

BOOK REVIEW

Ian Bache & Andrew Jordan (eds) (2006) *The Europeanization of British Politics* Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave

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The Europeanization of British Politics (2006), edited by Ian Bache and Andrew Jordan, is the final outcome of a project supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES). Up-to-date, it is the main contribution to the understanding of how European Union (EU) has affected and still affects British politics. The topic is interesting and original, because, as the editors recognise, most of the British academic works investigate the influence of Great Britain (UK) in the EU policy-making, and not the influence that the EU exerts over the British politics. Moreover, even if growing attention has been devoted to the interrelations between EU political system and national political systems, in the UK the debate about comparativists and European studies scholars is still underdeveloped. Several contributions about the Europeanization of British politics have been already published. But, for different reasons, British politics has been often viewed as somehow isolated from European politics, and studies about Europeanization are limited to very specific policies or aspects of the British political life.

As a consequence, the first aim of this book is to cope with this limit in the literature, offering at the same time one of the most comprehensive research ever carried out about the Europeanization of a single member state. Moreover, contrary to what often happens in edited books, the common research framework creates strong links between the different chapters, offering to the reader a very accurate and complete perception of the Europeanization of UK.

In their chapters, the authors try to address the same questions: "What has been Europeanised and to what extent? When has Europeanization occurred and in what sequence? How and why has Europeanization occurred, and via what EU-level mechanism? Were there winners and losers through Europeanization? What factors explain the domestic response to Europeanization pressures and how should the process be characterized? Has Europeanization had any other important long-term effects?" (p. 31). Answers are based on secondary literature and original empirical research.

After a brief introduction, Ian Bache and Andrew Jordan define the theoretical tools that will be used by the authors. First of all, they define the concept of Europeanization as "the reorientation or reshaping of politics in the domestic arena in ways that reflect policies, practises and preferences advanced through the EU system of governance". Secondly, they show how careful a scholar should be in using this concept, because disentangling the EU key variable is difficult, and Europeanization always takes place together with other factors of change, like globalization or domestic change. This last element is particularly interesting: very often Europeanization has been used to explain too many changes in the member states, underestimating, for example, the role of

domestic actors and the fact that several reforms can be promoted even without the pressure coming from the EU.

The book is structured in three parts. In the first one, devoted to the UK polity, authors present the Europeanization of the central Government (Simon Bulmer and Martin Burch), the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (David Allen and Tim Oliver), the Government in Scotland (James Smith), the English regions (Martin Burch and Ricardo Gomez), and local governance (Adam Marshall). In the second part, politics are taken into account. Specifically, the Europeanization of political parties and party politics (Andrew Geddes) is considered, as well as the Europeanization of organized interests (Jenny Fairbrass), trade unions (Erin van der Maas), and the third sector (Rachel Chapman). In the third part, authors present the Europeanization of some of the most sensible (for UK actors) policies, like foreign policy (Tim Oliver and David Allen), monetary policy (Jim Buller), competition policy (Michelle Chini), environmental policy (Andrew Jordan), and regional policy (Thomas Conzelmann). In the final chapter, the editors present some comparative conclusions. Unfortunately, the book lacks a chapter on British Parliament and maybe a chapter on the Europeanization of public opinion and political discourse, even if in this last case some elements can be founded in the different chapters.

Very often the results are quite surprising, for at least two reasons. The first one is that sometimes the authors show that the role of Europeanization has been overestimated. This is the case, for example, of the central UK government, where changes do not reflect the only and simple presence of the Europeanization. The second reason is that the final picture of the role of the Europeanization appears much more complex than it was supposed to be by looking at other contributions. For example, one of the major findings of the research is the “evidence of a higher degree of the Europeanization of the British *polity* than the existing literature would suggest” (p. 267); on the contrary, “the Europeanization of the *politics* dimension was found to be more variable, but discernible” (p. 267); and, finally, “findings on *policy* do not sit easily with the standard findings on the degree of Europeanization in this domain...The effects, in short, are much more nuanced” (p. 269). In other words, this book can be useful not only for explaining the role of Europeanization, but also for identifying other factors producing change and reform, offering a testable set of hypothesis for further research.

The common framework utilised by the contributors and the importance of the scholars involved in the project make this book an essential reading for those that are working on the relation between UK and the EU and, more in general, for scholars working on the process of Europeanization. Moreover, the clear writing style and the richness of information presented make this book interesting also for a non-academic reader.
