy contexts is intriguing in both countries. In fact, I am not aware of any other contribution in the field which has gone into such rich and amazing detail. The volume goes to great pains however to make sure that one is not lost in these details: frequent summaries and reiterations of partial findings make the main arguments easy to follow. The emerging conclusions are well supported by facts and thus convincing. The volume basically argues that in the pre-accession phase, EU conditionality was vague and left a lot of room for countries to formulate their own approaches. Thus, the emerging policies and institutional constellations were rather heavily influenced by Slovenia’s and Latvia’s general identification with the EU and their historical contexts. In the post-accession phase however, with the EU’s ability to influence member state foreign aid policies severely decreased, the volume stresses that it is actually surprising that there was no ‘backsliding’ in either country, and that reforms continued to happen. While the institutionalisation of international development policy was slow in both countries, and was not a political priority in either, Slovenia has been more successful in a sense that in created a ‘deeper’ institutional setting (p. 239) than Latvia did. In fact, with the large number of implementing agencies, one can argue that Slovenia’s international development policy is over-institutionalised, leading to a constant need for consolidation and centralisation, which so far has only happened partially. Latvia on the other hand still suffers from institutional limitations and capacity problems. Identification and policy resonance were clearly important in the post-accession phase, but also the emergence of veto players and adjustment costs. The volume seems to imply that the differences in the self-identification of the two countries were the key variable explaining different policy outcomes. Latvia seems to identify itself as a vulnerable economy and a poor country (p. 249), while Slovenia on the other hand increasingly sees itself as part of the West and a developed nation. Being developed includes the responsibility of providing aid to poorer countries, and thus can be seen as an explanation for Slovenia’s better performance.

The volume contributes to our understanding of foreign aid policy in the East Central European EU member states. This may be a rather niche topic, but the volume also holds important lessons for scholars of the EU and those wishing to draw the balance of a decade long ECE membership. It shows how the EU can penetrate domestic policy making processes and goes to meticulous detail to prove that the EU can have impacts even in areas where there is very little binding legislation that member states must apply. Much depends however on the domestic context of the members.

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