

Historical Usage of Europeanization in Academic Discourse

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This article advances the ‘historical turn’ in Europeanization research by tracing the intellectual trajectory of Europeanization within the broader intellectual movements and debates. Using collocation and temporal analyses, the study identifies key patterns and significant shifts in the usage of Europeanization in social-humanities discourse over the past century. Initially, Europeanization referred to outward cultural changes, later evolving into a more inward-looking focus on policy and politics. Europeanization emerges as a multifaceted, multidirectional, and often contested process, marked by reversibility and adaptability. It is best understood as a complex, long-term, and non-linear process of interaction and diffusion, spanning racial, cultural, social, economic, political, as well as spatial and historical dimensions.

Introduction

Europeanization has long been a central yet debated concept in the social sciences and humanities. The idea manifested itself among Western intellectuals in the sixteenth-century currents of European thought, but the term itself was not coined until the eighteenth century (Mathias 2008: 6; Schmale 2010: 24). The earliest documented usage appears in Andrew Archibald Paton’s 1845 book, *Servia: Youngest Member of the European Family*, where he discussed the *Europeanization of Belgrade* (see Oxford English Dictionary 2008). Since then, its usage has become a growing academic trend, playing a crucial role in shaping the idea of Europe and its historiography, and, in recent decades, it has gained particular attention as a distinct

research focus within European Studies, particularly in relation to European integration (Gehler 2016).

However, the contemporary conceptualization of Europeanization has often faced criticism, notably for being described and understood as ‘ahistorical’ (Clark and Jones 2009: 195; Flockhart 2010: 790; Greiner *et al.* 2022: 17). This critique holds particular relevance in light of the concept’s rich intellectual history. Empirical studies on the usage of the term have noted a growing focus on contemporary political and policy-related aspects, often at the expense of analysing its historical-related processes (Featherstone 2003: 5; Blavoukos and Oikonomou 2012: 2). This diminishing attention to Europeanization’s historical dimension, coupled with the neglect of long-term processes that shaped its evolution, raises significant concerns.

Scholarly attempts to recontextualize and historicize the concept have been continuously evolving in academic scholarship. This is particularly evident in the works of Borneman and Fowler (1997), Flockhart (2010), Hirschhausen and Patel (2010), Gehler (2016), Beichelt *et al.* (2019) and Greiner *et al.* (2022), among others, who advocate for a more nuanced understanding, emphasizing its historical background and development. These works represent an essential corrective to the dehistoricized usage of the term. Yet, despite these major contributions, much remains to be done in mapping historiographical research on Europeanization and understanding its use across different academic disciplines and historical contexts (Greiner 2022). Further historical analysis is needed to uncover the changing meanings and usages of Europeanization across various periods.

This article addresses this gap by conducting a quantitative and diachronic empirical study of Europeanization’s historical usage in academic discourse over the past century. By mapping its conceptual trajectory – patterns and shifts in usage – within intellectual and academic contexts, our study seeks to inform the term’s often-overlooked historical dimension.

The article proceeds by reviewing key debates on historicizing Europeanization research and detailing the methodological approach and data construction used in the analysis. We then present and interpret the empirical findings from the collocation and temporal analysis, followed by a discussion of the earlier critiques of Europeanization. We conclude with remarks on the main findings and reflections on the concept’s enduring relevance in contemporary academic debates.

Historicizing and Quantifying Europeanization: Methodological and Analytical Approach

Since the 1990s, research on Europeanization has been primarily guided by the deepening and widening of European political integration and governance. During this period, Europeanization has often been narrowly conceptualized as an EU-centric process whereby national policies and institutions adapt to EU norms – a process sometimes referred to as ‘EU-ization’. Although this interpretation has proved analytically useful in certain specific contexts, its restricted focus and limited

historical scope fail to capture the broader ideational, normative, and sociological dimensions of Europeanization across different historical periods and geographical spaces, thus jeopardizing our understanding of the concept's complex origin and transformations, and obscuring the temporal ruptures, contradictions, and inconsistencies that have characterized its historical development (Flockhart 2010).

From the perspective of intellectual history, Europeanization should be understood as an evolving intellectual construct shaped by competing historical frameworks, cultural traditions, and political transformations. Its earlier usage has emerged from and becomes entangled with diverse intellectual movements – ranging from Enlightenment cosmopolitanism to post-colonial critiques of Eurocentrism. These intellectual currents have profoundly influenced how Europeanization has been conceptualized and deployed over time and across academic fields, including political science, law, sociology, anthropology, and history (Hirschhausen and Patel 2010). In this wider view, Europeanization is a dynamic, multifaceted, and multidirectional phenomenon (Conway 2010: 271). As such, Europeanization is not merely a process of political adaptation, but it also reflects the diffusion of cultural practices, identity formations, and power relations that have unfolded through historically complex interactions and contestation.

This broader understanding of Europeanization led scholars to emphasize the need for more empirical research that goes beyond abstract theorization, uses robust methodological and conceptual frameworks, and rigorously engages with the historical context of Europeanization (Greiner *et al.* 2022: 12). There remains a pressing need for studies that explore the specific historical and intellectual contexts in which Europeanization discourse has been articulated, critiqued, and transformed.

In response to this call, we employ a methodological approach that combines traditional historiographical inquiry with computational discourse analysis and corpus linguistics. Specifically, we adopt a bottom-up, usage-based, and corpus-driven approach, prioritizing inductive analysis to identify frequent, meaningful, and salient word usage patterns in historical discourse without relying on predetermined assumptions (McEnery and Hardie 2012). This approach allows us to uncover significant meanings and associations that may remain unnoticed or difficult to discern in qualitative analyses of only a few articles (Brezina *et al.* 2015: 141; Baker 2023: 136). Two methodological principles guide our analysis: first, the collocation principle, which assumes that a word's meaning can be inferred from its co-occurrences with other terms in the text (Baker 2023: 136), and second, the principle of temporality, which posits that changes in word co-occurrence patterns over time can signal broader shifts in discourse trends (Lind and Kloster 2016; McEnery *et al.* 2019: 413). By applying these principles to a corpus of historical academic texts, we explore how Europeanization has been understood and deployed over the twentieth century. We acknowledge the shortcoming inherent in this methodological approach, particularly its tendency to oversimplify and decontextualize complex conceptual narratives (Hill 2017: 5). To address these limitations, we focus our analysis on sentence level, allowing for a more accurate investigation of the immediate context in which the term is used. Additionally, we supplement our

quantitative findings with qualitative insights, providing contextual interpretations and illustrative quotations from the literature.

We first compiled a dataset of scholarly articles referencing *Europeanization* using the Constellate platform, which grants access to large databases such as JSTOR and Portico, which contain a wealth of historical scholarly works spanning multiple disciplines and earlier historical periods.^a By conducting a full-text search using the query *Europeanization OR Europeanisation*, we found 1882 academic articles related to Europeanization published before the 1990s, which contained 2580 unique sentences. Despite its relatively small size, the specificity of the dataset – focused exclusively on Europeanization discourse – ensures its thematic relevance and analytical depth.^b As Baker (2023: 57–69) notes, the quality and content of data in specialized corpora are as important, if not more so, than the quantity. However, text from digitized historical documents may present issues such as optical character recognition errors, typeset discrepancies, and spelling variations, which may hinder accurate analysis. To ensure the accuracy and consistency of the corpus, we engaged in data preprocessing and cleaning by removing typographical errors, normalizing spelling variations, standardizing the use of accented characters and the spelling variations across British and American English, removing punctuations and converting all words to lowercase.

Following the data collection, we then conducted a detailed analysis of the dataset's metadata to identify publication trends, the prevalence of Europeanization discourse over time, authorship, and other publication-related issues in the historical discourse on Europeanization. For the collocation analysis, we used *GraphColl*, a tool within the *LancsBox* software, to perform collocation analyses and visually map the semantic network surrounding *Europeanization* (see Brezina and Platt 2023). We applied the statistical association measure (MI3) and considered immediate word collocations to a distance of five words on either side of the term.^c This allowed us to identify systematic and meaningful associations with *Europeanization* that were (relatively) unique and consistently appeared together, indicating solid and typical connections within the context in which the term Europeanization was used. As a next step, we turned to the temporal analysis techniques to further understand the historical evolution of Europeanization's intellectual usage and explore how the salience of associated terms fluctuated over time. Using Kleinberg's burst detection algorithm, part of the *SCI2 Tool*, we identified specific words associated with Europeanization that experienced sudden increases in frequency, along with the periods during which these 'bursts' occurred (Lind and Kloster 2016).^d

The (Western) Intellectual History of Europeanization

The historical trajectory of Europeanization in social-humanities discourse has been uneven, with significant variations in usage over time. Previous studies have noted the scarcity of references to *Europeanization* before the 1980s, a limitation attributed to narrow search methods that failed to capture the full range of academic output,

being restricted to specific scholarly journals or not covering full-text analyses (see, for example, Olsen 2002: 922, fn 1; Featherstone 2003: 4; Rovnyi and Bachmann 2012: 170–171, fn. 1). Our analyses, by contrast, draws on a comprehensive dataset spanning multiple disciplines and a full-text data search, thus allowing for a more detailed exploration of the term's intellectual history.^e

The first recorded instance of *Europeanization* in our dataset dates back to 1881, with minimal scholarly engagement, evidenced by only nine references across six articles throughout the entire nineteenth century. This limited early usage can be contextualized within the intellectual movements of the time, which were more concerned with nation-state formation and imperial expansion rather than supranational or continental frameworks. The twentieth century, however, witnessed a gradual but steady increase in references to *Europeanization*, particularly from the 1920s onwards. This trajectory correlates with critical historical events and intellectual shifts, reflecting broader transformations in Europe's political, cultural, and institutional landscapes. Notably, the use of *Europeanization* surged dramatically from 1981 to 1990, with over 40% of all recorded instances occurring in this decade alone. This coincided with the political and social upheavals leading to the end of the Cold War and the subsequent reintegration of Eastern Europe into broader European frameworks. The 1970s also saw a significant uptick in references (approximately 20%), marking a period of intensified European integration efforts, particularly in the context of the European Economic Community (EEC) and early discussions on European unification. The 1950s and 1960s contributed roughly 12% each, corresponding with Europe's post-Second World War reconstruction and establishment of institutions such as the European Coal and Steel Community, which laid the groundwork for modern European political cooperation.

Despite these broad trends, earlier decades were characterized by relatively low usage of the term, with notable exceptions such as the peak in 1937, driven by Hans Kohn's seminal work on *The Europeanization of the Orient* (and the subsequent reviews of his work).^f Another peak in 1952 is attributed to the status proposal and debates about the Saar region, an issue that highlighted the complexities of territorial and political Europeanization in the post-war era. The most significant peaks in *Europeanization* discourse appeared in the late 1980s, coinciding with the momentous political shifts preceding the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of East and West Europe. Scholars such as Morten Kelstrup (1990), Martin Saeter (1985, 1989), Michael Geyer (1989), Thomas Pedersen (1990), and Ole Wæver (1990) played critical roles in framing Europeanization within these transformative contexts as they explored the theoretical and practical implications of political integration, security, and identity formation (see Table 1 of the Supplementary Data). The sharp rise in usage in the late 1980s reflects an academic response to the imminent political restructuring of Europe, where the concept of Europeanization became central to understanding the integration of formerly communist states into European institutions and frameworks.

Figure 1 clearly illustrates these peaks in Europeanization usage. The higher frequencies in specific years result from an increased number of articles on the topic

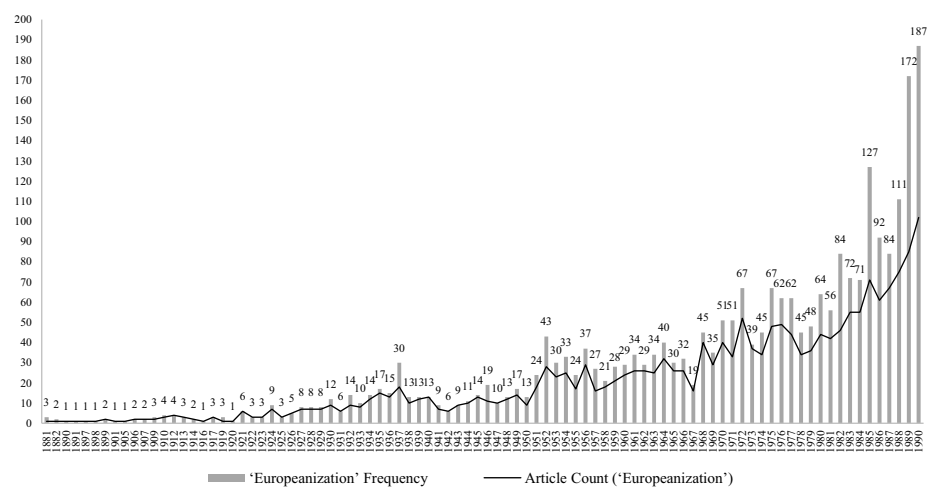


Figure 1. Temporal distribution of article counts and usage of *Europeanization* (1881–1990).

Note: The frequency of the term *Europeanization* is at least equal to the number of articles. If the frequency exceeds the number of articles, the term appears multiple times in an article.

or a few articles that reference *Europeanization* multiple times. The data also reveal how political events and intellectual debate shifts triggered increased scholarly engagement with *Europeanization*.

Table 1 of the Supplementary Data presents the prominent articles, authors, and journals that have shaped the intellectual trajectory of *Europeanization*. Martin Saeter and Morten Kelstrup emerge as particularly influential, contributing between 1% and 2% of all instances of *Europeanization* across the whole dataset of publications. Kelstrup’s work on the theoretical dimensions of the political changes and Saeter’s writings on the peace process and cooperation in Europe highlight how *Europeanization* was understood not only as a cultural or historical process but also as a framework for understanding European security and integration in the post-Cold War context. Among the foremost intellectuals, Hans Kohn and James Cracraft stand out due to their frequent engagement and substantial contributions to the study of *Europeanization*. Kohn’s early historiographical work bridged the fields of history, political science, and cultural studies, providing a comprehensive perspective on the diffusion of European norms and ideas across various regions and addressing the challenges and criticisms associated with this process. Similarly, Cracraft’s scholarly work on *Europeanization* underscores its critical significance in modern Russian history, exploring the cultural, political, and economic transformations and advocating for a nuanced interpretation that differentiates *Europeanization* from Westernization and Modernization.

The diversity of academic journals in which *Europeanization* appears – from *Bulletin of Peace Proposals* and *Slavic Review* to *American Anthropologist* and *Foreign Affairs* – underscores the term’s multidisciplinary relevance and utility across humanities and social sciences (see also Featherstone 2003: 3; Hirschhausen and

Patel 2010: 2; Coman and Crespy 2014: 12). While much of the discourse centres on political science and history, Europeanization also found resonance in fields as varied as anthropology, sociology, international relations, and area studies. This broad disciplinary engagement also suggests that Europeanization serves as a useful lens for elucidating both specific cultural contexts and broader socio-political transformations.

The term's utility in describing historical, cultural, and social shifts highlights its flexibility as an analytical framework, although it often remained vaguely defined. In many instances, Europeanization was used descriptively, reflecting an implicit understanding of Europe's historical development rather than being explicitly theorized as an analytical construct.⁸

Europeanization: A Plural Concept for (Many) Interconnected Ideas

Europeanization, far from being a singular or monolithic concept, manifests itself as a plurality of interconnected processes that have evolved over time, assuming various forms and acquiring diverse meanings to reflect its role in both cultural and socio-political transformations (Mjøset 1997; Conway 2010: 271).

The term *process(es)*, a dominant collocate in its usage, highlights its dynamic and evolving nature, emphasizing Europeanization as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by interactions across different societal domains. This understanding moves beyond the simplistic definition of Europeanization as merely '[t]he process of making or becoming European' (Whitney 1895: 2030) and situates it within the context of larger transformative processes and the broader intellectual and cultural movements of change (see also Leclercq 1978; Gehler 2016: 145). The collocation analysis reinforces the view that Europeanization is intricately linked to a spectrum of other transformative processes – *Modernization*, *Westernization*, *Americanization*, *Christianization*, *Secularization*, *Internationalization*, *Civilization*, *Assimilation*, *Detribalization*, *Germanization*, *Anglicization*, *Democratization*, *Urbanization*, *Liberalization*, *Regionalization* – and even forms of resistance such as *De-Europeanization* (see Table 2 in the Supplementary Material). These associations suggest that Europeanization was not a standalone process but operated within a broader matrix of global cultural exchanges and power dynamics. This plurality is crucial in understanding Europeanization as not merely a homogenizing force but as a process subject to both adaptation and contestation, where local and regional influences intersect in complex ways.

Particularly notable among these associations are the terms *modernization* and *westernization*, which frequently appear alongside *Europeanization*. These terms have often been used interchangeably^h (Rogers and Svenning 1969: 14–15; Cracraft 1982: 629) or as part of a continuum in which Europeanization represents a distinct yet overlapping form of modernization and westernization (Segall 1961: 656). This overlap is evidenced in foundational texts such as the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (Seligman and Johnson 1930), where the entry for *Westernization* redirects

to *Europeanization*, signalling the close intellectual ties between these concepts. Historically, Europeanization – like Modernization and Westernization – reflects the spread of *modern, Western European ideas*, grounded in Enlightenment thought and propelled by the intellectual movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly the diffusion of rationalism, individualism, and industrialism (Kohn 1937: 259).

Within this intellectual tradition, Europeanization has been imbued with a normative judgement, where key collocates such as *progress(ive)* and *development* carry implicit value assumptions. The process is often framed as universally beneficial, implying that (*imposed*) changes originating from Europe are not only desirable but *inevitable* for the progress of societies that adopt them (see Rogers and Svenning 1969: 14–18). Yet, this idealization of Europeanization as a pathway to modernity and progress has not been without its detractors. The collocates *resist*, *reject*, *oppose*, and *against* highlight the resistance that Europeanization has encountered, both within and outside Europe. This suggests that far from being a smooth or uncontested process, Europeanization has been met with significant opposition, reflecting the agency of local actors in negotiating or resisting the imposition of European norms.

The processes of *De-Europeanization* and *Re-Europeanization* offer compelling historical examples of the contingent nature of Europeanization. For instance, the American colonies' deliberate distancing from European traditions following independence (Mjøset 1997) and the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe during the Cold War, which represented a form of forced de-Europeanization (Murphy 1990), illustrate how Europeanization can be reversed or suspended in response to geopolitical shifts. The collapse of Soviet influence in 1989 led to a phase of Re-Europeanization in East Germany and Eastern Europe, as these regions re-approached (West) Europe after decades of divergence. These cases underscore that Europeanization is not a linear or one-sided process, but one subject to reversal, adaptation, and re-negotiation based on the socio-political context.

Indeed, Europeanization is best understood as a dynamic and ongoing process, shaped by both external European influences and internal responses. This process involved *gradual* or *rapid* changes *toward* a particular *perspective* or *direction*. The success or failure of Europeanization has often depended on the willingness and capacity of local populations to engage with, adapt to, or resist European ideas. As such, Europeanization was rarely a *complete* or definitive outcome; rather, it operated as a framework for understanding incremental and sometimes contested changes that unfold over time. This is evident in both domestic and international arenas, where Europeanization is often presented as a process still in progress, continually shaping and reshaping social, cultural, and political landscapes.

In the post-Second World War era, Europeanization became increasingly tied to formalized policy domains, as indicated by the prominence of *policy* in the collocation data. This shift marks a transition from Europeanization as a cultural or intellectual project to a more structured, policy-driven transformation, particularly within the context of European integration. The term became closely associated with

specific policy areas such as *security*, *defence*, and *foreign relations*, reflecting its centrality to the Euro-Atlantic integration process. This institutionalized understanding of Europeanization, embedded in governance structures and policymaking processes, underscores its role as a transformative force in shaping both national and international policies, further solidifying its position within contemporary intellectual discourse.

Europeanization: The Spatial Dimension and Thematic Narratives

The historical usage of Europeanization has encompassed a wide range of cultural, social, economic, and political transformations (Coman and Crespy 2014), unfolding across multiple geographical levels – global, continental, regional, territorial, and local. Earlier scholars understood Europeanization as a process of cultural, social, and political convergence, one that fosters deeper entanglements, interactions, and constraints within and beyond Europe (Beichelt *et al.* 2019).

The temporal analysis of Europeanization identifies distinct thematic narratives and significant shifts in discourse intensity, which align with historical events and geopolitical developments. In the early twentieth century, Europeanization was outward-focused, with collocates such as *India*, *Japan*, and *Africa* and *native*, *people*, *spread*, *rapid*, *great*, and *civil*, highlighting European colonialism, imperialism, and interactions with Indigenous populations. This discourse emphasized the rapid expansion and perceived superiority of European civilization. However, after the Second World War, the Europeanization discourse shifted inward, focusing on Europe's own processes of unification and cooperation. Collocates such as *France*, *Germany*, and *territory* reflected post-Second World War realignments, highlighting the Franco-German rivalry and the territorial disputes over Saarland. This exemplifies how Europeanization in the post-war era focused on overcoming past divisions and fostering political stability through integration. The Cold War period added another layer to the inward discourse of Europeanization, signifying both the *enlargement* of the Euro-Atlantic community and the growing political integration of Europe, particularly through organizations such as *NATO* and the European Community (*EC*). This contemporary inward phase of Europeanization of Europe has been driven by policy initiatives and was influenced more by American Wilsonian liberalism than European Enlightenment rationalism (Flockhart 2010: 803).

Collocation and temporal analysis demonstrate the extensive scale of Europeanization spatial reach. The term *Europeanization* has been closely associated with physical, political, and cultural spaces, as evidenced by collocates such as *earth*, *world*, *global*, *territory*, and *place* (physical); *empire*, *state*, *country*, *city*, and *community* (political); and *orient*, *eastlern*, *western*, and *tribes* (cultural). By the early twentieth century, many intellectuals posited that European civilization had (virtually) *spread* across the *world*, reaching every corner of the *earth* – from the *Americas* to *Africa* and *Asia*, and within Europe itself (see also Berndt 1959: 61).

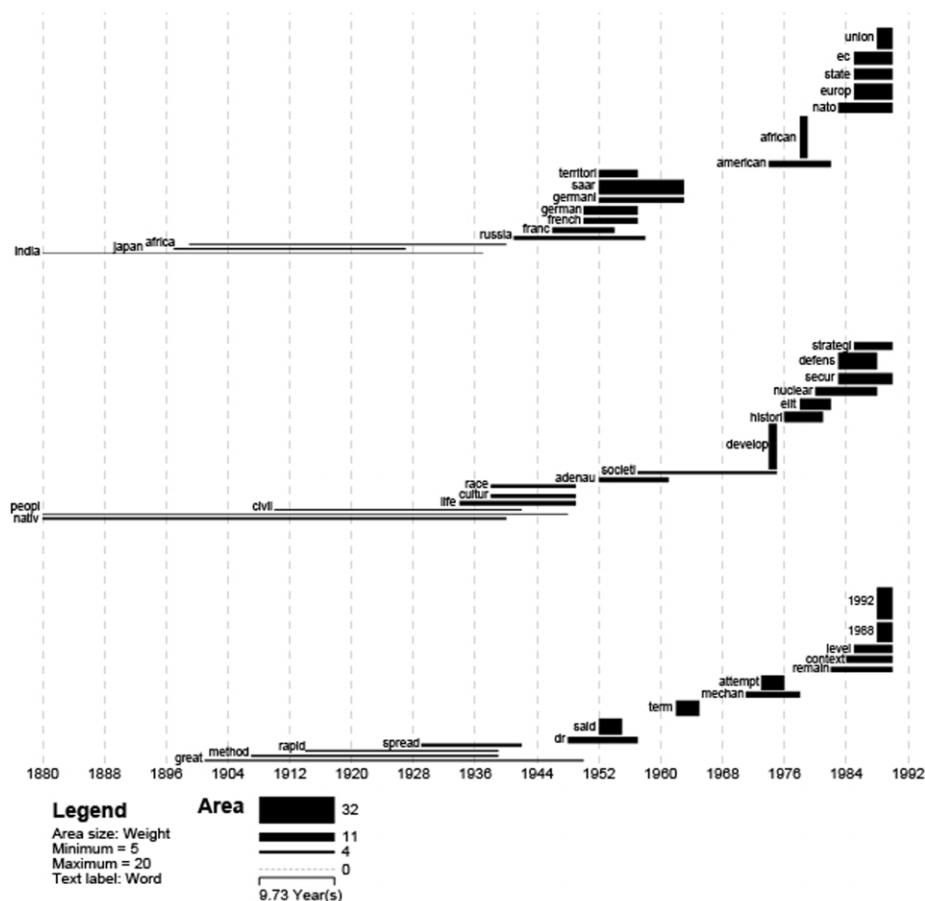


Figure 3. Temporal representation of Europeanization collocates.

Note: In the temporal bar graph visualization, each burst collocate is represented as a horizontal bar. Each bar has a specific start and end date and is labelled on the left. The area of each bar indicates the intensity, which corresponds to the magnitude of the change in word frequency that triggered the burst.

Racial Europeanization Narrative

In the nineteenth century, Europeanization was closely tied to notions of ‘ethnic replacement’ and ‘biological substitution’. Collocates such as *race*, *native*, and *people* suggest that Europeanization was framed as a deliberate outright process of transforming Indigenous populations through mechanisms such as extinction, expulsion, or intermarriage with Europeans. This form of ‘biological’ Europeanization extended beyond human populations, involving the introduction of European crops, animals, and diseases, which dramatically altered local ecosystems (Crosby 1986).ⁱ The ideological foundations of racial Europeanization were heavily influenced by the prevailing intellectual trends of social Darwinism and scientific racism (Flockhart 2010: 802). These theories justified European expansion

and the belief that European peoples were destined to dominate other races, a belief that underpinned the colonial endeavours of the time.

Cultural Europeanization Narrative

In the early- to mid-twentieth century, as European empires expanded further, Europeanization came to signify ‘cultural imperialism’, particularly through the so-called ‘civilizing mission’. Collocates such as *culture* and *civilization* highlight this, where Europeanization was seen as the imposition of European languages, religion, and education on colonized populations. This period was characterized by a more systematic attempt to instil European cultural and moral values through the spread of European dress, architecture, science, and intellectual traditions. This process involved a degree of acculturation, often imposing European culture on world populations, yet it was rarely unidirectional (Kienetz 1977: 553).

Socioeconomic Europeanization Narrative

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Europeanization discourse entered a new phase that emphasized socioeconomic transformation. Terms such as *development* signal this shift, as Europeanization became closely linked with post-war reconstruction and socioeconomic restructuring. Narratives of socioeconomic Europeanization referred to the establishment of capitalist economies, replacing traditional craft-based industries with mechanized ones, and introducing financial systems based on money and wages (Young 1937: 623; Shepherd 1919). The rise of industrialization and urbanization significantly impacted traditional social hierarchies, encouraging ideals such as social equality, while disrupting the influence of the nobility and clergy (Berndt 1959: 68). This shift away from racial and cultural terminologies toward socioeconomic concepts mirrors the Modernization Theory in the social sciences and its intellectual turn towards more neutral, development-oriented narratives in the context of decolonization and the Cold War, thus framing Europeanization as a process endeavour to modernize societies and open European economies to other nations.

Political–Security Europeanization Narrative

Earlier discourse on political Europeanization was centred on the implementation of democratic ideas, the subordination of all governmental organs to the sovereign state, and the promotion of national solidarity (Young 1937: 623). In contrast, in the late twentieth century, Europeanization narratives transitioned toward regional integration, marked by the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Economic Community, and eventually the European Union. Collocates such as *state*, *security*, *defence*, *NATO*, and *EC* indicate a political-security focus, reflecting Europeanization’s role in fostering internal convergence and unification among European states. This phase saw the establishment of

common political and security frameworks, particularly in the aftermath of the Cold War, as Europe sought to reconcile its internal divisions and promote rapprochement between East and West.

Early Critique and Counter-narratives of Europeanization

Usage of *Europeanization* has encompassed a broad range of interconnected dimensions – racial, cultural, social, economic, political, as well as spatial and historical – each evolving through processes shaped by Europe’s internal developments and its interactions with the wider world. As Europeanization became broader in scope, critical reflections emerged, challenging its conceptual elusiveness, historical oversimplifications, and the ideological assumptions underpinning the term. These critiques both stemmed from and reinforced the central criticism of Eurocentrism inherent in the discourse on Europeanization.

The earliest usage of *Europeanization* has often been critiqued for its conceptual vagueness, particularly its lack of a precise analytical framework with clearly defined boundaries. One key challenge in conceptualizing Europeanization lies in the fluidity of the concept of ‘Europe’ itself (Leclercq 1978). From its inception, Europeanization has been equated with terms such as *Anglicization* or *Germanization*, often confined to the colonial, imperial, or wartime actions of an individual (e.g., English, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and German) or group of (Western) European states or nations. However, reducing Europeanization to the sum of individual nations overlooks its broader collective dimension of Europe as a whole (Shepherd 1919: 44) and its European-wide regimes of power, socioeconomic activities, and cultural meanings (Geyer 1989: 333). Thus, Europeanization, as an obstinately elusive concept, can only be understood within Europe’s ever-changing historical context, as attempts to define it often result in either overly simplistic statements or become entangled in its self-referential nature (Conway 2010: 271-2).

Critiques also have highlighted the historical oversimplifications inherent in early discussions of Europeanization. Scholars argue that Europeanization has been reciprocal and multi-dimensional, rather than a straightforward, one-directional process of imposing European norms, institutions, and ideas onto non-European regions – whether through direct colonial rule or more subtle forms of political and economic influence. Shepherd (1919) noted that Europeanization involved not only the export of European models but also the adaptation and integration of elements from colonized societies back into Europe.^j This mutual exchange complicates the narrative of Europeanization as a unidirectional process, revealing the significant ways in which norms and ideas circulated outward from Europe, inward into Europe, and within Europe itself (Mjøset 1997; Flockhart 2010). Political scientists and historians alike have emphasized this dialectic of Europeanization, as shaped by both internal and external influences, particularly in the context of European political transformations (see Geyer 1989; Morten 1990). The influence of non-European societies on Europe itself challenges the traditional notion of

Europeanization as an uncontested, top-down process of norm diffusion (Kienetz 1977).

In addition to these conceptual and historical critiques, the ideological and political dimensions of Europeanization have drawn criticism. Europeanization, far from being a value-free academic concept, has often functioned as a political tool, organizing knowledge and conveying moral values such as freedom or social equality (Berndt 1959: 68; Geyer 1989: 320). The tendency to equate Europeanization with other global processes such as *modernization* or *civilization* had reinforced the Eurocentric worldview, presenting Europe as the source of universally applicable and successful models of development. Such framing marginalized the contributions of non-European societies and overlooked their agency in shaping alternative trajectories of development (Ghosh and Kurian 1979: 157). Colonial-era biases are thereby perpetuated, implicitly presenting Western European forms of governance, socioeconomic structures, and cultural norms as ideal and globally desirable (Cracraft 1982: 632). Furthermore, in the post-Second World War era, Europeanization served to justify Europe's continued global influence. Under the guise of spreading democracy and liberal economic models, Europeanization often functioned as a form of soft cultural imperialism, reinforcing historical hierarchies and dependencies between Europe and non-European regions (Weryho 1994: 341–342). Equally important is the way in which Europeanization has obscured the darker aspects of European history. The concept has often overlooked the legacies of Colonialism, Fascism, and Nazism, which are integral to a comprehensive understanding of Europe's past (Hirschhausen and Patel 2010: 3). These historical realities are essential for interpreting Europeanization not merely as a force for progress and development, but also as one that has been marked by violence, exploitation, and systemic conflict. A more nuanced understanding of Europeanization would necessitate acknowledging these darker chapters and incorporating them into the broader narrative. Doing so reframes Europeanization not as an inevitable or unproblematic force for change, but as a contested process that includes elements of resistance, reversibility, and profound ethical ambiguities.

Concluding Remarks

This article contributes to the growing body of research on the 'historical turn' in Europeanization studies by providing a historiographical and quantitative review of the term's intellectual usages within social-humanities discourse over the past century. Europeanization, as a historical and transdisciplinary concept, has permeated academic discussions long before and far beyond European Studies (Coman and Crespy 2014: 12; Featherstone 2003). By exploring its historical evolution, multidimensionality, and earlier contestations, the study enriches our understanding and provides a deeper and quantified context for current research.

Our empirical analyses corroborate that Europeanization has a rich and nuanced history, with significant variations across time and space (Flockhart 2010). From its early appearance in the nineteenth century, as an outward-focused cultural framework to its post-Second World War shift toward a more inward-looking political process, Europeanization reflects Europe's changing self-conception and influence. Conceptually, it should be understood as a complex, long-term, and non-linear process of interactions and diffusion that operates across multiple dimensions – racial, cultural, social, economic, political, as well as spatial and historical.

The enduring relevance of the concept continues to drive interdisciplinary research, provoke academic debate, and offer critical insights into the complex processes of transformation associated with the idea of Europe. It (still) remains central to understanding Europe's changing role and influence both within and outside the continent. As current debates around European identity, integration, and global influence persist, it is crucial to acknowledge that many of these discussions echo the same complexities and critiques that have historically shaped Europeanization. For both the historical and contemporary debates alike, Europeanization remains a multifaceted, multidirectional, and often contested process, with the potential for reversibility and adaptation (Greiner *et al.* 2022: 15).

The conceptual fluidity of Europeanization has allowed for its broad application across various contexts, time, and space, contributing to its interdisciplinary appeal and enduring relevance in contemporary academic discourse.

Supplementary Material

The Supplementary Material is available here <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798724000310>.

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Notes

- a. The Constellate platform allows researchers to compile, download, and analyse a considerable number of scholarly works, up to 25,000, encompassing metadata and their corresponding full texts or any specific subset containing a particular term or expression (Adams 2021: 178–189; Constellate 2023).

- b. For a discussion on small-sized (less than 250,000 words) and specialized corpora, see Almut (2010).
- c. We used the cubed variant of mutual information statistics (MI3), which emphasizes co-occurrence exclusivity (words that occur only or predominantly together) and frequency (collocations that appear relatively frequently in the corpus). For a detailed discussion on collocation association measures, see Chapter 3 of Brezina (2018), and Brezina *et al.* (2015: 159–160).
- d. We ran the burst detection algorithm with the standard and often-used parameters: gamma at 1.0, density scaling at 2.0, and maximum burst level set to 1.
- e. Our dataset on *Europeanization* reflects similar trends found in other broader databases such as HathiTrust and Google Books. For a comparison with the HathiTrust database using search keywords *Europeanization*, *Europeanisation*, *europäisierung* and *européanisation* or *européisation*, see HathiTrust Research Center (2022) (<https://bookworm.htrc.illinois.edu>). The graph can also be web-viewed [here](https://books.google.com/ngrams/). For a comparison with the Google Books Ngram Viewer data, see <https://books.google.com/ngrams/> or Greiner *et al.* (2022: 5).
- f. Historian Hans Kohn authored the article ‘The Europeanization of the Orient’ in 1937 for the *Political Science Quarterly*, based on his 1934 book ‘*Die europäisierung des Orients*’ (Berlin), later translated into English under the title ‘*Western Civilization in the Middle East*’ (1936).
- g. In the few instances when definitions or conceptual clarifications were provided, they sought to refine an already broadly accepted usage.
- h. For an illustration of the interchangeable use of these terms, see for example Kohn (1936; 1937) at note f.
- i. Crosby (1986) coined the term ‘Ecological Imperialism’ to describe the historical biological expansion of Europe from 900 to 1900.
- j. Shepherd (1919: 51–53) conceptualized Europeanization as the ‘expansion of Europe’, highlighting both its outward influence (*the transit of European ideas and institution*) and the often-overlooked homeward impact (*the reaction on European life and thought*) on Europe itself.

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