

Trade Policy with the Lights on

Linking trade and politicization

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Abstract:

As the most hotly debated trade topic in recent history, several observers have dubbed TTIP a ‘politicized’ issue. Yet in the trade literature, there has not been much attention to what the latter concept entails, nor what its drivers and consequences are. I argue that we need to explicitly link the scholarly fields of trade and politicization, not only to explain several societal features in the TTIP debate, but also because it carries constraining consequences for policy-makers on national and European level, and because this link will be increasingly relevant in the future. Through a selected review of the politicization literature, I want to show that linking these fields is beneficial in both ways. This opens up a research agenda that maps, explains and investigates the consequences of the increasing societal contestation of trade policy, manifested through public debates, mobilization efforts and rising citizen awareness.

1 – Introduction

“The [TTIP] debate is a few degrees hotter in Germany than in other countries. But I am not able to sociologically analyze that.” – Cecilia Malmström (Tost, 2015)

Over the last decade and a half, there have been several instances where the elite game of international relations has responded to criticism of civil society organizations (CSOs)¹ or even citizen groups. Regarding trade policy, the most prominent examples were the successful opposition to the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (1998), the breakdown of the Seattle WTO negotiations (1999) and the resistance to the GATS negotiations (2000) and the Economic Partnership Agreements (2004). More recently, the Anti-Counterfeiting Agreement (ACTA) was shot down in the European Parliament, a move mainly attributed to civil society mobilization and campaigning (Dür & Mateo, 2014). The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) currently being negotiated is accompanied by one of the fiercest trade debates in recent history, which has had the European Commission (hereafter: Commission) on the defensive since negotiations were launched in 2013. On several occasions it has responded to these societal outbursts and already changed some elements of the agreement; moves that have been attributed to civil society engagement and attention for the topic. With the European Parliament (EP) directly accountable to European citizens and more aware of its new Lisbon powers to veto international agreements, it is now even unclear if TTIP will make the final EP ratification hurdle – if negotiations reach that phase. Other preferential trade agreements (PTAs) (the EU-Canada (CETA) and the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) in particular) have felt the fallout of this politicization of TTIP.

This societal politicization is a remarkable episode, as European trade policy has not always ignited a lot of enthusiasm or spontaneous debate amongst politicians, journalists, interest groups, let alone citizens. For decades, a large share of society seemed indifferent to the technical (and boring) negotiations of free trade agreements, which for consumers would result (as classical economics states) in more choice and lower prices in a variety of products. Nor was attention seen as useful because observers were critical of the role that civil society or ordinary citizens could play. Studies on the drivers of European trade policy have been skeptical about the potential of CSOs to exert influence (Jarman, 2008; Woll, 2007). Dür and De Bièvre (2007) find that NGOs have been actively consulted over the past years, leading to increased access, but that this hasn't resulted in real influence. Furthermore, the view that business pulls the strings remains persistent and is evidenced both in these results of scholarly literature as in the sole focus on business organizations in academic literature (Beyers, 2004; Bouwen, 2002; Dür, Bernhagen, & Marshall, 2015; Dür & De Bièvre, 2007; Schmitter & Streeck, 1991).

¹ Even though not entirely the same and overlapping to some extent, I will use the concepts of ‘civil society organizations (CSOs)’ and ‘non-governmental organizations (NGOs)’ interchangeably.

Not many people had therefore predicted the forces that would unleash and have dominated popular debate after the negotiations on TTIP begun. There is thus a very topical and persisting need to analyze what is happening, to explain recent episodes of increased contestation and opposition to trade policy (which take place on European level but also vary significantly from Member State to Member State), to investigate what the possible consequences for TTIP (and future trade policy) could be, and, lastly, why this is important for future research. In this paper, I argue that to further our understanding of the current contentious episode of TTIP (and our broader knowledge about the trade literature in several dimensions) we should look to the literature on *politicization*.

The politicization concept has only started to attract significant attention over the last 10 years (De Wilde, 2011). Although the concept itself has become central to various research projects, predominantly present in studies assessing European integration or the European Union as an authoritative international institution (Hooghe & Marks, 2009; Kriesi et al., 2012; Schmitter, 1969; Zürn, Binder, & Ecker-Ehrhardt, 2012), it has been used in many different ways and was not always explained in detail (De Wilde, 2011). With regards to trade policy, some authors have stated that the field has been politicized in the past (Faber & Orbie, 2007), but it has never been elaborated what this meant and what consequences this entailed. This paper thus shows that the linking of the trade and politicization literature is fruitful and will be increasingly relevant.

Section 2 starts with an assessment of why we should focus on politicization when studying trade policy, with TTIP in particular. We should do this, firstly, to broaden our understanding of why TTIP is such a hotly debated topic, in general, but also why manifestations of this politicization differ greatly between Member States. Secondly, politicization of TTIP has already proven constraining and led to real changes, which is in itself interesting, but also directs us to ask what part this plays in Member State preference formation. Thirdly, I argue that it will also be increasingly important to focus on this interlinkage. Section 3 then gives a selected overview of the contemporary literature on politicization, and shows that several processes and developments can be supported with theoretical concepts elaborated in this literature field. Section 4 concludes and gives directions to further research.

2 – Linking trade and politicization

2.1 Societal forces in TTIP

It is already a truism to state that TTIP has become a contentious issue over the last two years. Different manifestations, such as interest group mobilization, media reporting, political debates and even citizen awareness, have made observers along the field state that this is a ‘politicized’ issue. De Wilde (2011) establishes a working definition of this concept: “An increase in polarization of opinions, interests or values and the extent to which they are publicly advanced towards the process of policy formulation within the European Union”. It is a focus on “the communicative

processes that lead to an increasing intensity and controversy of debates on international institutions in the broader public, encompassing not only political executives but also party politicians, NGOs, and other interest groups” (Schmidtke, 2014) . In the case of the EU it is “the mobilization of mass public opinion with regard to EU policies and institutions” (Hooghe & Marks, 2009). For Schmitter (1969), it referred to “a widening of the audience or clientele interested and active as a consequence of the increasing controversiality of issues”. It is “making collectively binding decisions a matter or an object of public discussion” (Zürn, 2014). In this paragraph, I point to two particular features of the TTIP debate (interlocking societal forces and a differentiated picture of contestation around Europe) and show that we need broader models or theories to explain these, and that the concept of politicization entails these features.

Interlocking societal forces

Different ‘manifestations’ of politicization (as described above) and the links between have a long history of scholarly attention. Citizen awareness and attitudes on policy issues have often been studied in models that point at occupation and varying factor endowments (Blonigen, 2011; Mayda & Rodrik, 2005) or comparative advantages (Scheve & Slaughter, 2001) as explanatory variables. Mobilization efforts by interest groups as well, have traditionally been studied in classic (economistic) theories of International Political Economy (IPE)², and – since the shift to the new trade politics has been materializing (Young & Peterson, 2006) – will now be increasingly benefitting from scholarly literature on regulatory cooperation (Nicolaidis & Shaffer, 2005).

These are extremely useful theories in economics and political science and are essential building blocks in explaining mobilization, awareness or broader public debates. However, the picture is – naturally – more qualified than these economistic models often presume. The changing nature of trade politics (more focus on domestic rules and standards), for example, may prove more salient (Beyers & Kerremans, 2007), which makes factor endowments of little use, both for awareness and mobilization. Identity and loss-of-sovereignty concerns (cfr. GAL-TAN; Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson (2002)) may have an impact on our view of trade and globalization as well. But especially the relationship between interest group activity, media, public opinion and political activity cannot be neglected or downplayed.

Interest groups can be effective in shaping public opinion if their message framing is consistent with pre-existing beliefs ((Dür, 2015; Dür & Mateo, 2014). Eliasson (2015), for example, argues that TTIP campaigners successfully tapped into deeper socio-cultural concerns connected to food safety, which made even the slightest possibility that TTIP will have an impact on this a major problem. Indeed, Dür (2015) shows that strong framing of TTIP issues has had an impact on public opinion, especially if knowledge and/or awareness for a topic was low before, which necessitates a

² Cfr. Heckscher-Ohlin and Stolper-Samuelson theorems (Cuyvers, Embrechts, & Rayp, 2002)

passionate campaign (Burstein, 2010). By making a highly technical subject such as ISDS salient, and educating the public on this low-awareness topic, TTIP campaigners succeeded in doing this (Eliasson, 2015).

Vice versa, increasing public salience makes more interest groups active on a certain issue (as witnessed in the ACTA debate, cfr. Dür and Mateo (2014)), as the logic of survival dictates interest groups to be in the spotlight if they want to secure future (financial) support (Berkhout, 2013; Binderkrantz, 2005). Active outside lobbying thus raises salience, which leads to even more groups becoming interested in the topic, which galvanizes public opinion even further (Dür & Mateo, 2014). Eliasson (2015) concludes that, while it is difficult to find causal relationships, there is a clear correlation between interest group campaigns, shifting public opinion and developments in TTIP, especially since support for free trade as such did not alter much in the same period.

Media coverage, furthermore, both informs, but also shapes public opinion (Page, Shapiro, & Dempsey, 1987). Articles on TTIP in major global papers (and national quality newspapers) rose as interest group were active and the public became aware of the issue (Eliasson, 2015). The other way around, public opinion drives media coverage on issues that are not primarily connected to spectacular events (such as trade policy) (Uscinski, 2009). With media coverage, the incentives for interest groups to become active rise as well (cfr. Logic of survival). Interest groups themselves of course try to frame debates in such a way that they are picked up by media and ultimately by public opinion (Andsager, 2000). Political parties have incentives to take a stance on salient issues, again providing for stories in mass media, and providing cues and frames for citizens (Dür, 2015).

It is not the purpose of this paper to show all the links at work here in detail (there are many!), but this shows that there are numerous links between public opinion, mobilization of interest groups, mass media (public debates) and political activity. If politicization means that “issues that did not catch the eye of the general public previously are debated in the public sphere” (Rixen & Zangl, 2013), all these manifestations and links have to do with and are part of ‘politicization’. We should therefore look into this concept more deeply to have a broader conception of the societal forces at work in TTIP, which transcends a too narrow look into one or two variables.

Differentiated picture

Another key feature of this episode is that the debate and criticism on TTIP has flared up in some Member States, but not in others, which makes for a very differentiated picture. ‘Episodes of contention’ (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2009) are significantly bound to domestic arenas. De Ville and Siles-Brügge (2015) note this differentiation in mobilization patterns and mass media as well: “we have an anomaly of countries such as the UK and Germany – where TTIP has been subject of parliamentary debates, regular news programs and demonstrations and which possess well-organized anti-TTIP NGO coalitions – and others where the issue has barely been discussed at all in the public sphere”. Stuckatz (2015) finds that interest group mobilization (as measured by

newspaper data mentions) is the highest in Germany and Austria, while almost negligible in e.g. Spain and even France.

Focusing on European citizens' awareness of and engagement with TTIP points to the same conclusion. Of the 150.000 contributions to the ISDS public consultation in 2014, more than 80% originated from just 3 countries: Austria, the UK and Germany. The 'Stop TTIP' campaigners collected signatures all over Europe as part of their (self-organized) European Citizens' Initiative, but almost half of the 3.2 million signatures are from Germany, and countries such as Austria, France, UK and Belgium have more than tripled the required quorums (Stop TTIP, 2015). Public protests in Berlin (October 2015) assembled about 150.000 citizens on the streets during the International Days of Action against TTIP (Johnston, 2015), but hardly anyone marched the streets of Bratislava or Budapest. Measured via citizen attitudes in Eurobarometer statistics, opposition to an FTA with the US is highest in Germany, Slovenia, Luxembourg and Austria (see table 1). Moreover, in this same group public opposition against TTIP has been on the rise and – in the case of Germany – now amounts to more than half of the population.

	For		Against		Don't know	
	2014/11	2015/05	2014/11	2015/05	2014/11	2015/5
Austria	39	23	53	67	8	10
Germany	39	31	41	51	20	18
Luxembourg	40	37	43	49	17	14
Slovenia	57	46	31	42	12	12
Belgium	66	53	26	35	8	12
France	50	53	32	33	18	14
Slovakia	62	56	26	29	12	15
Greece	61	66	32	28	7	6
EU	58	56	25	28	17	16
Netherlands	74	63	18	27	8	10
Hungary	62	63	28	26	10	11
Croatia	67	63	23	26	10	11
Italy	58	58	22	24	20	18
Sweden	59	64	26	23	15	13
Czech Republic	62	62	25	23	13	15
Portugal	60	60	23	23	17	17
Finland	62	58	21	22	17	20
Cyprus	59	64	25	21	16	15
Latvia	66	62	18	21	16	17
UK	65	63	19	20	16	17
Spain	63	63	19	19	18	18
Denmark	71	66	17	18	12	16
Bulgaria	64	67	14	15	22	18
Estonia	72	63	11	14	17	23
Poland	73	71	11	14	16	15

Ireland	71	77	15	12	14	11
Romania	75	78	11	10	14	12
Malta	75	79	11	7	14	14
Lithuania	79	79	9	7	12	14

Table 1. Q: What is your opinion on each of the following statements? A free trade and investment agreement between the EU and the USA. Source: Eurobarometer 82/83

The specific bones of contention are also dependent on the Member State (Atlantic Community, 2015): the UK fears a privatization of the NHS, the Germans have sovereignty and food concerns (especially on GMOs), Italian CSOs and citizens are worried about aggressive competition for their local SMEs (Di Sisto, 2014), and the French are concerned about protection of local agriculture and geographical indications (Von der Burchard & Barigazzi, 2015). A shared skepticism (or total rejection) of the investor-to-state-dispute-settlement (ISDS) mechanism is present in several Member States. Eastern Europe on the other hand, is practically silent in this debate (also on ISDS) and countries such as Romania (cfr. Iftodi, 2015), Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia show the highest levels of support for TTIP in 2014, even higher than traditionally pro-trade states like the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon countries.

This divergent picture needs deeper explanation. Several individual explanations can be furthered, such as a strong anti-American feeling in Germany and France, strong NGO presence in Luxembourg, or strong potential negative (economic) effects in Italy, but again we need a broader picture. All countries will potentially be affected by TTIP (even though effects will differ) and we need to look at the intermediating factors that drive domestic politicization.

2.2 Constraining consequences and Member State positions

TTIP (re)positioning

Advocates of TTIP, with the Commission in particular, have since the start of the negotiations been on the defensive. The civil society movement that has led the campaign has grown in size and variety of opponents, and has found traction in public opinion as well (Eliasson, 2015; Dür, 2015). The Commission has not been deaf to these concerns, acknowledging in the new ‘Trade for all’ strategy that “We’ve listened to the debate” (European Commission, 2015b). For one, this recognition has led the Commission on a PR-quest, in order to appease the harshest criticisms and ‘sell’ the agreement to the public. Already before negotiations started, a leaked internal document showed the Commission’s attempt to “further [...] our communication effort at Member State level in a radically different way to what has been done for past trade initiatives” in order to “reduce fears and avoid a mushrooming of doubts” (CEO, 2013). Especially since Commissioner Malmström took over the trade post, an aggressive communications campaign took off to allay public’s concerns with promises of a “new start” (Eberhardt, 2014), even though she has reiterated consistently that it is the Member States’ job to explain TTIP’s value to citizens (Von der Burchard, 2015).

In parallel to this discourse on refreshing the talks and demystifying concerns, several changes have followed in response to those parts of the deal that have attracted most attention and criticism. Transparency is one of them: specific websites, Twitter accounts, written summaries of each negotiating round, published factsheets and EU negotiating documents, disclosure of the negotiating mandate, and an all-round improved access to documents, are amongst the batch of changes that were put in place (see e.g. European Commission, 2014). Several of these provisions have been ‘codified’ (at least in principle) in the new trade strategy called ‘Trade for All’ (European Commission, 2015b), which is thus consolidating transparency practices for future agreements. Another toxic element of the deal, the investor-to-state-dispute-settlement (ISDS) mechanism, was so controversial it made the Commission abort talks on this chapter, start a public consultation and propose a new Investment Court System (ICS) to replace “old-ISDS” (European Commission, 2015a). It was furthermore forced to mitigate the scope of the horizontal regulatory cooperation chapter, which would have bestowed a Regulatory Cooperation Council with the power to adopt legal acts (De Ville & Siles-Brügge, 2015). Sectoral provisions on cosmetics that would have led to mutual recognition of lists of banned and authorized substances have been scaled downwards to “convergence of data requirements and scientific safety assessment methods”, a move welcomed by CSOs (Goyens, 2015).

It therefore seems that politicization has actual constraining effects (cfr. Hooghe & Marks, 2009). Developments in TTIP were (to some extent) influenced by public opinion, mobilization efforts and media reporting, which make up the most obvious forms of politicization. Further research on this process and its consequences therefore shifts our focus to politicization literature in order to explain and understand public policy changes in the trade field. These effects could even be more outspoken with regards to Member States (who still have a large role to play in trade policy) as the link between policy makers and constitutions (and thus electoral incentives) is bigger here than on European level.

Member State preferences

The added value of politicization literature is not confined to TTIP. If Member State positions and preferences in trade are to some extent influenced by societal politicization, the prospect of linking trade and politicization works retroactively as well. Niemann (2004), for example, claims that Spain was the only state opposing the Basic Telecom proposal in the late nineties because the issue was ‘domestically politicized’. Bollen (2016) correctly states that “there’s an entire world of politics contained in this sentence, but we do not get any insight in why this was so, or why Spain eventually yielded to the Commission’s pressure”. The explanatory value of our overarching trade models is to some extent ‘incomplete’ if we refuse to look at singular atoms (and how they work) and only at the molecule itself. Being able to explain why exactly Spain (and not any other Member State) is

‘domestically politicized’, and how this societal feature influenced its final position enriches our current models, and adds to our capacity to explain (and predict) trade policy movements.

Furthermore, even though the politicization effect may or may not be decisive in explaining Member State preferences – which merits additional research– we know very little about Member States’ preferences (formation) in trade policy. Bollen (2016) shows that the trade policy literature in general has largely neglected Member State positions or uses them only superficially, e.g. as part of a variable that determines the Council’s behavior. The general criticism that the trade literature has failed to look at Member State preferences and its formation (in which politicization possibly takes an important role) is not new (Adriaensen, 2014; Alons, 2013; Young, 2007). However, to date, this concern has not been thoroughly addressed. Meunier (2005), for example, acknowledges in her seminal work on ‘Trading Voices’ that ‘domestic preferences’ are clearly complementary to her institutional analysis, but she nevertheless focuses on the latter. Bollen (2016) explains why this is a problem and provides a broad research agenda, with a focus on deep, comparative and long-term research on the black box that is preference formation within Member States. If – but more importantly *how* – politicization played a role in trade preference formation at Member State level, is therefore an important question and (re)directs our attention to politicization studies when assessing trade policy.

2.3 Increasing importance

Trade policy in the past has not always been a very exciting and extravagant domain as it seems today. Most post-war trade conflicts centered around export-oriented and import-competing businesses striving for attention and influence on reciprocal tariff negotiations (Young, 2015). So even though (fierce) mobilization on trade did occur at some points, we expect to see this debate much more prominent in the future, both on EU and national level, for three reasons.

Firstly, EU trade policy is becoming increasingly authoritative and thus constitutive of our daily life. It has always been an exclusive competence of the EU vis-à-vis the Member States since the Treaty of Rome (1956) and there has been a continued spillover to the supranational level over the years (Devuyst, 2013). Trade authority is therefore a defining characteristic of the EU’s authority in general. The 1990s especially were a decisive moment (e.g. Maastricht Treaty, Single Market Program) especially for trade policy, with the conclusion of the WTO Uruguay Round and the establishment of the WTO (1994)³. Since then, services, investment, commercial aspects of IPR, and an increasing amount of behind-the-border tariffs (as resembled in TBT and SPS rules) have come onto the trade radar and are now subject to negotiation in multi-, pluri- and bilateral free trade arrangements (Young, 2006). Through trade, the EU is thus increasingly dealing with issues

³ Stephen Gill (1995) has pointed to this period as the “new constitutionalism” of neoliberalism. It was meant to reflect a growing institutionalization of neoliberal frameworks and policies into legal and quasi-legal agreements, insulating these policies from day-to-day democratic debate and decision-making (Dierckx, 2012).

that were exclusively domestic beforehand (the 'new trade politics'), which has imposed international constraints on domestic maneuvering space (ibid.).

As trade issues rub against these various aspects of domestic politics, citizens became increasingly aware that trade decisions taken on European level affect their lives (Meunier, 2005), which meant that European trade policy⁴ itself became more politicized (Hocking, 2004)⁵. Meunier (2005) explains this new-found political salience in parallel with an explosive combination of (i) the perceived democratic deficit in the EU; (ii) the traditional distorted interest representation in EU trade policy; and (iii) the Pandora's box of democratic legitimacy complaints opened up in Seattle (1999). Underlying was a rising authority that was not perceived as legitimate (both in trade and in the EU in general; cfr. Zürn et al., 2012). After the millennial turn, governments throughout the developed world started to recognize that trade policy could therefore no longer be a technocratic, behind-closed-doors policy, without input from civil society (Hocking, 2004).

A widely recognized effect of this changing nature of trade, is that an increasing amount of groups (such as NGOs, regulating agencies or legislators) have joined the debate (Hocking, 2004; Young, 2015; Young & Peterson, 2006). Whereas tariff negotiations (that took up the lion's share of FTAs in the past) were about reciprocal market access and diffuse benefits related to liberalization, negotiations on non-trade-barriers (NTBs) deal with (amongst others) rules, standards and procedures that could potentially have adverse consequences on trade activity (Young, 2006). These are intended to serve public policy objectives, but can to a certain extent be damaging for businesses that are engaged in foreign trade relations. The distribution of costs is thus different, and subsequent disputes (such as fights over TRIPs, dolphin-unfriendly tuna or reformulated gasoline) that were sparked by this trade-off triggered the attention of a multitude of (environmental, consumer, development) NGOs that are active on these fronts (Young, 2006). They feared a race-to-the-bottom in the wake of competitive deregulation to attract foreign investors (Vogel & Kagan, 2004). Once mobilized, these new trade actors often became pro-active later on, seeing trade rules not only as a threat, but also as a possible tool for realizing them (Young, 2006).

The underlying authoritative forces and legitimacy concerns have not evaporated over the years; on the contrary, the Lisbon Treaty (2009) enhanced the EU's trade authority vis-à-vis the Member States once again by supranationalizing previously mixed competences such as services, IPR, and above all foreign direct investment (see Van den Putte, De Ville, and Orbie (2014))⁶. This part of

⁴ National trade policy may or may not have been contested before supranationalizing several competences.

⁵ Even though this was actually what policy makers tried to avoid by delegating trade competence to the supranational level.

⁶ Before, Member States negotiated their own bilateral investment treaties, mainly to protect against unfair or uncompensated expropriation (Woolcock, 2010). It is interesting to investigate why this issue was not politicized when it was still a national (or mixed) competence.

the EU's increased authority – translated into the specific investor-to-state-dispute-settlement (ISDS) mechanism – has especially come into the spotlight during the TTIP negotiations. This is a symptom of the overall increasing authority of European FTAs. With TTIP, the expected rise in authority is greater than ever before, as there is now, for example, for the first time the push to institutionalize provisions of the (horizontal and vertical) regulatory cooperation chapters (European Commission, 2015c). In CETA, these provisions are all voluntary and come down to mere intentions that the parties 'endeavor' to commit themselves to (cfr. CETA, p. 396)⁷. At the same time, the negotiating partners are also no longer only developing countries, which makes the prospect of the EU as the dominant partner diminish, in favor of a situation where compromises have to be sought on the EU front as well. This all takes place in a period where Europe as such is already in the limelight, with the fallout of the financial crisis, euro crisis, refugee crisis and climate concerns all evolving in parallel to trade.

In sum, the EU's trade authority has risen over the previous decades, which has shifted more and more attention to the supranational level, as trade policy increasingly penetrated domains that were previously exclusively domestic policies. This authority drive shows no signs of diminishing in the future, as the far-reaching 'living agreement' prospect of TTIP could serve as a template for future bilateral and WTO negotiations (Beck, 2014). It could therefore be well expected that attention, mobilization and debate will not return to pre-TTIP levels. De-politicizing efforts are doomed to fail if they do not touch upon this basic rise in authority (cfr. De Wilde & Zürn, 2012; Flinders & Büller, 2006).

Secondly, the potential for trade to attract more and more public attention has been given an enormous boost in 2009 with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. Institutionally, the biggest change for European trade policy is the increased power of the European Parliament (EP) which now has veto power over trade agreements (Van den Putte et al. 2014; Kleimann (2011)). Contrary to unelected Commission officials and government personnel in the Council who are only accountable to the European citizens through a double-step relation, MEPs are directly accountable to constituents and thus have incentives to strive for reelection. Richardson (2012) notes that in the post-Lisbon era "the EP has proved receptive and has established itself as the guardian of vulnerable groups who oppose the conclusion of harmful FTAs". In an early assessment of the EP's new role, Van den Putte et al. (2014) concluded that MEPs generally support the EU's liberalization agenda, but are susceptible to special protectionist interests within this liberal framework. These "vulnerable groups" do not always have to be businesses however. The ACTA negotiations, for example, were struck down in a surprise and landmark move by the EP in 2012, most importantly because of civil rights mobilization and campaigning (Dür & Mateo, 2014).

⁷ The full CETA text is available here:
http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2014/september/tradoc_152806.pdf

Van den Putte, De Ville, and Orbie (2015) conclude that the legal and institutional changes that the Lisbon Treaty brought into place have yet to substantialize and be transformed into real power, yet the rejection of ACTA enhanced the EP's credibility as a veto actor and strengthened the influence of the EP in the other stages (preparation and negotiation) of trade negotiations in the future. With TTIP, this 'real power' is surfacing and the EP seems more aware of its revamped trade powers. This was exemplified in the attention given to a 'mere' resolution of the INTA committee containing recommendations for future acceptance of TTIP, which saw 13 other committees drafting opinions (European Parliament, 2015). The Commission has stated more than once that they will have to take Parliament's view into account. All this entails a learning process in which the involved institutions are looking for a new balance, but which will end up in a constellation where the EP's role vis-à-vis the Council and the Commission has (relatively) risen (Van den Putte et al., 2014)

The important thing to see is that the EP's increased role is a facilitator for several mechanisms related to societal politicization. Interest groups now have a new stage to lobby on trade policy; MEPs are in the spotlights (and no longer overlooked) when talking about trade issues; media sense the importance of these debates and bring them into the spotlight, which in this way inform public opinion; societal awareness gives an even bigger incentive for MEPs to take a stance, and for public interest groups to show that they are present (and on the look for support and financial resources); around the European Parliament, opinions are voiced, crystallized and furthered, in an attempt to influence trade policy. How these factors relate (and probably mutually reinforce each other) is not entirely clear, but the main conclusion is that the potential for contestation has expanded.

Thirdly, there may now be ingredients for a politicization 'feedback cycle' present. Increasing authority and the rising role of the main electoral European body are significant parts, of course, but there is more. A politicized issue such as TTIP engages a lot of people – citizens, activists, journalists politicians – who become aware and undergo learning processes about the EU, trade and the importance of both. This may make those people more susceptible or even willing to engage (or to have an opinion) on other (trade) issues⁸. Public responsiveness to policy output is furthermore expected exactly in those domains that have witnessed some extent of popular salience, which means that changes in salience (such as a hotly debated topic) can structure future responsiveness (Franklin & Wlezien, 1997). This subsequent 'mental shift' therefore provides fertile ground for future issues or procedures to become politicized as well. In the words of Schmitter (1969): "one could hypothesize that, given the above, there will be a shift in actor expectations and loyalty toward the new regional center" (p. 166).

Maybe more importantly, NGOs that have mobilized and built up expertise may permanently remain active in the trade field. In fact, civil society activism on TTIP has started with those NGOs that were already present and campaigning around the millennial turn (grouped around the

⁸ Or make them reject the debate and the EU outright. Nevertheless, this is 'better' than being unaware or having no opinion at all.

Seattle2Brussels network, De Ville & Siles-Brügge, 2015, p. 107). Trade activists now see TTIP as a new defining moment in civil society activism on trade (*ibid.*). This points to NGO networks and processes that reach further than one episode. Especially the linking of these so-called non-traditional NGOs (environmental, development, consumer, citizen groups) may prove to be essential in building ‘global activism’, no longer confined to one branch of criticism, but united in their push for another trade regime. It goes without saying that mass communication and transport improvements have made the sustainability of such networks and information spreading more durable and robust (Keck & Sikkink, 1999; Smythe & Smith, 2006).

Even though TTIP is certainly an extreme (and maybe unique) case, the issues under negotiation will be increasingly included in other bi- and multilateral fora as well. Potential consequences on trade polity (such as transparency changes, changing consultation practices, more involvement of national parliaments), politics, such as interest groups behaving differently according to issue salience (Culpepper, 2010; Salisbury, 1984; Schattschneider, 1960), or policy (Dür et al., 2015; Rauh, 2013) that result from this singular episode, could clear the road for potential mobilization or engagement in the future. In this sense, politicization leads to consequences that spur more politicization.

If the above logic holds, then what we witness is not only the politicization of TTIP, but a spike in the politicization of European trade policy or the EU in general. TTIP serves as a stepping stone for a bigger debate about European trade policy (and the powers of the EU in general), of which dynamics and consequences should not stop when TTIP is concluded (or rejected). The spike of attention that TTIP is now causing is itself the result of an interplay of variables, but on its own adds to a general layer of politicization of trade policy, or even the EU itself. Should global activism drop significantly after TTIP (such as we have seen during the mid-2000s⁹), it will be equally interesting to investigate what made up for the brake.

3 – Politicization: elements, manifestations and causes

Until now I have given several reasons why we should study TTIP and trade policy through politicization glasses. However, I have only given some very general definitions and showed that there are actually different processes or manifestations commonly associated with a ‘politicized’ issue or institution. This section therefore gives a selected overview of the general politicization literature and pinpoints identifying/operational elements, the interlinking of manifestations, longer-term causes and explanations for the (differentiated) picture.

⁹ This is partly attributed to the stalled Doha talks, and to the fact that many NGOs changed their position to being more ‘reformist’ rather than outright ‘rejectionist’ (Hopewell, 2015).

3.1 Operational elements

In the previous section some general definitions of societal politicization were presented that all in some way or another describe an evolution whereby the divide between, on the one hand, a publicly contested sphere of national politics and, on the other hand, the elite-driven game of international relations, is becoming increasingly blurred (Schmidtke, 2014; Zürn et al., 2012). Political sociologists or comparativists frequently use the concept to identify moves away from indifference or consensus with respect to decision-making processes in the EU (Green-Pedersen, 2012; Hooghe & Marks, 2009; Hutter & Grande, 2014), or regional integration exercises in general (Hurrelmann & Schneider, 2014). International Relations scholars (grouped around the work of Michael Zürn) see the EU as the most explicit case of politicization of international authority of international institutions (such as IMF, WTO, UN) (De Wilde, 2015). In this sense it refers to the situation where citizens and civil society increasingly become aware of the institution's relevance and voice questions on how much power such institutions should have.

Even though multiple definitions exist, there are several recurring elements in all of them. In the introduction to a special issue on politicization, De Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke (2015) distinguish four vital parts: a component of importance (actors perceive EU issues as increasingly important for their interests or values), a behavioral component (actors increase spending resources to influence or contest the EU), a preference component (diverging views with what the EU should or should not do) and a socialization component (more societal actors become aware of EU affairs and even start engaging with them). Several authors have subsequently conceptualized 'politicization' as a multi-dimensional concept, taking (some of) these four components into account with differing weight (Zürn, 2014; De Wilde, 2015). De Wilde et al. (2015) come to the conclusion that in recent studies these can be boiled down to: (i) growing salience, (ii) polarization of opinion, and (iii) an expansion of actors/audiences.

The first element, growing *salience*, literally means a rise in importance of the EU or its policy making (De Wilde et al., 2015; Epstein & Segal, 2000; Warntjen, 2012). This can manifest itself as a growing awareness of the existence of the EU, and then means a greater interest in and concern about decision-making processes, issues or institutions (Zürn, 2014). It is about visibility and the extent to which decision-making is "contemporaneously perceivable by the [...] public" (Rauh, 2011). It also manifests itself in the amount of public statements by political parties in national election campaigns (Wonka, 2015) or the number of parliamentary questions on EU issues. In mass media, it is discernable in the number of articles devoted to the EU or a specific policy.

Secondly, *actor or audience expansion* points to a greater amount of citizens, groups, politicians (in general: actors) who dedicate resources (such as time, money, expertise) to follow and engage with EU topics or to the European level in general. Again this may translate into different manifestations (Zürn, 2015): a passive audience expansion, with more individuals (with different characteristics) becoming interested and engaged in the issue; different types of collective actors

mobilizing and spending resources (Stuckatz, 2015); or an expansion of the contributors to a political debate, going wider than merely executive actors (Leupold, 2015).

Thirdly, *contestation or polarization* refers to conflicting views of the common good and opposing demands put to political institutions (Zürn, 2014). It has also been defined as taking a more extreme position, which involves a depletion of people without an opinion on the EU or a specific policy (De Wilde et al., 2015). Again this can be about different beliefs about an issue (or the EU) between citizens; or mobilized groups that take opposing positions; or a polarization of claims-making, often represented in mass media (Zürn, 2015)¹⁰.

3.2 Manifestations

What should be clear is that politicization is clearly *manifested* in different ways¹¹. In the classification above, for example, De Wilde et al. (2015) pinpoint the three operationalized elements, but refer to distinct ways in which these are expressed or researchable for scientists. Several authors have focused on politicization as manifested in public debates, stating that politicization is best dealt with as a discursive phenomenon and that it is not sufficient that people become aware, but that it becomes salient in political communication (Green-Pedersen, 2012; Hurrelmann & Schneider, 2014). This is a legitimate statement, but it is not only when something “appears often, if different opinions exist and if different social actors are involved” that we speak of politicization (Zürn, 2015). This interpretation is too focused and closely aligned with seeing politicization as a communicative effort that can only be assessed through mass media (ibid.)

Several authors therefore argue therefore to make explicit distinctions between these different *manifestations of politicization* (Baglioni & Hurrelmann, 2015; Zürn, 2015). The process or product of politicization (De Wilde, 2007) can be witnessed in (a) political *attitudes or beliefs*: rising awareness and interest in an issue, or recognition that an institution can make binding decisions; (b) political *activities*: increase of resources spent on influencing negotiations by e.g. interest groups or political parties; and (c) political *communication*: public debates with conflicting views of the common good and opposing demands put to political institutions¹².

The lion’s share of contemporaneous research on societal politicization has focused, as said, on political communication, and especially on content analysis of mass media (De Wilde, 2015; Baglioni & Hurrelmann, 2015). That is also why contemporary operationalization of the different elements (salience, actor expansion and polarization) are often expressed in mass media terms¹³.

¹⁰ For more info on the method of ‘claims-making analysis’, see De Wilde (2013).

¹¹ It should be noted that in the literature ‘domestic’ societal politicization is identified, instead of European politicization. If viewed from the ‘public debates’ viewpoint, Risse (2015), for example, argues that we cannot yet observe a European public sphere, but several ‘Europeanized’ national public spheres.

¹² The different manifestations could be said to be present at micro, meso or macro level (Zürn, 2015).

¹³ Salience is then, e.g., measured by the number and share of articles about an issue in an analyzed newspaper; for actor expansion claims are coded to check who is participating in debates; polarization is characterized by disagreement between (political) parties, visible in those articles. See Leupold (2015) for one example.

However, equating politicization with what is discussed in mass media seems to include unnecessary and exclude relevant things (Zürn, 2015). We therefore need to include different manifestations as a broader conception of politicization. Table 2 below is presented by Zürn (2015) to clarify the point.

	Salience	Contestation (polarization)	Expansion of actors
Micro (beliefs)	Importance relative to other issues or institutions	Different beliefs about the issue or the institution	Individuals with different traits (social status, sex, ethnic group etc.) see the issue or institution as important
Meso (mobilization)	Importance relative to other targets of mobilization	Mobilized groups stand for different positions	Many different types of groups mobilize
Macro (public debates)	Often mentioned in media (relative to other issues)	Polarization of statements/claims	Expansion of contributors to the debate

Table 2. Operational elements and different manifestations of politicization. Source: Zürn (2015)

These ‘levels’ taken together give a broader conception of “something” that is politicized, and specifically adds more nuance to a question that is otherwise answered by either “yes, we see ‘some’ politicization” or “no, apparently nothing is politicized here”. It can therefore occur that in some Member States there is politicization on the micro and meso level, but not discernable in public debates. The “full” or “empty” discussion (Baglioni & Hurrelmann, 2015) must therefore be left behind by giving this kind of broader overview of how the process of politicization manifests itself, which opens up new explanatory avenues.

This links back to the discussion of societal forces in TTIP of the previous chapter. The different manifestations of the politicization of TTIP, such as growing awareness among citizens, mobilization by civil/citizen groups or public debates, are all part and parcel of the same process (Zürn, 2015). So even though the specific links (such as media influence on public opinion) are useful, we should not treat them in isolation here. Zürn (2015) states that we especially need to know more about the role of interest groups and CSOs in the process of politicization, as this will make for thicker description of politicization trajectories.

3.3 Causes

Nowadays there seems to be consensus that “something like politicization has occurred since the mid-1980s” (Schmitter, 2009), yet the driving force and – importantly – how and why it is apparent in some Member States and not in others is still under debate. The contemporaneous literature

investigating the driving forces of politicization (Zürn et al., 2012; Schmidtke, 2014; Rixen & Zangl, 2012; Schmidtke, 2015) postulates several explanations (De Wilde, 2015), with increasing political authority as the most common claim (Schmidtke, 2015; Zürn et al., 2012).

In this *authority transfer hypothesis*, political authority is defined as prescriptions, rules and orders that are recognized as being collectively binding¹⁴. Increasing political authority means that, at some point, a level is reached where institutions can make collectively binding decisions on matters that were previously predominantly domestic jurisdiction (Cooper, Hawkins, Jacoby, & Nielson, 2008), so-called behind-the-border issues (Zürn, 2004). One can subsequently expect increasing awareness, more mobilization (against it, or for more use of it) and more public debates in mass media (Zürn et al. 2012). De Wilde and Zürn (2012) discern level (centralization and majoritarian decision-making powers (Börzel, 2005)), scope (breadth, increasingly in domestic politics) and inclusiveness (constituencies affected and how they can affect the institution) as central components of authority. The greater these elements, the larger the political authority a specific international institution has, which will – according to this strand – lead to increasing politicization as citizens are more frequently confronted with effects resulting from this decision-making (Schmidtke, 2014).

However, there is no one on one relationship between authority transfers and politicization. If this were true, we would see the same level of politicization in all Member States, since they are subject – more or less – to the same authority. Country-specific economic and socio-cultural characteristics are important mediating factors for the authority transfer to result in politicization (Schmidtke, 2015) and their explanatory power cannot be underestimated (De Wilde et al. 2015). Describing a singular ‘politicization of EU governance’ is therefore no longer tenable and should be replaced by a ‘differentiated politicization’ (De Wilde et al. 2015): “*differentiated forms, degrees and manifestations (...) depend on the time, setting and location in which it unfolds*”. They conclude that we need to take into account country-specific relationships with the EU, the varying political and economic systems and – very specifically – different windows of opportunity (such as elections, crises or referenda) (De Wilde & Zürn, 2012).

This range of intermediating variables is rather extensive, and how these fit into each other is the recent focus of scholarly literature on politicization (De Wilde, 2015; Zürn, 2015). Identity plays an important role, for example (Ecker-Ehrhardt, 2012). In this argument, “societal modernization” (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005) such as modern ICT and knowledge evolutions should facilitate citizens’ (intellectual) skills required to recognize global interdependencies, leading to a “cognitive mobilization” (Zürn et al. 2012) and making them more aware about international problems, thus leading to more public awareness and politicization (Schmidtke, 2014). The rise of public activism is thus conceptualized here as linked to cultural and technological advances in sustaining a

¹⁴ Two subtypes can further be discerned: one that focuses on accepting the right that someone makes collectively binding decisions; the other one focuses on accepting that international institutions can enforce these decision too (Zürn et al., 2012).

transnational civil society, that can mediate a variety of views across borders. In this view it is expected that politicization positively correlates with economic interdependence and the fundamental (global) civil society structure (and density, cfr. Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Rixen & Zangl, 2012). Vice versa, the identity variable also focuses on citizens holding an exclusive nationalist identity (Ecker-Ehrhardt, 2014; Hooghe & Marks, 2009). These people feel (threatened to be) left out with an ever larger connected and rapidly-moving world and are therefore extremely critical of integration steps that lead to more authority for supranational bodies. However, this is expected to be important only if right-wing parties ‘tap into’ these feelings (Green-Pedersen, 2012; Hoegliger, 2015)¹⁵. The political economy literature, furthermore, holds that individuals that expect to benefit from an authority transfer will support more integration, and vice versa (Eichenberg & Dalton, 2007). The distributive economic effects will thus shape the level of domestic societal politicization.

It is becoming increasingly clear that these hypotheses are somehow linked to each other. Authors have converged to seeing authority (especially centralized decision-making) as a driving factor (Rixen & Zangl, 2012; Schmidtke, 2014; Zürn et al. 2012; De Wilde & Zürn, 2012), conditioned by “cognitive mobilization” (Schmidtke, 2014), political opportunity structures (De Wilde & Zürn, 2012), perceived lack of legitimacy (Rauh, 2013) or distributive effects and national socio-cultural contexts that allow for country-specific timing, strength and direction (Schmidtke, 2015). These contributions do not challenge the authority transfer hypothesis, but are complementary to it (Zürn, 2015).

Again the overarching remarks by Michael Zürn are guiding here, as he points to two distinctions (see table 3). Firstly, he distinguishes between authority as the driving force, and mobilization resources and political opportunity structures as conditioning variables. Secondly, this distinction is useful both on Member State and European level. It is – in this logic – possible that Member States are all subject to a certain authority transfer, but that already on this overarching level, the potential for politicization increases when there are European elections, crises or transnational NGOs successfully campaigning on a certain issue¹⁶. Besides this common driver, country-specific exposure to authority (e.g. a membership debate in that country only), and national mobilization resources and political opportunity structures will dampen or enlarge domestic politicization.

¹⁵ Cfr. For example the ‘sleeping giant’ debate on EU integration (Van der Eijk & Franklin, 2001)

¹⁶ He argues, however, that the absence of “real competition” in EU elections, or successful transnationally mobilizing NGOs may hamper transnational politicization.

	Commonalities/Community level	Variance/National level
Authority	Authority transfer	Membership debates; Different affectedness
Mobilization resources and political opportunity structures	European elections; European-wide referendum; crises; NGOs; access to IOs	Party and cleavage structure; perceived economic costs; national referenda

Table 3. Types of explanatory factors of EU politicization, according to Zürn (2015).

In the previous section I already pointed to the presence and increasing relevance of authority as a driver of contestation, which is here supported by scholarly contributions. However, not only the role of authority, but especially the role of a wide array of intermediating factors that explain place-bound manifestations of politicization can be investigated in this framework as well. In the case of TTIP, for example, this directs us to analyze, amongst others: the presence of radical-right parties; the amount of people holding exclusively national identities (or the amount of people holding anti-Americanism or anti-free trade beliefs in general); the civil society structure in a given country (such as amount of NGOs working on trade, and their networks); political economy variables such openness to trade, dependence on trade, specific sector statistics that recall distributive effects of trade policy; or support for EU supranational policies in other domains.

3.4 Cycles and consequences

Figures that chronologically graph evolutions of EU politicization show a rising basic trend, with very periodical ups and downs (see figure 1). Intuitively it follows that even if an institution is becoming increasingly politicized, this will not persistently play out, nor will every policy output or part of the process be subject to close scrutiny and the same constraining powers. Several authors have pointed towards such a distinction between general politicization and a contemporaneous, time-bound, episode of politicization. Schmidtke (2014) elaborates on this by referring to Downs (1972) article on ‘attention cycles’. The cyclical nature observed, he argues, can be attributed to a more general feature of public debates: they are regularly characterized by episodes of non-attention and low issue salience and times of high attention and issue salience. Rauh (2013) also distinguishes convincingly between a general EU politicization trend and contemporaneous public salience of specific issues at stake. De Wilde (2011) furthermore states that issue politicization is very time and space specific that can ignite in certain Member States, but die a quick death quickly after, a phenomenon dubbed elsewhere as ‘episodes of contention’ (McAdam et al., 2009).

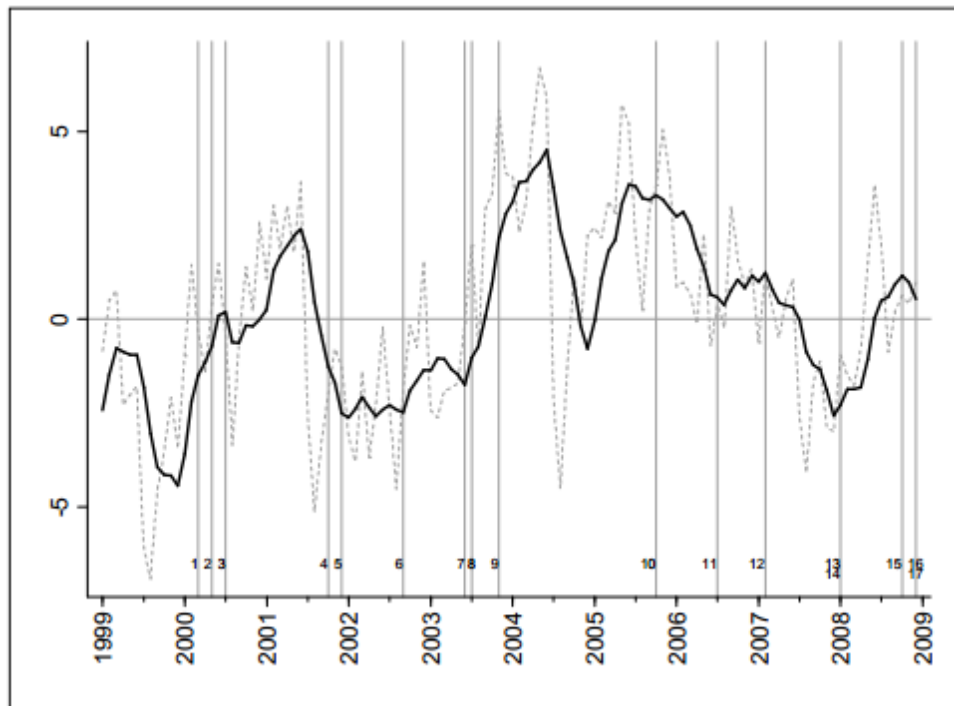


Figure 1. Relative EU politicization: linear trend with spikes. Source: Rauh (2013).

These various authors have different conceptions of this contemporaneous element, with some labelling it salience (Schmidtke, 2014; Rauh, 2013) and others ‘politicization’ (De Wilde, 2011). Nevertheless, some distinction between a general politicization and a short-term component is apparent. Rauh (2013) developed a model to account for both (see figure 2). The logic is that (domestic) societal politicization of EU integration incentivizes the Commission to think about public interests when developing policy, but this link is mediated by the salience of the specific issue. So even though the EU is becoming increasingly politicized, it is only when the Commission reasonably assumes the issue is salient (or politicized; depending on how you conceptualize this) for the public that it will ponder to take public interests into account. If this is the case, the public’s evaluation of the particular issue feeds back into the general political evaluation of the EU (Rauh, 2013).

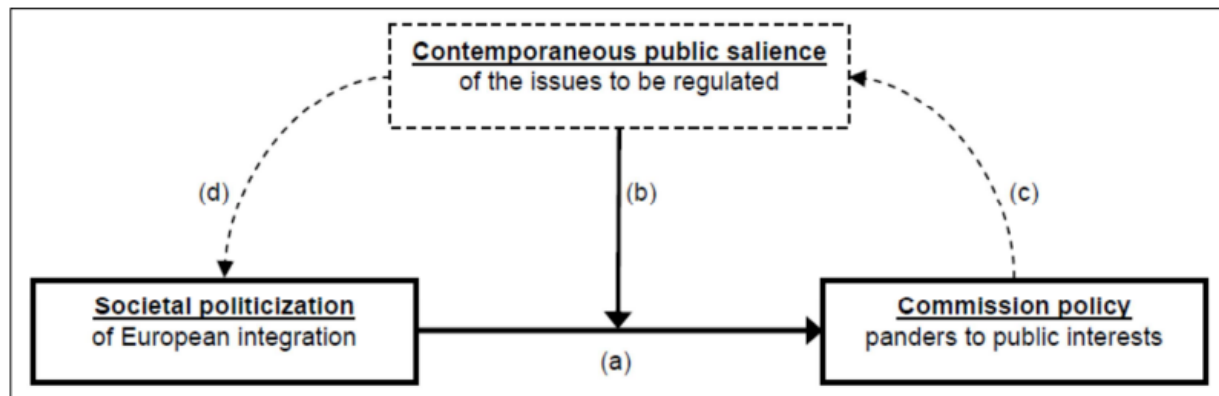


Figure 2. Theoretical model of politicization and public salience, according to Rauh (2013).

Rauh's (2013) framework first of all supports the idea that politicization has constraining consequences, as described in TTIP in paragraph 2.2. He showed that in times of both high politicization and high public salience, the Commission was responsive to interventionist measures in consumer policy. In the broader area of International Relations, Zürn (2014) also hypothesizes that politicized international institutions will less likely be captured by special interests and will at the same time be more responsive to societal demands than in the case of 'executive multilateralism' (Zürn, 2004)¹⁷. Even more general, politicization leads to deeper, fundamental questions about the legitimacy of the institution who produces the output (Statham & Trenz, 2015), which could drive dynamics to changes in polity, politics and even policy. Research on the consequences of politicization is very scarce, and is therefore an important avenue to pursue.

Figure 2 furthermore adds to our understanding of a certain feedback cycle (see part 2.3), which makes it increasingly relevant to study politicization in trade. The politicization of a specific issue involves more people or collective actors that were previously unaware of the specific case, and even sensitizes them to the importance of this governance layer in general. If the Commission responds to this contestation (with changes in politics, polity or policy), this could increase the politicization of the EU itself. A rising general politicization of the EU (or of a specific field) increases the *potential* that international institutions and their output will make it to citizens or interest groups' radar (probably in those domains where it has the most power/authority, exclusive competences), and so forth. De Wilde (2011) argues in this respect that particular episodes of contention "stack up and overlap" which points to "trends in the politicization of European integration" (p. 563), even if periods of 'discursive calm' are present between democratic moments such as elections or referendums (De Wilde & Lord, 2015). The "(...) nature of conflict and the arguments made during such periods have lasting effects on the public discourse about Europe in the member states in question (De Wilde, Michailidou, & Trenz, 2013).

¹⁷ This refers to a decision-making mode in which governmental representatives coordinate their policies internationally, with little national parliamentary control and away from public scrutiny.

Concluding this section, it seems that the literature on general EU politicization processes has much to offer for our understanding of TTIP and trade policy, and we should start to investigate its links. However, this section showed as well that – partly due to the relatively recent nature of this literature domain – several concepts, links and deeper understanding of politicization are still not entirely clear-cut. Because of this, the argument that research on trade could benefit from politicization literature, can be reversed as well. Trade policy should even be a most likely case for politicization to occur, as it is one of the most authoritative domains in the EU. Another one, monetary policy, has already been subject to several politicization studies (Leupold, 2015; Statham & Trenz, 2015; Wonka, 2015). These fields should offer the best prospects of investigating the links between longer- and short-term spikes, and authority and mediating variables. Secondly, it is often heard that longer-term uneasiness with several criticisms of the EU are crystallized in the TTIP debate. This includes the (perceived) power of and lawmaking for big business, secrecy of decision-making, lack of transparency and democratic channels to voice opinions, and fears connected to neoliberal policies that would undermine domestic rules and standards. If only part of the opposition is directed towards the EU itself instead of just TTIP, this ‘case study’ adds to a more general understanding of politicization of the EU, which is – as argued in the seminal paper by (Mair, 2007) – not susceptible to ‘organized criticism’ on a supranational level.

4 – Conclusion

Through TTIP, European trade policy has become politicized. In this paper I argue that we need to explicitly link the scholarly domains of trade and politicization in order to explain the current highly-controversial topic of Transatlantic trade negotiations in several respects. Both the interlocking societal forces between public opinion, interest group activity, media and political activity, and the differentiated picture of politicization throughout Europe, merit a broader understanding of this episode. The concept and literature on *domestic societal politicization* proves to be a fruitful addition for this endeavor. Furthermore, the Commission – aware of the polarized debate – has started to shift its policy on some crucial elements of the deal, which shows that even technocratic actors are to some extent susceptible to flaring societal demands. This in itself is another reason why we should focus on the consequences of this concept. Lastly, I also argue that the link between both fields will become increasingly relevant to take into account, as the ever-increasing authority of European trade policy, and the renewed active role of the European Parliament in trade, provide the necessary ingredients for longer-term feedback cycles that permanently direct attention to this supranational level that has a profound impact on our daily lives.

Throughout the paper I have given pointers to how further research should continue. In essence, I see three broad components of this agenda. First, attention should shift to *description*. Besides some preliminary accounts, there is no thorough mapping and measurement of politicization in

TTIP (nor trade in general). In line with the different manifestations of politicization, this should primarily focus on the mobilization of civil society actors (type, positions, activities), the involvement of politicians (European and national), citizen awareness (through surveys or focus groups) and these trends and differences between Member States and between actors. Secondly, those politicization dynamics merit *explanation*: why does politicization occur more in some Member State than in others? This analysis should be guided by content analysis of the TTIP negotiations and semi-structured interviews with decision-makers and civil society organizations, which could result in a QCA-analysis of the necessary and sufficient determinants to explain debates/mobilization/awareness of TTIP in a particular Member States. Thirdly, the more durable *consequences* of this episode on the short and longer term should be explored. This involves possible changes in organization/polity (involvement of governments/parliaments, transparency and consultation practices, increasing NGO capacity/resources), politics (changing trade lobby behavior) or policy.

In the end, this research also adds to more normative questions in trade policy, as opinions about the effects and desirability of politicization for this field differ. Some authors have long called for more discussion and spirited debate about EU trade, which would enhance the democratic legitimacy of the field (e.g. Devuyst, 2013). Others are more cautious about the effects, as it could lead to simplistic discussions in what is unavoidably a technical area, with negative consequences for trade policy's effectiveness and efficiency (Meunier, 2003). The profoundness of this dilemma is exemplified in the TTIP debate, so we should no longer hesitate to incorporate politicization concepts into the study of trade policy.

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