Europeanization, Historical Institutionalism and Domestic Change: 

What Role for Informal Institutions?

My dissertation deals with Europeanization of security sector reform (SSR), an issue area often referred to as civil-military relations in the comparative politics literature. The specific aim is to explain the varying degrees of implementation regarding the principle of 'democratic civilian oversight' (henceforth civilian oversight) by focusing on the cases of Poland and Turkey. Through highlighting the power-distributional aspect of institutions and institutional change, the project builds up on and aims to contribute to the historical institutionalist literature. The main hypothesis is that, through their interaction with the changes in formal institutions, informal institutions emerge as a moderating variable that condition the impact of EU reforms on political outcomes.

The previous chapter introduced the research question that this study aims to answer as: ‘Given the formal adoption of a specific model of security sector reform (SSR) promoted by the EU, which national intervening factors account for the differing degrees of civilian oversight in Turkey and Poland?’ The aim of the current chapter is to lay down the conceptual and theoretical foundations of my attempt at answering this research question.

My study situates itself at the intersection of mainly three theoretical building blocks towards which it also aims to contribute:

1. Europeanization understood as a process and as a normative political context in which domestic change takes place and acquires meaning; in particular 'Eastern Europeanization', where EU funds, technical assistance and conditionality form the backbone of linkage and leverage mechanisms
2. Informal institutions as a moderating factor which, in their interaction with formal institutional changes, may condition the impact of EU reforms
3. Historical institutionalist theory of gradual institutional change based on a cultural approach

The following sections intend to clarify how each of these theoretical building blocks are utilized in the dissertation.

Europeanization, Eastern enlargement and domestic change

The term Europeanization can acquire different meanings depending on what the object of explanation (dependent variable) is. Explaining European or EU-level structures, institutions, policies and politics is often termed 'bottom-up Europeanization' whereas Europe's or EU’s effect on domestic structures are named 'top-down Europeanization' (Bulmer and Lequesne, 2013). As this study is interested in the latter, the term Europeanization is always used with the meaning of 'top-down Europeanization'.

It's important to point out that the term 'top-down' denotes not an empirically deterministic but a theoretical direction. After all, changes in European and domestic level structures happen simultaneously and in complex ways. However, it is also possible to analytically separate these two processes and focus on the object of explanation, in this case, national political outcomes. A second
important point regarding top-down Europeanization concerns an assumption about the effect of Europe or the EU on domestic structures. Whereas Europeanization provides the analytical context within which this dissertation studies political outcomes, this in no way implies that it assumes that the EU is the most important factor behind any changes that are observed. In fact, this study is interested in finding out whether or under what conditions one can speak of such an impact.

As an analytical concept, Europeanization extends over both time and space. Time-wise, it reflects a process whereby European Union (EU) ‘rules, procedures, policy paradigms … and shared beliefs and norms’ are ‘incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, identities, political structures and public policies’ of member and candidate states (Radaelli, 2003). At the same time, Europeanization offers an analytical space understood as a normative political context, which acts as a filter for such ‘incorporation’ to take place (Kaliber 2013). This means that the process of adoption or incorporation into the domestic sphere does not take place automatically but involves normative and cognitive processes whereby rule makers, rule takers and rule enforcers engage in cooperation and contestation over the meaning, legitimacy and the particular application of these rules.

Europeanization as a research agenda signifies a rupture from classic regional integration theories and has established itself as a distinct and growing analytical field since the 1990s (Featherstone, 2003). For European Union (EU) studies in general, this noticeable turn towards Europeanization came as a result of both the exhaustion of earlier theoretical debates between intergovernmentalist and supranationalist literatures as well as a growing political role attributed to the EU following the signing of the Maastricht Treaty (Graziano and Vink, 2013). Analytically, there was a growing need to move away from the zero-sum understanding in which either the nation states or non-state actors came to be seen as the main drivers of European integration. Empirically, the further consolidation of ‘an ever closing union’ in the beginning of 1990s coincided with the establishment of the EU as a novel political arena.

The ‘Europeanization turn in EU studies’ (Graziano and Vink, 2013) meant that the EU was no longer regarded only as a phenomenon to be explained. Rather, this new political playing field was regarded as a potential source for ‘adaptational pressures’ with far reaching implications for the domestic structures of its member states and beyond (Risse et. al., 2001). This particular approach to Europeanization, where the main focus is on the domestic impact of Europe, is generally termed ‘top down’ Europeanization and is equivalent to the idea of ‘the second image reversed’ in international relations literature (Borzel and Risse, 2003; Risse et. al. 2001). The analytical interest in explaining the impact of Europe on domestic structures also signified a theoretical break with the field of international relations which pushed Europeanization scholars to turn towards other subfields of political science, such as comparative politics and public policy, for the purposes of theoretical grounding.

Eastern Europeanization and accession conditionality

The expansion of Europeanization as a research field also goes hand in hand with the potential territorial expansion of the EU towards the ‘East’, leading to a separate research agenda that is now termed 'Eastern Europeanization' by leading scholars of the field (Vachudova, 2005; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005; Heritier, 2005). Eastern Europeanization, which refers to Europeanization in the
new member states and the candidate states of the EU\(^1\), is arguably distinct than its ‘Western’ counterpart due to the certain way in which EU enlargement policy is designed and applied. In a manner that was not seen before, the role of accession conditionality has been key in promoting the adoption of not only the specific chapters of the EU acquis but also of specific institutional templates and democratic norms that are considered to be characteristics of EU member states themselves.

Similar to studying Europeanization in the old member states of the EU, Eastern Europeanization scholars dominantly use new institutionalism as a theoretical framework. In the rational choice variant of this framework, scholars generally highlight the unmatchable importance of ‘conditionality’. With EU membership being the ‘golden carrot’, all decisions regarding institutional change would ultimately depend on whether or not possible costs would outweigh this much desired reward (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). For historical institutionalists, historical legacies are the primary concern. For instance, for the case of post-communist transitions, the extent of opposition to the communist rule and whether or not the old elite remained within party structures has been a major factor in determining the nature of later reforms (Vachudova, 2005). For sociological institutionalism, concepts such as culture, identities and norms come to the fore. For instance, contested national identities might have a major impact on how reforms relating to minority issues will be decided, received and implemented (Sasse, 2008). Similarly, discursive politics are also on the table when it comes to both policy formulation and implementation. In this regard scholars of discursive institutionalism suggest that type and timing of certain discourses both feed from and have an impact on institutional change (Lombardo & Forest 2012).

The focus on conditionality is not very surprising given the novelty of introducing the Copenhagen political criteria in 1993 as a condition for membership, a condition that didn’t exist for the EU members themselves. Potential member states now had to fulfill the criteria of having stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; a functioning market economy, capacity to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the union; and the ability to take on the obligations of membership while adhering to the aims of political, economic and monetary union. Copenhagen criteria or ‘democratic conditionality’ as they are often called marked a first in conditioning not only membership but also EU candidacy on certain criteria before the accession negotiations could even begin. Civil-military relations reforms are also considered to be a part of EU’s democratic conditionality due to its strong association with stable and democratic institutions, human rights and the rule of law.

Conditionality as a policy tool did not develop overnight, nor was it applied in a uniform manner. Rather, we have good reason to believe that EU institutions developed and communicated accession conditionality as it developed over time. For instance, when the democratic conditionality was first introduced, the current monitoring procedures were not yet in place and the first active monitoring of progress for candidate countries came with the 1997 assessment report that covered a period of five years' time (Grabbe, 2004). It is only after the EU embraced active monitoring as an effective application of conditionality that regular yearly progress reports were introduced. EU is making use of

\(^1\) EU’s new member states, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Malta, Cyprus, Croatia; candidate countries, Turkey, Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania; potential candidates, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo
such novel policy tools even during the post-accession period as we see in the case of coordination and verification mechanism applied for the cases of Bulgaria and Romania (Gateva, 2010).

The profound importance paid to accession conditionality among EU officials is also matched by an excessive role adhered to the external incentives provided by EU conditionality in analyzing Europeanization in the enlargement countries. Specifically, ‘external incentives model’ explains rule adoption in these countries through various mechanisms that translate EU pressures into government preferences. According to this model, in the presence of external incentives, such as EU membership, governments decide for or against a particular reform depending on certain intervening factors such as veto players, size and speed of rewards, determinacy of conditions and credibility of conditionality (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005). This model, which places a central importance for conditionality has been so far quite dominant in explaining in institutional changes in key reform areas for the eastern enlargement countries, including Turkey and Poland.

However, ten years down the road from the big waves of enlargement, the suitability of conditionality for explaining divergences across countries and issue areas is now being challenged. The same scholars who developed the external incentives model ask whether external incentives had been the most-likely answer given that the shadow of conditionality on adoption processes was very strong at the time (Epstein and Sedelmeier, 2009). There are indeed important developments in the new members of the EU that leads us to question how deep reform programs have been during the era of immense rule adoption during the 2000s. First of all, not all member states have gone full length into reforming certain issue areas. This has been the case in corruption control and rule of law reforms in Bulgaria and Romania to the extent that the EU decided to continue monitoring these two countries through the coordination and verification mechanism (Gateva, 2010). Literature has also shown that even though rule adoption in the form of transposition have been particularly strong for eastern enlargement countries, sometimes even more so than the old fifteen member states of the EU, rule enforcement has been very weak leading to compliance rates that fall under the classification ‘world of dead letters’ (Falkner, 2010; Falkner and Treib, 2008). Furthermore, there are pronounced instances of democratic backsliding and illiberal turn in the case of Hungary and Romania during the post-accession phase against which the EU has had to take certain measures (Sedelmeier, 2014).

In the light of these advancements, there is a need to recognize the idea that accession conditionality has perhaps been given too much explanatory power in the Eastern Europeanization literature and that societal and ideational level factors should be explored more in depth in order to account for patchy integration records we are witnessing today (Epstein and Sedelmeier, 2009). As the effects of Europeanization has transcended neither the East-West divide in the EU nor the differences between countries subjected to the most recent waves of enlargement (Epstein & Jacoby, 2014), there is today even a greater need to study and collect data on the much under-researched aspects of Europeanization especially the normative-cognitive structures of EU new member and applicant states (Grabbe, 2003). By introducing informal institutions as a moderating factor between adaptational pressures of the EU and domestic change, my study aims to address this gap. The next section introduces the role of uncertainty in the Europeanization process with regard to implementing civilian oversight, which potentially increases the importance of informal institutions when formal guidelines are less than clear for the reforming country.
Civilian oversight and the role of uncertainty in Europeanization

SSR is an area that is not sufficiently covered by the Europeanization literature. It is at the same time a promising area for research, as the EU has been promoting the same model of reform to all candidate states for the past two decades, namely ‘democratic control of the armed forces method’ with dramatic differences in the levels of success for each country (Forster, 2001). SSR comprises of both civilian and technical/military components of reform whereas 'democratic oversight' represents mainly the civilian aspect of the overall SSR program. As such, it appears as the main area within SSR where EU officials in Brussels have been able to influence the most with regard to the enlargement countries (Dijkstra, 2012).

The concept of civilian oversight involves the establishment of a series of constitutional constraints in the form of checks and balances for the regulation of the civil-military relations. The main objectives are to guarantee the political neutrality of the security sector and to establish civilian supremacy over its decisions and actions. The shared responsibility of the executive and legislative branches of the government in controlling and overseeing the armed forces is a key component (Caparini and Fluri, 2002) Whereas the executive branch is held responsible for establishing control over all military activity, the parliament assumes a supervisory role over both the executive and the military. Important pillars of reform along this principle include the redefinition and legal separation of civil and military competence, parliamentary oversight of defense activities (especially the budget) as well as ensuring government discretion over all aspects of the security sector (Cizre, 2004). Since the 1990s, especially with the pressure exerted through EU and NATO membership requirements, civilian oversight has emerged as a principle component of SSR in the EU’s enlargement zone and its formal requirements had to be met by all applicant states subject to the Copenhagen criteria (Cizre, 2004).

In its enlargement zone, EU encouraged rule and norms adoption through various mechanisms. Mostly, these took the form of providing models or institutional and legal templates, financial aid and technical assistance, benchmarking and monitoring, advice and twinning as well as gate-keeping (Grabbe, 2003). For the case of civil-military relations reforms, the principle of civilian oversight has been promoted by exchanging information on examples of different and best practices from Europe, providing financial assistance for twinning projects and giving advice and monitoring progress through the Commission’s progress reports. Because there is no specific chapter in the EU acquis regarding civil-military relations, concerns and improvements regarding civilian oversight have been treated under the heading ‘democracy and the rule of law’.

In this dissertation, the level of civilian oversight is measured through the level of military autonomy both de jure and de facto. The less the autonomy the military organization has through laws, regulations and practices, the more successful is the implementation of the civilian oversight principle. I use a combination of indicators concerning military autonomy presented by Stepan (1988), Pion-Berlin (1992) and Zaverucha (1993) and Gursoy (2011). These six indicators are outlined below:

Military’s role in internal security: When military autonomy is low, the military engages in activities in order to provide internal security only in rare circumstances, with the authorization of the executive and within limits envisioned by the legal framework. When the autonomy is high, the legal framework
gives the military the duty to provide internal security and leaves it to the discretion of the military to decide when and how it will carry out its duties.

Oversight by executive, legislature and civilian courts: When the autonomy is low, the executive, legislature, relevant parliamentary committees and civilian courts monitor and oversee the military budget and arms procurement. When the autonomy is high, the legislature approves the defense budget without much debate. The executive approves military’s procurement requests. Civilian courts do not audit military budget and assets.

Military’s role in legal system: When the autonomy is low, the military has no legal jurisdiction except for cases against the discipline of the armed forces. When the autonomy is high, military courts can try both civilians and officers. Military personnel are unlikely to be tried by civilian courts.

Military’s role in senior-level personnel decisions: When the autonomy is low, the military makes recommendations to the executive on promotions, retirements, appointments and purges. The executive is not constrained and can approve or disapprove the military’s recommendations. When the autonomy is high, the military determines promotions, retirements, appointments and discharges on its own. The executive approves the military’s decisions without changes.

Coordination of defense sector: When the autonomy is low, the military is responsible to a defense ministry directed and controlled by civilians. Professional civil servants assist the government in designing and implementing defense and national security policies. When the autonomy is high, the military is not responsible to a civilian controlled defense ministry. Designing and implementing defense and national security policies are directed and controlled by military offices.

Military’s role in intelligence: When the autonomy is low, all intelligence agencies are directed by civilians, subject to reviews of civilian-controlled boards. When the autonomy is high, intelligence agencies are directed by military officers. The military is involved in both intelligence-gathering and carrying out operations, which are not subject to the review of civilian boards.

De jure autonomy is measured through the constitutional arrangements, laws and regulations that are passed whereas de facto autonomy is measured through the actual enactment, application and enforcement of these rules along the six indicators.

An initial look at the Polish and Turkish cases shows that both countries have made similar formal institutional changes to achieve civilian oversight as a requirement of fulfilling the Copenhagen political criteria (Cizre, 2004); but as individual progress reports have shown, the formal adoption of rules was coupled with varying degrees of implementation regarding the principle. Whereas Poland constitutes a successful case, with a fast pace of adoption and successful alteration of power relations between the civil and military fold (Danopoulos & Zirker, 2002), Turkey is among the least successful cases in the region with the political weight of its armed forces remaining intact (Cizre, 2004).

This empirical observation shows that implementing the principle of civilian oversight along the six indicators might not be very straightforward as the rules regarding the implementation of the principle of civilian oversight is expected to be bound by a great deal of uncertainty. Grabbe (2003) lists policy agendas, hierarchy of tasks, timing, relevant EU authorities and standards and thresholds as five factors that feed into the uncertainty involved in the accession process. This section aims to highlight that
uncertainty is especially relevant in the context of democratic conditionality and to show the potential role it might play out in the more specific context of security sector reform and the implementation of the principle of civilian oversight.

**Uncertainty about the policy agenda.** Grabbe (2003) makes a distinction between mature policy areas and policy areas where EU jurisdiction does not exist or exists only partially even for its member states. She places political conditions of membership in the latter group as these criteria lack any major form of institutional template that is upheld or enforced by the EU. This is also the case for civilian oversight reforms. Whereas the regulation of the security sector does not lie within the boundaries of the community law, the political criteria implicitly require a democratic approach for governing the relationship between security forces, society and the state (Cizre, 2004).

This means that in the context of Eastern enlargement, the EU has been actively demanding major institutional changes regarding civilian oversight without having a unified institutional template of its own. This has been the case for Central and Eastern European countries, as well as Baltic and Balkan states throughout their integration with the EU and NATO since the beginning of 1990s. For the enlargement countries, a clearer policy agenda for the technical elements of security sector reform had been provided by NATO, whereas supporting efforts for establishing the democratic components of reform, such as civilian oversight, was mainly left to the EU (Dijkstra, 2012). Lacking a clear institutional mandate meant that the former potential member states faced high amounts of uncertainty regarding the policy agenda for civilian oversight. Even in Poland, which has often been coined the champion of Eastern enlargement, more effective strategies were not developed before the second half of the 1990s, even though security sector reform attempts dated back to the beginning of that decade (Epstein, 2006).

For the Turkish case, a high amount of uncertainty regarding the policy agenda is also to be expected. Lacking a concrete institutional example to look up to, policy makers and implementers might largely need to rely on informal policy suggestions communicated by local delegations and other relevant EU offices or a set of positive and negative signals placed in country progress reports. In this case, concrete suggestions for institutional templates are likely to be avoided even for the most cumbersome aspects of Turkish security system, such as the role of the gendarmerie in internal security, the quasi-privatized security service providers like the village guards or the oversight of intelligence services, due to the fact that EU member states differ widely among themselves as to how they individually organize these issues.

**Hierarchy of tasks.** According to Grabbe (2003), the second factor that feeds into the uncertainty of the accession process concerns the operational division and the specific organization of the policy agenda itself. Just like many other areas of democratic conditionality, civilian oversight is a complex and a wide-ranging reform area. In the civil-military relations literature, its components include issues as diverse as military’s role in internal affairs, its role in the legal system, decisions regarding the promotions of its personnel and its role in providing intelligence services (Gursoy, 2011). Each of these components is further divided into smaller operational features most often involving different organizational units within the state including the armed forces, bureaucracy and the judiciary. For the specific case of enlargement countries of the 2004/2007 enlargement wave, NATO related aspects of security sector reform, such as downsizing the defense budget and professionalization of the army had been given priority and were easier to implement due to their more technical nature (Cottey et. al.
However, when it came to democratic components of reform which are much less technical in nature, confusion prevailed among policy makers as to which reform items to tackle first resulting in quite different reform trajectories even among frontrunners of Central and Eastern Europe (Cottey et al., 2002).

**Timing.** Grabbe (2003) identifies timing as a third factor. How to arrange the timing of reforms can in fact increase uncertainty especially when the speed of rewards, such as candidacy or membership status, is unknown. In fact, the time factor is also built into the external incentives model as an intervening variable as 'size and speed of awards' (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005). Timing had been a problematic issue for some of the Eastern enlargement countries as they left complex and costly reform areas towards the end of the accession process. Due to its complexity and political sensitivity in the Turkish context, timing can be a crucial factor for the case of civilian oversight as well.

**Whom to satisfy.** Accession process is expected involve more uncertainty when policy makers and implementers are not sure about which actors to listen to about desired reform trajectories. According to Grabbe (2003) this type of uncertainty mainly stems from differing functions of the EU Commission and the Council for different issue areas. For the case of civilian oversight, local delegations of the EU Commission appear as the most active partners of informal demands for reform together with other officials of the Commission and members of the European Parliament who hold discussions and a vote on the country progress reports.

However, for this issue area in specific, we might expect uncertainty regarding whom to satisfy if and when there is a conflict of interest among the two most relevant international organizations, namely the EU and NATO. During the latest enlargement waves, EU and NATO played an effective role in different components of security sector reform and this situation might have increased uncertainty among the policy makers of the enlargement countries.

Furthermore, twinning and IPA projects might constitute a cause for uncertainty regarding whom to satisfy in the reform process as well. Different countries employ different resources for implementing such projects. In this sense, the organizations (such as UNDP and NATO) and experts that are charged with supporting domestic governments may potentially provide conflicting expectations and guidelines regarding the reform program.

**Standards and thresholds.** The last dimension of uncertainty is probably one of the trickiest especially in the context of democratic conditionality. Having fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria to a satisfactory level, most enlargement countries are referred to as being in the 'consolidation phase'. However, boundaries separating initial phases of reform and consolidation of reforms is very much blurry and not specifically defined through visible indicators.

**The moderating factor in Europeanization: Informal institutions**

Europeanization literature agrees that the impact of Europe or the EU depends on the combination of several factors, among which are intervening variables at the national level. The main expectation of this study is that studying the role of informal institutions may potentially uncover one of the mechanisms through which Europeanization takes place.
In defining informal institutions, I follow Helmke and Levitsky (2006) that informal institutions refer to the rules that are ‘created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels’ as opposed to formal institutions that ‘are created, communicated, and enforced through channels widely accepted as official’. It is necessary to note that ‘unofficial’ does not refer to ‘non-state’. In this sense, informal institutions refer to rules and templates that are uncodified, implicit and tacit in nature as opposed to formal institutions that are explicitly codified in constitutions, laws and other legal documents. This definition is also in line with the one given by Gryzmala-Busse as ‘consciously followed rules of political behavior…that are widely recognized and taught [even though] they are not sanctioned or codified via legal recognition, legal enforcement, or official access to power/policy making’ (2004). The main idea behind both of these definitions is that political actors recognize the existence of informal institutions and they form their expectations around them. With informal institutions, the idea of ‘rule following’ resonates well with the ‘logic of appropriateness’ as political actors socially share the view that certain ways of conduct are more appropriate than others (March and Olsen, 1989).

This study embraces institutions in their totality, claiming a central place for informal institutions alongside formal ones in explaining different reform outcomes. Even though common wisdom holds that studying informal institutions would be irrelevant for countries with effective formal institutions, recent studies in political science (i.e. Lauth, 2004, Helmke & Levitsky, 2006, Leftwich, 2007), political economy (i.e. Culpepper, 2005) as well as classic works in the field of economy (i.e. North, 1990) provide convincing evidence that informal institutions are central for political and economic life regardless of the strength of formal institutional settings that they exist in².

One of the main concerns of this study is the way in which formal and informal institutions interact within the realm of security sector reform. There are mainly three ways in which such an interaction can take place, where formal and informal institutions can substitute, undermine or reinforce each other. Substitution refers to cases of replacement of formal rules by informal ones whenever formal rules are absent or weak. Undermining refers to instances where informal institutions ‘feed off’ from, ‘undermine’, ‘weaken’ and at some instances deliberately violate formal rules and regulations. In contrast to these, informal institutions can also reinforce the formal institutional set up (Gryzmala-Busse, 2004).

When SSR is introduced formally into the civil-military relations systems of Poland and Turkey, they are also expected to interact with informal institutions that are shared by political actors. The specific way in which this interaction takes place might have great consequences for the outcome of reform. We might expect these to be different for each indicator. For instance, for the military’s role in internal security, it is possible for EU guidelines to be undermined by informal institutions that operate in grey areas of jurisdiction. This could for instance be the case for informal understandings with regard to operation zones of police and the gendarmerie when such forces exist. Informal institutions could also be present in the definition of ‘rare circumstances’ where written rules allow or tolerate the intervention of military forces for the purposes of internal security. With regard to the second indicator, concerning the oversight functions of executives, legislatures and civilian courts, informal institutions might be expected to be present in defining the extent or reality of the oversight that actually takes place. For

² This does not leave out the possibility that their impact on political outcomes might be different under strong and weak formal institutional settings. For a discussion, see the introductory chapter in Helmke and Levitsky (2006).
example, since lack of civilian expertise in security matters has been an underlying feature of civil-
military relations in the EU enlargement zone in general, we might expect politicians to think that the
appropriate way of handling a security question might be to leave it with the professionals in the
military.

Informal institutions can also be at work with regard to militaries’ role in the legal system. This could
be the case again for grey areas in between where civilian and military jurisdictions lie. Prosecutors,
who are charged with determining where the case law should be held, might have broad or narrow
understandings of such areas. As formal institutions, informal institutions also have power
distributional aspects. In this sense, informal institutions might be at work concerning military’s role in
senior-level personnel decisions as informal and personal networks or as bargains with the executive as
a part of issue linkage. With regard to the fifth indicator, coordination of defense sector, minister of
defense might feel that decisions on certain issues are more appropriate to be left to the chief of general
staff or heads of state might develop informal links that interfere with the chain of command. Informal
institutions are also expected to be present with regard to the last indicator, military’s role in
intelligence services. Democratic control and oversight of intelligence services is one of the most
problematic aspects of civil-military relations reforms due to the amount of grey areas it entails. We
can expect informal institutions to be present in the operation and oversight of intelligence services.
Once again, actual competence for gathering and usage of intelligence data might lie with civilians
whereas the technical expertise might lie with the military fold, leading to possible dual jurisdiction.

**Historical Institutionalism, theory of gradual institutional change and informal institutions**

Even though we speak of Europeanization as a research field, there is no unifying theory that combines
Europeanization approaches. As it was shown in the previous section, current Europeanization studies
are strongly associated with comparative politics and public policy analysis. That’s why they also rely
on the dominant theoretical approaches present in these subfields of political science, namely the new
institutionalist theory (Borzel and Risse, 2003; Borzel, 2005; Graziano and Vink, 2013). My study
situates itself in historical institutionalism, one of the four main variants of new institutionalism, the
others being rational choice, sociological and discursive institutionalism (Hall and Taylor, 1996;
Schmidt, 2008; Schmidt, 2010).

This study aims to combine historical institutionalism with the ‘cultural approach’ with regard to
conceptualizing the relationship between institutions and individuals. Even though both cultural and
calculus approach is found in historical institutionalist literature, cultural approach is more suited for
studying ideational level variables such as informal institutions. According to this, political actors are
not necessarily rational, benefit-maximizing individuals whose preferences are exogenously
determined. On the contrary, their preferences are a function of the institutional environment they
operate in and they often act according to the ‘logic of appropriateness’ when they are faced with
options (Hall and Taylor, 1996).

Even though cultural approach is common in sociological institutionalism, what sets historical
institutionalism apart is that it seeks to provide historically grounded explanations for institutional
change. It emphasizes the role of endogenous sources of institutional change, where the sources of
change are already present within the institutional system and comes into place as history progresses (Thelen and Steinmo, 1992). It underlines the importance of increasing returns that are present in an institutional system and the resulting path dependency and institutional inertia (Pierson, 2000). Historical legacies and unintended consequences of reform are also an integral part of the historical institutionalist understanding of institutional change. Institutional legacies and policy legacies provide a template for reformers to visualize and act on reform whereas unintended consequences warns us against assuming a perfect means-ends efficiency with regard to particular reform programs (Hall and Taylor, 1996).

According to historical institutionalism reform takes place in a world that is already filled with politically embedded institutions (Thelen & Steinmo, 1992), however there is no consensus in the institutionalist scholarship as to how political institutions are best defined (Streeck and Thelen, 2005). The working definition that is a combination of the ones given by Hall (1986) and March and Olsen (1989), where institutions refer to all ‘formal rules, compliance procedures, and standard operating procedures that structure the relationship between individuals in various units of the polity and economy’ (Hall, 1986) as well as to ‘norms’, ‘understandings and routines’ that ‘provide individuals with the appropriate course of action and which form the basis of legitimacy for implementing and enforcing those values’ (March & Olsen, 1989). This combined approach to defining institutions serves a double purpose: that of emphasizing the political character of institutions vested in the idea that institutions shape power structures among political actors (Thelen and Steinmo, 1992) and of emphasizing their close association with the ‘logic of appropriateness’ (March & Olsen, 1989). In other words, I agree with the historical institutionalist claim that institutions signify obligation. However, this obligatory character does not solely arise due to the existence of formal third party sanctioning as argued by Thelen and Steinmo (1992) but is also fed from more subtle forms of enforcement such as social templates that shape individual behavior towards what is possible, appropriate and legitimate.

Furthermore, I follow the footsteps of Streeck and Thelen (2005) in conceptualizing institutions as ‘regimes’. This approach highlights the ambiguous and politically embedded character of institutions, which makes them subject to interpretations and re-interpretations by both rule-makers and rule-takers at all times. In this sense, the meaning of institutions is never self-apparent but is constantly negotiated and defined by relevant actors. Streeck and Thelen (2005) argue that within each institutional regime, there is always a gap that emerges out of this unfixed meaning, which enables political actors to manipulate the institutional scene to their own advantage. This approach is especially relevant for this study due to its focus on the phase of reform implementation, which refers to the way in which policy decisions are put into effect or are enacted (From & Stava, 1993). This means that much of the contestation for meaning of institutions comes to the fore during the implementation stage where public bureaucracies and judiciaries transform a rule into action thereby defining it in practice (Streeck & Thelen 2005; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010).

The idea that institutions are not ‘given’ entities but operate within regimes of meaning resonates well with my conceptualization of informal institutions that was introduced earlier this chapter. Since informal institutions are not codified, their power to substitute, undermine or enhance formal institutions arises out of this ‘meaning gap’ and it translates into the actions of implementers of reform. When we revisit some of the examples of informal institutions that can be at work in implementing civilian oversight, it is much clearer to see that informal institutions might make use of the open-ended
nature of every given indicator concerning military autonomy. For instance, we speak of ‘rare circumstances’ with regard to military’s role in internal security. Informal institutions, which signify the appropriate way of doing things, would in this case be able to define how rare these circumstances are and which conditions might be considered as ‘exceptions’. Similarly, military’s role in the legal system is an integral part of military’s autonomy and we consider this indicator to be at low levels when the military can use its jurisdiction for cases that are a matter of ‘military discipline’. During the implementation phase, however, judicial bureaucrats who are charged with deciding what counts as military discipline will be guided by informal institutions when no clearer guidelines are given in the law.

Hence, there is a difference between how I conceptualize this ‘meaning gap’ that is essentially different from Streeck and Thelen’s understanding. The ‘meaning gap’, as conceptualized by Streeck and Thelen, is characterized by a political vacuum where agency above everything is decisive for the final institutional outcome. This brings to mind the rightful criticism raised by Thelen and Steinmo against Krasner’s ‘punctuated equilibrium model’: the fact that ‘institutions explain everything until they explain nothing’ signifies a theoretical shortcoming (Thelen & Steinmo, 1992). In order to restore the centrality of institutions for the institutional regime model, I argue not only for the necessity of acknowledging the existence of such a meaning gap, but also that of recognizing that even this space is replete with informal institutions which continue to guide the behavior of political actors within a given institutional regime.

By conceptualizing institutions as regimes and analyzing institutional change beyond formal adoption of rules, this study aims to address a gap within the Eastern Europeanization literature as well. As stated earlier, the last decade has witnessed a growing of scholarly interest in the distinct features of Eastern Europeanization following the introduction of EU accession conditionality. However, this stream of literature has remained very formalistic in its definition of Europeanization, through equating this process with the decision of respective governments to adopt EU rules (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). One of the few exceptions to this general trend has been the literature on compliance, where compliance patterns in a few countries are measured against the totality of the policy cycle and the results demonstrate a striking contrast to what more formalistic models leads us to believe about the extent of Europeanization in the new member states of the EU (Falkner, 2010). As such, regarding institutions not solely as rules but as regimes where the way in which they are enacted in practice is also of analytical concern is expected to raise the strength of the arguments that are to be presented in relation to the extent and depth of EU’s influence on the selected countries.

**Institutional change: Sudden dramatic bursts or gradual transformation?**

One of the big debates in historical institutionalist research is about whether institutional change takes place in short dramatic bursts as a result of exogenous shocks or through gradual adaptation. The former model, also termed ‘the punctuated equilibrium model’ is associated with Krasner (1984) and it has dominated the historical study of institutions for decades (Thelen and Steinmo, 1992). However, new scholarship in the field argues that looking at wholesale institutional transformations through exogenous shocks makes us miss many other opportunities where institutional change is still present, yet takes place in a gradual manner (Thelen and Steinmo, 1992; Streeck and Thelen, 1995; Mahoney and Thelen, 2010).
Punctuated equilibrium model has in fact quite common features with the external incentives model that was previously introduced. External incentives model also emphasizes the role of a major external shock, the introduction of accession conditionality, which alters the cost-benefit analysis of governments. It also emphasizes Europeanization as rule adoption and considers the transposition of EU rules, which take place in rather a limited amount of time. In this sense, it might also thought to be sharing some of the weaknesses of the punctuated equilibrium model. One such weakness might be related to the explanatory strength attributed to the exogenous shock at the expense of possible endogenous sources of change, such as policy or institutional legacies, or in this case, informal institutions. Another weakness could be related to having a rather narrow understanding of institutional change, being limited to transposition of EU rules. However, as Mahoney and Thelen (2010) warn us, a wholesale change in the codification of rules is only one way in which institutional change can take place. Whereas for a study that is interested not only on how EU rules are being codified but are being implemented in practice, such as this one, it is necessary to be able to conceptualize other forms of change, which feed from endogenous sources of change and happen rather gradually. Hence ‘theory of gradual institutional change are much suited for the purposes of this study due to their stronger emphasis on implementation and in their theoretical strength in engaging with the dynamic nature of institutions that account for both stability and change. The next sub-section aims to introduce four different ways in which institutional change takes place and isolates the processes of displacement and convergence in order to study the role of informal institutions in implementing civilian oversight measures in Poland and Turkey.

Theory of gradual institutional change and the four modes of institutional change

As stated earlier, the major aim of this study is to study the role of informal institutions as an intervening variable between a common stimulus for change (EU pressures for SSR) and a national political outcome (implementing civilian oversight). In order to study this relationship, I adopt the ‘theory of gradual institutional change’, suggested initially by Thelen and Steinmo (1992) and further developed by Mahoney and Thelen (2010). This framework emerges from within historical institutionalism, and constitutes one of the most promising theoretical initiatives for studying the impact of endogenous mechanisms on institutional change and stability. Its relevance for my study stems from its compatibility with the conceptualization of institutions as regimes, its theoretical focus on the phase of reform/policy implementation as well as the dynamic character it assigns to institutions for being susceptible to both stability and change. Especially the last characteristic must be welcomed by the historical institutionalist tradition given the lack of middle-range theoretical tools developed by this school for studying endogenous dynamics of change (Thelen and Steinmo, 1992).

The theory of gradual institutional change positions itself against the already mentioned ‘punctuated equilibrium model’ (Krasner, 1984) and criticizes this once dominant framework for its inadequacy of conceptualizing different modes of institutional change as well as for failing to account for endogenous sources of institutional change, that is, sources of change arising directly from within an institutional system (Thelen & Steinmo, 1992). According to the latest version of this framework, institutional change does not solely take the form of ‘displacement’ as suggested by the punctuated equilibrium model, but can follow processes of layering, drift and conversion as well. Displacement refers to the introduction of new rules in place of the current ones and corresponds to the punctuated equilibrium model’s conceptualization of institutional change. Layering indicates a process whereby new rules are
introduced alongside current ones even though they may entail a contradictory logic. Drift signifies the continuation of existing rules albeit with a change in their impact due to environmental shifts. Lastly, the process of conversion refers to a process whereby a change in the enactment/enforcement of an existing rule leads to institutional change (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010).

One of the major criticisms raised against the theory of gradual institutional change concerns the fact that the initial version of the theory, as established by Thelen and Steinmo, fail to go beyond a mere typology of institutional change. This is a rightful criticism and it stems from the observation that whereas the authors bring to the fore many more modes of change than had ever been envisaged by previous theorists within the same tradition, they do not establish theoretical links between these and what constitutes as real/fundamental change (Immergut and Anderson, 2008). In other words, the crucial theoretical link that should define the nature of the relationship between different processes of change and the outcome regarding the overall institutional structure is missing from the picture. The same point of objection can also be raised to the newer version of this theory found in the volume edited by Mahoney and Thelen (2010). In the theoretical framework for gradual institutional change, it is somehow assumed by the authors that the four modes of change (displacement, layering, drift, conversion) are all capable of creating fundamental institutional transformations at all times. However, the theoretical shortcoming remains as to when each process should be expected to lead to stability, inertia, on-path or off-path change. For instance, the transformative force of processes of displacement is probably the most taken for granted among all. But as the empirical puzzle of this study demonstrates, the displacement of the formal institutional structure has led to fundamental political change in only one of the cases. For that reason, the growing need for identifying relevant intervening factors and ascertaining their role in accounting for the divergent political outcomes is more apparent than ever. As Thelen and Mahoney suggest, theory on gradual institutional change is still in the making; so there is much to learn from individual studies that are equipped to explore the role of possible intervening variables that can uncover the missing link between the two variables. This study aims to do exactly that by limiting the theoretical focus on two of the processes of change identified by Mahoney and Thelen: displacement, which stands for the complete replacement of (formal) institutions with new ones; and conversion, which refers to a change in the enactment/enforcement of those rules. Displacement is a relevant process for change with regard to my empirical puzzle due to the fact that I focus on a universe of cases where the formal requirements have been met, hence displacement with regard to formal institutions has already taken place. The relevance of conversion, on the other hand, stems from the observation that not all processes of displacement have led to fundamental political change in civil-military relations in the EU’s enlargement zone. I realize that Mahoney and Thelen define conversion strictly as a mode of institutional change where there is no change in formal rules, which is a different case than what is being presented here. However, I believe that it should be possible to conceptualize conversion as a process that can follow formal institutional change. In that sense, it is a legitimate question to ask whether or not conversion, defined as a change in the logic of implementation, has followed the process of displacement.

My argument regarding successful cases such as Poland is that the process of displacement has been coupled with an equally significant process of conversion, signified by a change in the actual enactment of the rule at the phase of implementation, which has possibly lead to the successful transformation of civil-military relations. In less successful cases such as Turkey, process of conversion has not followed
displacement. So, even though Turkey has adopted the same formal model as Poland for reforming its security sector, displacement of the formal institutional framework was not combined with the equally crucial transformative process of conversion, thus failing to lead to a changed logic of enactment with regard to the political weight of the security sector in the country’s political life. I further argue that informal institutions continue to guide the behavior of rule enforcement bodies after displacement and their impact has been decisive for the emergence of a conversion process, which has ultimately lead to off-path change in Poland and on-path change in Turkey as defined earlier in this section.

I believe that the theory of gradual institutional change has a good potential for explaining institutional stability and change and for providing an answer to why one witnesses such divergent political outcomes under common stimuli for change. However, uncovering the role of intervening political factors, such as informal institutions, are crucial for the further development of this theoretical framework and for strengthening its explanatory value. My study proposes that informal institutions provide a fertile ground for research in order to comprehend more fully when formal institutional changes have a transformative effect on power relations that make up for a given political outcome. A natural follow-up from this argument is that the four different categories of institutional change may not be as mutually exclusive as Thelen and Mahoney suggest. In fact, depending on the results of this study, it might be possible to identify other forms of institutional change created through the interaction of different modes of change that are outlined by this theory. As stated earlier, in line with my empirical puzzle, my theoretical focus rests on the joint effects of the processes of displacement and conversion and whether their interaction can be linked to fundamental institutional change. Since the process of conversion relates to a change in the logic of implementation, and since formal institutional structures are not the only type of institutions that guide enforcers’ actions, this study places key importance to the impact of informal institutions throughout this process. Together with formal ones, and through their interactions with them, informal institutions also influence political outcomes in the form of institutional change. Hence, their incorporation into the theory of gradual institutional change is crucial for uncovering important causal mechanisms that link displacement to fundamental institutional change.

At the empirical level, instances of uneven implementation of SSR reveal that formal institutional changes do not fully account for the level of changes that we observe in the overall institutional structure, which not only refers to the ‘specific characteristics of government institutions’ and the ‘overarching structures of the state’, but also to the ‘nation’s normative social order’ (Ikenberry, 1988). An initial look at the dynamics of SSR in Poland and Turkey suggests that informal institutions may have played an important role in bringing about the different levels of democratization in these two countries even under similar formal models of institutional change. For instance, in the Turkish case, parliamentary debates on security-related issues appears as an area where formal measures prove to be inadequate as the members of the Turkish Parliament continually resort to self-restraint and silence when such issues are on the agenda. Comparing to other areas of legislation, security issues are debated significantly less. Furthermore, both the governing and opposition parties usually accept the military budget without holding any real debate about the suggested programs or projects (Akyesilmen, 2010). This points to an underlying norm in Turkish politics: that it is the military that decides on matters of security policy and not the elected officials. In sharp contrast, the implementation stage of SSR in Poland was dominated by ideational shifts that enabled the consolidation of civilian empowerment. Poland demonstrates an example where the norm of civilian empowerment no longer permits the
The persistence of ‘concentrated model of executive authority’ that used to dominate Polish civil-military relations (Epstein, 2006).

In the light of the above mentioned theoretical and empirical observations, and with the purpose of unraveling unexplored causal mechanisms, I argue for the necessity of studying informal institutions as an intervening variable between Europeanization of SSR and the associated levels of democratization in civil-military relations. By doing so, this study can potentially contribute to the advancement of scientific knowledge on six dimensions that are especially relevant for the historical institutionalist literature on Europeanization and institutional change. Firstly, analyzing the role of informal institutions as an intervening variable might uncover unexplored causal mechanisms of institutional change and contribute to the development of a more comprehensive historical institutionalist theory of gradual institutional change. Secondly, concerning the analysis of endogenous sources of change that is central for historical institutionalism, this study points to an interaction effect between the formal-legal and cognitive-normative structures during institutional change. Whereas different schools within institutional theory focus on either of these structures separately, the novel emphasis on their interaction might contribute to the much needed ‘bridging’ between different theoretical perspectives within new institutionalism (Hall, 2010). Thirdly, as central as the historical institutionalist emphasis on historical legacies may be for explaining divergent outcomes of institutional change under similar pressures, moving away from ‘past legacies’ and into the realm of informal institutions will allow for a more systematized analysis of national particularities without jeopardizing the historical focus. Fourthly, when considered in terms of ‘historical legacies’, these national particularities almost exclusively appear as sources of stability rather than change. In contrast, conceptualizing them as informal institutions gives them a more dynamic character as both causes and effects of political change. Fifth, because the study goes beyond reform as formal policy change and studies the actual process of enacting this change, it addresses a rather understudied stage of the policy cycle, that of implementation. And lastly, the study would contribute towards addressing a much significant gap identified by theorists of Europeanization (i.e. Grabbe, 2003) with regard to the data available on cognitive-normative structures of EU applicant states. Such knowledge is crucial for understanding the broader implications of EU’s influence beyond its borders.

**Bibliography**


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