

Why the Excitement? Values, Identities, and the Politicization of EU Trade Policy in America



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Large Scale Opposition


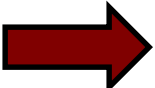



“I could never have imagined it. That an economic and trade agreement between the EU and Canada could turn into a soap opera involving a small region of Belgium. Yet that’s what happened: for two weeks, a four-letter word, Ceta, resonated on factory floors and offices, in homes, schools and cafes the length and breadth of Wallonia, the region I have the privilege to be president of, as our parliament delayed the deal ... That such an obscure topic as an economic and trade agreement should be the subject of such popular debate and controversy is a phenomenon in itself.”

-- Paul Magnette, Minister-President of Belgium’s Wallonia, *The Guardian* 2016

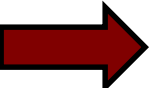
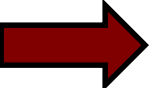
Existing Explanations

2007 Lisbon Treaty Institutional Changes

-  Reconfiguration of the key driving principles that the EU should honor when pursuing external trade
 -  Transfer of authority on essentially all external trade matters from the member states to the EU
 -  Bigger EU Parliament role
- Cannot explain why TTIP and CETA but not others (Mercosur, etc.)

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MLG and Competencies

-  MLG and resulting discontent leveraging
 -  Increased competencies of the EU
- Paint with too broad a brush

The Argument: Economic Sociology, Identities & Values

For economic sociologists, economic exchanges never occur in a void; instead, they are always 'embedded' in cultural contexts. In particular, the goods and services being traded reflect and assert shared understandings of the world. As such, they are always 'more' than their technical specifications ...



Trade agreements require definitional and normative assertions: *values and identities*

Their content can therefore be very sensitive and explosive, especially if trading partners are close peers or competitors ... then, they acquire significant symbolic importance ...

... This is precisely what has happened with TTIP and CETA

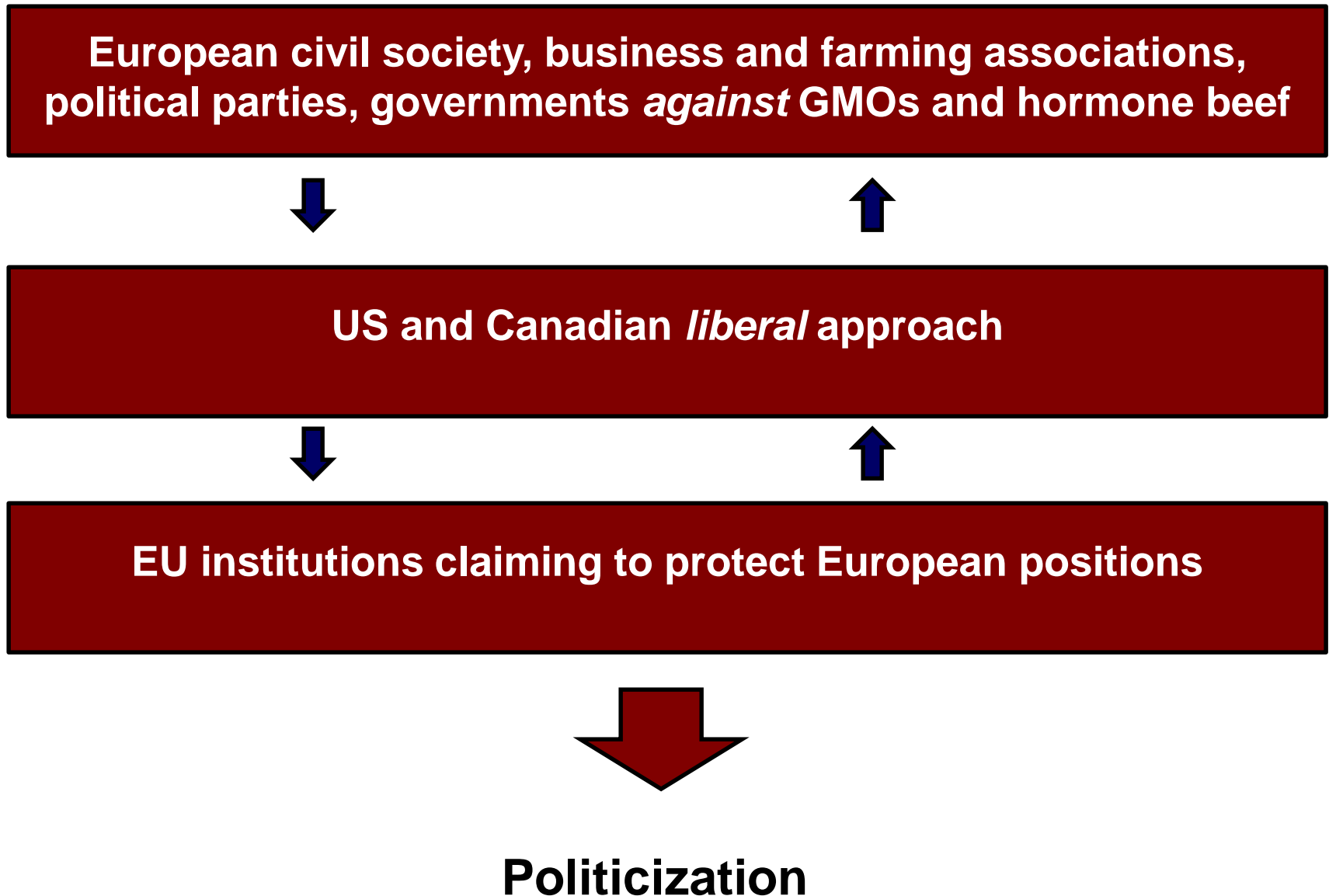
The Argument (continued)

TTIP and CETA have become politicized precisely because at stake *in* their highly technical issues have been key *fundamental values and identities of the EU and its member states as they face divergent worldviews from the United States and Canada*. The conflict has thus been, at one level, about certain technical regulations regarding objects, services, and specific sorts of actors but, with that, it has also been about what lies *behind*, or more precisely *within*, those regulations: what those regulations affirm about Europe and its traditions, citizens, and culture; what they indicate about the United States and Canada; what they say about the relationship between business interests and established ways of living; and what they say about the EU and its member states. Put differently, the specific technical material of TTIP and CETA has held great symbolic significance, and that significance has become the primary material of the politicization process. Key actors - from the EU to non-governmental organizations, national parties, member state governments, certain business associations, and other entities - have thus reacted and sought to influence those negotiations and agreements.

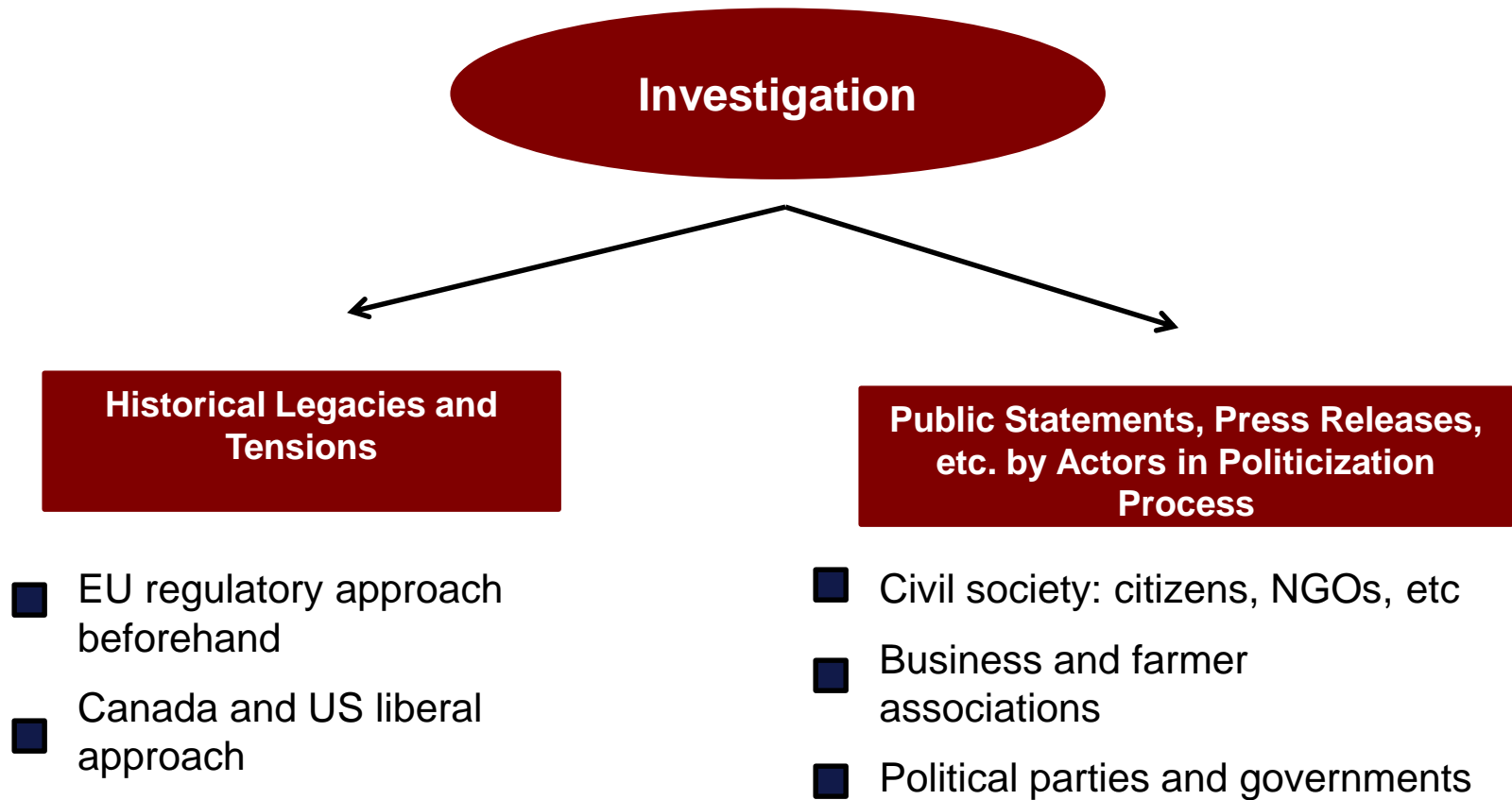
... This argument is in line with literature on sociology's contribution to IPE ... Sociologists "often emphasize that norms and ideas of various sorts ... shape the behavior of actors ... one of sociology's most original contributions to the IPE literature is to offer normative and ideational ... explanations" (Campbell 2009: 260).

Campbell, John L. 2009. "What Do Sociologists Bring to International Political Economy?" Pp. 260-73 in *Routledge Handbook of International Political Economy*, edited by Mark Blyth. London: Routledge.

Specific Points of Contention: GMOs and Hormone Beef



Methodology



GMOs and Hormone Beef Stances: Historical Roots

| | Regulatory Approach | Outcomes |
|---------------|---|--|
| EU | <p>‘Precautionary’ principle for GMOs prioritizing consumer & environmental health: use allowed if proven harmless (Bernauer, 2003; Vogel, 2003; Scholderer, 2005)</p> <p>Complex GMO approval process involving the European Food Safety Agency, member states, and Commission’s Appeal Committee</p> <p>For hormone beef, protection of animal welfare, food quality, consumer health and safety (Johnson 2015)</p> | <p>Only 58 GMOs approved for use; only 1 approved for cultivation</p> <p>As of 2001, indefinite moratorium on GMO approvals (European Parliament, 2015)</p> <p>As of 2015, member states (a) can ban cultivation of any GMO, (b) have final say on which GMO are sold in own territory (Geelhoed, 2016)</p> <p>As of 1989, ban on all importation and production of hormone (natural or synthetic) treated meat (Kerr and Hobbs, 2002; Vogel 2003)</p> |
| North America | Market prioritization, with GMOs and hormone-fed beef regulated as any other food product | Liberal use of GMOs and hormones in food supply chain |

The Logic of Civil, Farming, and Political Opposition

Civil society, small business groups, political parties, farmers' association, and others have mobilized because they have seen in TTIP and CETA fundamental challenges to what they hold dear and to their understandings of self. ***Will Europe's appreciation for food quality and traditions, consumer health, and animal welfare be squashed by the interests of multinational corporations from the United States and Canada, their governments, and a general neoliberal culture of capitalism?*** Suspicious of the EU's intentions and willingness to represent its citizens, a huge number of European actors have sought to oppose, often with great emotion, TTIP and CETA.

The EU Commission has accordingly responded by embarking on a public campaign to reassure its citizens of its commitment to what they hold dear.

Canada and the US have accused Europe (the EU, civil society, etc.) of being unscientific, protectionist, and too traditionalist

The language has been about civilizational differences, divergent perspectives on what is important, hierarchies of worth, fundamental choices about how to live, and visions of self and others.

Reflection Points

- More specificity on the conditions under which a trade deal becomes politicized: the importance of the partners involved, anteceding or coexisting factors.
- Directionality: we saw that the EU was reactive in the politicization cycle ... might there be instances when official bureaucratic bodies in charge of the negotiations themselves politicize them? If so, when can we expect them to do so? What 'orders' of contention are there?
- Power differentials: more clarity is needed on power differentials among the actors involved in the politicization process. Resources, networks, institutional placements, and other factors likely affect the ability of any one player to influence the specific content and direction of politicization.