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CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN STUDIES

Cordially invites you to
Europe in-contexts Seminar XII

on

The future of EU integration and enlargement: Has Brussels lost its power to transform post-authoritarian transitional states at its borders?



SPEAKER

Professor Adam Fagan
School of Politics and International Relations
Queen Mary University of London

Adam is a co-investigator in the EU-funded MAXCAP (Maximizing the Integration Capacity of the European Union) research project <http://www.maxcap-project.eu>. His research focuses on the Europeanization of the Western Balkans, with particular reference to judicial reform, minority rights and environmental governance in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia.

Adam is also the editor of East European Politics
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fjcs21#.Uvkw0_3DMYU.

Adam's work has been funded by the AHRC, the British Academy, and the Leverhulme Foundation. He is Head of School, holds a chair in European Politics at QMUL, and is also Professorial Fellow at the London School of Economics (LSEE – LSE South East Europe Research).

Abstract

Since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism in Europe, the EU has been at the forefront of democracy promotion and regime change in Central and South Eastern Europe. The so-called 'fifth enlargement' saw the majority of ex-communist states accede to the EU after an extremely intense process of legal, political and economic reform. Under the aegis of Brussels, these countries transformed not just their public policy and laws, but also the *practice* of politics: the processes of decision-making and implementation were radically altered, particularly with regard to the involvement of civil society and non-state actors. Although the impact of Europeanization is often over-stated and was by no means without its contradictions and limitations, the capacity of the EU to integrate these new member states, plus their ability to absorb a battery of new laws and procedures in a relatively short time period is historically unprecedented. It was widely assumed by academics and commentators alike that the transformative power of the EU would deliver a similar dividend in the post-conflict successor states of the former Yugoslavia. Notwithstanding their recent experience of war, and state and economic collapse, the EU's tried and tested instruments of rewards and incentives was the framework through which the international community sought to transform these weak and contested states; post-conflict state building rapidly became 'EU-member state building', and full membership the ultimate goal for fledgling states with limited bureaucratic capacities. Whilst such optimism has not entirely dissipated (largely due to the successful accession of Croatia in 2013), it has been severely tempered by the reality of stiflingly slow progress, year-on-year. The EU has responded by refining its instruments and adopting a 'new approach', which prioritises rule of law and judicial reform (Chapters 23 and 24 of the *acquis*). There is now much greater emphasis on a country's track record of compliance, and the involvement of civil society and other stakeholders from the outset. Drawing on extensive data collection in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro, this paper argues that the EU's new approach is delivering change in terms of new institutions and formal compliance, but at the same time engendering a combination of unintended consequences and sub-optimal outputs that prevent progressive change from occurring on the ground. More alarmingly, the EU's new approach runs the risk of prioritising the rule of law and legal reform at the expense of democratic accountability. This jeopardises not only the fundamental basis of regime change, it also discredits and delegitimises the EU in the eyes of citizens and elites.

Date: Wednesday, 7 October 2015
Time: 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Venue: T2, Conference Hall (IIIrd Floor)