

Europeanization —An Evaluation of Research Approaches

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Abstract

The study of Europeanization has been popular since the late 1990s. However, the core disputes of Europeanization remain unresolved, the definition of the field is much contested, and the causality of the process of Europeanization has not yet been clarified. This paper offers a methodological assessment of typical approaches currently employed in Europeanization studies, examining their merits and limitations based on their conceptualization, hypotheses, theoretical frameworks, and empirical analyses. Because Europeanization focuses on changes (or adaptations) in domestic polity and policy, the author finds that most researchers prefer approaches derived from new institutionalism and comparative politics—indeed, case studies and comparative methods dominate the research field of Europeanization and there have been very few quantitative studies aimed at verifying various causal hypotheses of Europeanization. Indeed, the most urgent research task in the field is to clarify the causal mechanisms of Europeanization. The author suggests that historical institutionalism and a dynamic functional integration model be used to clarify time-sequences and causal reversals of Europeanization.

Key Words: Europeanization, European integration, new institutionalism, comparative methods, quasi-experimental designs