The European continent, due to the creation of the European Union, can be considered an experiment, much like the United States was when its citizens broke free from the British Empire and implemented its own governmental structure and federal system. Member states of the EU have ventured into unchartered territory, as established states have relinquished control and sovereignty to the European Union on certain issues. Because of this sacrifice in national sovereignty, scholarly interest has grown in the analyzing the ways in which the ideals, values, and structure of the EU have influenced all facets of domestic politics within EU member states. While this topic has become more prevalent in scholarly literature, the research is far from complete. For this essay, there will be one assumption we must accept. As Borzel and Risse (2006) discuss, there is an inevitable ‘misfit’ “between European and domestic policies, processes, and institutions.”[[1]](#footnote-1),[[2]](#footnote-2) Despite this fact, there are two competing ideas of the ways in which the European Union has managed to influence domestic politics of member states through a process known as Europeanization. The first argues that there will be an expected convergence in political structures from member states due to constraints imposed by the European Union structure. Contrary to this, there is an idea that there is moderate ‘clustering’ from states that have similar political structures in place. Even then, the amount of change experienced by states is not uniform and is largely case-specific.

This essay will argue that the latter argument is the most accurate given the literature and the research available on this topic. Firstly, this analysis will define ‘Europeanization’ as well as ‘domestic politics’. Following this, the essay will analyze the convergence theory by understanding its hypothesis, and then examining the results of experiments that demonstrate the hypothesis to be inconclusive. Finally, this essay will look into the way domestic politics are affected by Europeanization. This will be accomplished by analyzing lobbying activities as well as the power structure of political parties.

Prior to engaging in the question posed for this analysis, it is imperative to understand two key terms: ‘Europeanization’ and ‘domestic politics.’ Both terms are encompassing, broad, and multi-faceted. Thus, it should not come as a shock that there are multiple definitions for both terms. Therefore, the definition must be clearly defined in this analysis to minimize ambiguity. Borzel and Risse provide three varying definitions of ‘Europeanization.’ The first is defined simply as the development of distinct structures of governance at the European level; the second definition is the process where “European-level institutions and decisions shape and transform the domestic politics and institutions of member states”; whereas the third combines the previous two into a top-down and bottom-up approach where states have input but also have to abide by EU decisions that alter their domestic politics.[[3]](#footnote-3) Much in line with the second definition provided by Borzel and Risse, Europeanization, for the purpose of this essay, will be defined as “an incremental process reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that [EU] political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

Now that the independent variable, Europeanization, has been adequately defined, this analysis must turn to defining ‘domestic politics.’ No disagreement exists surrounding the term ‘domestic’ in this literature. When discussing domestic politics, the reader can be certain member states are the center of analysis. The same will be true in this essay. However, there are many differing definitions of ‘politics’ from scholars. This is a major source of the fragmentation of the literature, as multiple scholars consider politics to mean one thing, while others argue it is something else. Politics, as is commonly understood, is the political discourse, feelings, and opinions surrounding a multitude of topics and subjects. Other scholars view politics as political institutions, whereas others view politics as the policies that are implemented. However, for the purpose of this essay, politics is to be regarded as the political structure of the governing system. The political structure refers to “parliament, [the] executive, judiciary, horizontal and vertical intergovernmental relations, political parties, systems of interest representation, and the like.”[[5]](#footnote-5) This analysis will therefore examine the key actors within the political system of various member states.

Now that both integral terms to the analysis have been adequately defined, this analysis will turn to examining the convergence model and its viability, or lack thereof, in answering this question. In his analysis, Anderson (2002) discusses the convergence train of thought. He points out that as member governments delegate policy competences to the supranational level, more power is then awarded to the EU. However, in order to monitor the EU, and attempt to shape policy-making decisions, similar procedural and institutional reforms will be implemented and adopted to alter political structures.[[6]](#footnote-6) Hix and Goetz (2007) expand further on the convergence hypothesis. They demonstrate that Europeanization encourages member states to introduce new regulatory policy styles to enforce EU rules.[[7]](#footnote-7) While policy style is not included in the definition of politics, it affects the political structure of a member state. For instance, the introduction of EU regional policies incites the establishment of “planning authorities at the regional level, which in turn produce demands for a democratisation of these structures.”[[8]](#footnote-8) One can then expect states to propose and support policies at the EU level, that are similar to policies that have been implemented domestically, with the aim of minimizing the cost of policy implementation. This stems from the aforementioned ‘misfit’ assumption. In short, the hypothesis of convergence follows the rationale that as more policies are passed on to the EU, the more likely political structures of member states will look similar in order to easily implement policies at the domestic level.

This hypothesis is based on fairly straightforward logic, and the economic theory of opportunity cost. A proponent of this theory might look at the USA and find the similarities in political structure at the subnational level (states and localities) and be optimistic their hypothesis will remain true for member states of the EU. However, coming to this conclusion is premature, as the literature thus far suggests there is minimal convergence. Anderson conducts an extensive research experiment analyzing Europeanization’s effect on domestic polity from 1945-2000 and confirms this statement. He does so by analyzing states in the timeframe of 1945-1985 and then again in 1986-2000. In his research of executives—parties and federal—unitary dimensions, he finds no converging and diverging trends among the EU-15.[[9]](#footnote-9) Anderson then tested the hypothesis that “a lack of congruence between supranational and national levels will elicit national adjustments resulting ultimately in EU- wide convergence.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Once again, Anderson found no convergence nor divergence present among the EU-15. When he analyzed the hypothesis that member states that have been members for a longer period of time are more likely to exhibit common patterns of development, he found inconclusive convergence as Luxembourg, Germany, and the Netherlands all moved towards the mean, but France, Belgium, and Italy did not.[[11]](#footnote-11) Anderson continued these tests on a multitude of convergence hypotheses, and he was able to come to the general conclusion that there is no convergence or divergence. Thus, while intuitive in theory, the convergence hypothesis has proven to be inaccurate, or at least, evidence does not yet exist to support said theory.

The convergence theory proved to be inconclusive; however, one must not then believe that the EU and Europeanization fails to influence the domestic politics of member states. One of the many areas where we can clearly see politics influenced by Europeanization is when lobbying activities are analyzed. Lobbying groups, a central actor in politics, policy making, and political discourse, have had to undergo structural changes to adjust to Europeanization. However, not all Europeanize their lobbying strategies, as certain conditions must be met. According to Klüver (2010), the amount of resources and the domestic institutional context can predict whether or not lobbying groups would Europeanize. Klüver finds, after conducting an experiment, that possessing very high resources is a sufficient condition for Europeanization of the lobbying group; however, having high resources will only lead to Europeanization if that lobbying group is entrenched within a centralized institutional context, such as France.[[12]](#footnote-12) When a lobbying group is embedded within a corporatist, decentralized government, such as Germany, the lobbying group has more power at the domestic level, and can influence the policy-making process.[[13]](#footnote-13) Therefore, the European Union has allowed highly resourced lobbying groups with an outlet to produce greater influence in politics than they previously had at the domestic level, in centralized states.

Within the framework of domestic politics, the power dynamics of political parties is important as well. While lobbying groups have been influenced by Europeanization, political parties have experienced a more pronounced influence. Carter and Poguntke (2010) made the argument that party elites, due to their need to negotiate meaningfully at the EU level, possess significant discretion in regard to their national party.[[14]](#footnote-14) After conducting an analysis they found this argument to remain true, despite perpetual attempts to constrain the party elites by national parties through ex ante and ex post accountability.[[15]](#footnote-15) Additionally, as Carter and Poguntke write, “the overall patterns of party elite empowerment … hold for the overwhelming majority of cases.”[[16]](#footnote-16) Their work suggests that national parties are finding it difficult to handle the ever-growing influence the European Union has over their policies and functioning, therefore, party elites have asserted control due to their involvement at the EU-level. This has led to party executives, parliamentary parties as well as party congresses having their power declined as party elites have gained power at party bodies’ expense.[[17]](#footnote-17) Much like party elites have gained power, so too have national executives. As Ladrech (1994) writes, “national executives act unencumbered by parliamentary oversight in their dealings with Brussels, whether with the Commission or the Council.”[[18]](#footnote-18) This power shift has occurred because of the increase in decision making at the EU-level, while national parliaments are only required to ratify many decisions.[[19]](#footnote-19) This trend is especially pronounced in states such as Portugal, where the national parliament is relatively weak compared to the executive. Thus, the power dynamics and power structure of political parties and the governing system have clearly been altered due to Europeanization.

In conclusion, the literature analyzed in this essay has demonstrated that Europeanization affects various facets of domestic politics in various EU member states at varying rates. The literature has also demonstrated that when analyzing these different facets, certain states are more prone to feeling the effects of Europeanization, therefore demonstrating a ‘clustering’ effect as opposed to the convergence theory that has been deemed inconclusive. Even coming to this conclusion might be premature, as Anderson writes “we simply do not know enough about the impact of integration on the constellation of institutions, procedures and rules associated with parliamentary democracy in Europe.”[[20]](#footnote-20) Thus, as one can see, the research on this topic is far from complete, and scholars must continue to delve into this budding topic as the European Union continues to increase its influence and power on the European continent.

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