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The Eurozone Crisis Seen From the Periphery

The ongoing crisis of the eurozone is often narrated as a high-political power play among EU governments, with Germany leading the fray and imposing its preferred austerity-based solutions. The last issue of the EUSA Review Forum discussed whether this meant the return of a "German problem" in Europe. In this issue of the EUSA Review, we continue to take stock of this major EU crisis. This time, however, four scholars take the perspective of struggling countries in the periphery of Europe – Greece, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain.

What is going on in these countries is especially interesting because they have shouldered the heaviest burden of adjustment so far. Austerity is the name of the game, with its painful implications – slashed government expenditures, higher taxes, and recession. Yet other member states are not at all immune from such predicament. Last summer, Italy became the latest victim of the eurozone crisis. The European Central Bank's recent decision to inject massive liquidities in the form of three-year loans to eurozone banks seems to have stemmed the crisis -- at least for now. But unless the contagion is stopped, the list of struggling countries may still grow, extending perhaps even to France and to other core EU member states. How the peripheral countries have fared in the crisis is therefore a harbinger of Europe's fate. Government and popular responses to the crisis will determine the fate of the euro and, more broadly, will have a profound impact on national and European politics for the foreseeable future.

What exactly has changed since 2009, and what does it bode for future political attitudes and government policies? According to Kevin Featherstone, the Greek people are torn between their "pride in a shared (European) identity" and their resentment against EU-imposed austerity; social conflicts are on the rise, however, as well as "social and political alienation". More surprisingly perhaps, Brigid Laffan writes that the Irish responded have responded "with forbearance rather than resistance"; they have broadly supported the government's attempt to restore its creditworthiness through austerity. In Portugal, according to Francisco Torres, the most widespread sentiment is that there is no alternative to austerity; many also think that externally imposed adjustment may be good for Portugal in the long run. As for Spain, Kenneth Dubin concedes that it is "no longer a hotbed of unconditional Euroenthusiasm, but it is hardly a nation of Euroskeptics"; the Spaniards continue to positively associate Europe with modernity and democracy. Altogether, these contributions underscore the remarkable resilience of peripheral countries that have been caught in the vortex of the euro crisis. Yet they also point out the looming danger of popular backlash and the possible turn to extremist politics if painful adjustment programs continue indefinitely.

Nicolas Jabko
EUSA Review Editor

Greece: penetrated, bound and committed

Kevin Featherstone

'Europe' and 'Europeanness' have long been important référentiels in modern Greece. They have helped to define identity and modernity. As such, they have provided a base for legitimation, but also of calibrating the capability of state institutions. Europe has been a paradox for Greece: pride in a shared identity, mixed with angst over the domestic failure to 'keep up' with Europe's core. Thus, many of the questions posed by the sovereign debt crisis that emerged in Greece in 2009 fit into an established historical pattern.

The crisis has brought several systemic features into sharper relief. In the bigger picture, EU membership has not served to strengthen the domestic state, as liberal intergovernmentalism assumes. Instead, it has been penetrated and made vulnerable: denuded of its established protection and patronage, its technocratic shortcomings have been exposed. Thus, suggestions that the executive branch of government has been empowered need to be tempered: not only can its failings appear insuperable; Greek negotiators typically enter EU negotiations as policy-takers, marginal to overall outcomes, left to justify them at home. These conditions held well before the crisis, but now they are more acute. Not sufficiently understood outside Greece is the extent of the creditor intervention into the basic operation of the state administration. A 'Troika' office has been established in Athens to represent the interests of those bailing-out Greece since May 2010, to check that the 'Memorandum' conditions are being met. Composed of officials from the EU Commission, the ECB, and the IMF, its monitoring across ministries is unprecedented and poses both normative questions and issues of capability for the EU institutions (the IMF is well-seasoned in this kind of role).

The public response has been mixed. Polls in late 2011 showed strong majorities opposed to the austerity measures. This is not surprising: austerity has deepened every few months in a climate of great uncertainty. By 2013, Greece will be in its fifth consecutive year of recession. Public sector workers have seen across the board salary cuts and lay-offs into a 'labour reserve' with the prospect of redundancy. Stereotypes of Greeks as lazy are unfounded – Greeks and Austrians work 43.7 hours per week on average, more than the rest of the EU (The Guardian, 8 December 2011). The problem is one of productivity, which raises wider issues. Some 40% of young people are unemployed. The impact on Greece's social fabric is profound. Mass protests – and riots – in Athens' central square have been broadcast around the world, as was a 'Madrid-type' camp - a hotchpotch of protestors: unrepresentative, but ready for interviewing.

Despite all of this, a December 2011 poll showed

70% supporting continued membership of the euro-zone. Only the political fringes talk of exit. There has been no surge in euro-scepticism.

Politically, Premier George Papandreou – elected before the crisis in October 2009 – was forced to resign last December. His government had gone through hell. The main opposition leader, Antonis Samaras, was accused of opportunism in repeatedly refusing to back the euro-zone bailouts. To address the legitimacy issue, Papandreou proposed a referendum on the latest European Council measures. The initiative was botched and he was forced to resign. Samaras agreed to back the euro-deal on condition that a short-term technocratic prime minister was appointed to head an inter-party coalition. Lucas Papademos, a former Vice President of the ECB, was put in a much more precarious position as PM than Mario Monti in Italy. The inter-party deal assumes elections in the early spring of 2012. However, recent polls show no party likely to win a parliamentary majority. Papademos may be given a new mandate. 2012 is likely to be a period of political instability, with the political extremes benefitting but no strong leader emerging. Although the Greek political elite is criticized for the accumulation of state failures, it has not yet faced its 'Tagentopoli' moment.

The Greek case reminds us of the importance of centre-periphery differences within the EU and the challenge of managing a heterogeneous currency union with near-failing states. These conditions ought to have prompted an economic union at Maastricht. But the case also warns of the dangers of the EU imposing unremitting austerity: social and political alienation, when growth is a shared interest. What was 'Europe' for, again?

Kevin Featherstone, London School of Economics

Ireland: From Boom to Bubble to Bust

Brigid Laffan

Irish society has lived with the financial crisis for more than three years. On the 28th of September 2008 the then Irish Government guaranteed the vast bulk of bank liabilities without knowing the extent of the toxic assets in those banks. Ireland's problems were not caused by an excess of sovereign debt. In socialising the liabilities of the banks, the Government undermined its own fiscal standing. Nor did Ireland wait for the imposition of austerity from outside. In April 2009, the government introduced an emergency budget, the first in a series of austerity budgets that will continue to 2014. Prior to the bailout, Ireland experienced a 21% decline in GDP by 2010 from its peak in 2007. The collapse was too great for Ireland to cope with. An outflow of capital, reliance on the ECB for liquidity and widening spreads made the November 2010 rescue inevitable. It would be impossible to overstate the deep shock this has caused. The Irish state, even when poor, was always able to fund itself and never defaulted in its history.

On the face of it, Irish society has responded to what has happened with forbearance rather than resistance. The strikes and civil unrest that have characterised reactions in other countries is strangely absent in Ireland. An anti-austerity march on October 22, 2011 could only muster 2,000 participants. It would be wrong to interpret this as an absence of deep anger. In February 2011, when the Irish electorate was afforded an opportunity to pass judgement on the then Government, it reduced the once dominant ruling political party, Fianna Fáil, to 20 seats in parliament and only one seat in the greater Dublin area. It was an earthquake election.

It is difficult to assess the impact of the crisis on relations between Ireland and the EU as the programme requires a further 15 billion euros of austerity measures by 2014. There are multiple negative feedback loops across the Eurozone member states. The Irish public and elite opinion reacted very negatively to the punitive interest rates that were initially charged on the loans. There remains widespread opposition to the ECB's insistence that Ireland repay all bondholders even those not covered by a legal guarantee. November brought a sharp reminder of the loss of sovereignty when a Bundestag Committee saw projections of the 2012 Irish budget before the Irish parliament did. Equity is also a concern in public debate. Greece got a haircut on its debt while Irish taxpayers are expected to continue to shoulder a heavy debt burden that helped avoid an implosion of Europe's financial system. So far, a majority (46%) of the Irish electorate believe that Ireland should continue to comply with the terms of the bailout although a sizeable minority (30%) disagree and 20% expressed no view. Britain's veto of treaty reform has done the Irish government a service because it reduces the need for a referendum on the intergovernmental treaty that is now in prospect. Polls suggest that a referendum would not be carried. A decision on whether or not a referendum is required will be taken after the treaty format has been decided.

Ireland is the best performing of the programme countries. Competitiveness and growth have returned driven by a booming export sector and a reduction in unit labour costs. However, unemployment is rising (14.6%), emigration has accelerated and the domestic economy continues to decline. If the bailout strategy does not work in Ireland, it will not work in the other peripheral countries. Ireland may however be overwhelmed again if conditions in the wider Eurozone continue to deteriorate.

The Irish Government has decided to play a long game. It favours enhanced economic governance in the euro zone but put the sustainability of Irish debt on the table at the December 2011 European Council. Essentially the aim is to re-work the Irish debt burden over a longer time frame and at reduced interest rates. It is not in Ireland's interests to default as a sovereign given its reliance on inward investment and exports. Whatever bargaining chips Ireland holds will be used with care to facilitate a re-entry into the bond markets. A state that cannot fund itself is no longer interdependent in the EU but dependent on it. Ireland joined the EU to escape dependence.

As long as the situation in Europe remains unstable, the Irish Government has to navigate the pressures emanating from the domestic and the EU. Just how long any Government can manage sustained austerity is difficult to judge. There may well be a tipping point into social unrest but so far, the Irish Government, economy and society have displayed considerable resilience.

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Portugal: a Chance to Implement Previously Adopted Objectives

Francisco Torres

In spite of the harsh adjustment programme, Portugal has not been turning against the EU nor is it focusing on any renegotiation strategy. There is a relatively broad understanding that the adjustment programme, irrespective of other developments in the Eurozone, is the only way of returning to a sustainable development path. The country's financial position has been fragile, with accumulated external imbalances, and high risks associated with the costs of servicing the (largely externally held) debt. Therefore, it was essential for the government to credibly pre-commit to medium-term budgetary objectives with accelerated corrective measures in the face of the 2009 fiscal overrun. However, fiscal policy remained inadequately expansive in the run-up to the general elections in autumn 2009. As a result, the ratio of government deficit to GDP jumped from 3.6% in 2008 to 10.1% in 2009 and 9.8% in 2010.

In March 2011, the national parliament rejected the government's austerity programme, which triggered the fall of the incumbent Socialist government and was followed by Portugal's request of financial assistance. The caretaker Portuguese government signed a Memorandum of Understanding on specific economic policy conditionality and a Loan Agreement before the June general elections, with the formal consent of the two main opposition centre-right parties, PSD and CDS.

The election resulted in a new government led by a PSD-CDS coalition. Yet, the main opposition party, the PS, had supported the outgoing government that signed the MoU and maintained a relatively cooperative role. Portugal's economic and financial adjustment programme was tabled for the period 2011 to mid-2014, including "structural reforms to boost potential growth, create jobs, and improve competitiveness; a fiscal consolidation strategy, supported by structural fiscal measures and better fiscal control over public-private-partnerships and state-owned enterprises, aimed at putting the gross public debt-to-GDP ratio on a firm downward path in the medium term and reducing the deficit below 3 % of GDP by 2013; a financial sector strategy based on recapitalisation and deleveraging, with efforts to safeguard the financial sector against disorderly deleveraging through market based mechanisms supported by backstop facilities" (EU Council decision of 17 May 2011).

According to the Second Review Mission to Portugal by the EC, ECB, and IMF (MEMO/11/793, 16/11/2011), the implementation of the 2011 budget got off to a good start. On the expenditure side, the measures included an average cut of 5% in government wages, reductions in government payroll lists, cuts in social transfers, and a freeze of essentially all other social outlays. Measures have also been aimed at gaining control on spending, in particular in the health and public sectors. Consolidation efforts on the revenue side consisted mainly of a 2 percentage-point increase in the standard VAT rate in January 2011.

Spending overruns led the government to resort to extraordinary measures in 2011, which will lower the government deficit to 4%, significantly below the target of 5.9. The deficit for 2012 remains under upward pressure. The EU-IMF mission's assessment is that the fiscal target of 4.5% of GDP can be met. But this will be achieved through a reduction of public sector wages and pensions, with the elimination of 2 out of 14 annual payments for those earning more than 1100 euros, a measure whose constitutionality has been challenged.

The government has been criticized by the minority left parties in parliament for being 'too obedient to the German Diktat'. Yet, it has stood rather firmly by its commitments, stressing the broad parliamentary consensus behind its austerity programme and its determination in pursuing all of the agreed objectives. So far, there is however no consensus to enshrine a debt brake in the constitution. Trade unions have been protesting against labour market reform and austerity. But these protests have not crystallized major conflicts or had a lasting impact, except for one-off strikes primarily affecting the public and transportation sectors. There is no strongly negative popular sentiment towards the EU. The public perceives the sheer magnitude of the crisis and the need to tackle the accumulated imbalances and the financing problems of the Portuguese economy. Political and social tensions have not been particularly high either. In fact, the curbing of unjustified and decades-long rent-seeking, privileges, and mismanagement – especially in local and regional government, in the health sector and in the public sector – may lead to increased public scrutiny and transparency. It could also perhaps contribute to a better redistribution of income, which has been one of the worst in the EU.

Portugal typically tends to carry out reforms in times of crisis, when there is external pressure. Budgetary consolidation and structural reform are now being implemented thanks to market pressure and EU/IMF conditionality. Portugal has committed itself to fiscal adjustment and structural reform. It is still early to tell whether the current adjustment programme will succeed. It depends both on the country's capacity to push reforms through a period of negative growth and high unemployment (forecast to approach 14 per cent in 2013) and on how the eurozone will handle its overall institutional challenges.

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Spain: Europe is Still the Answer

Kenneth A. Dubin

After more than a decade of strong economic growth (or, if one prefers, a mirage of brick and mortar) from the mid-1990s through mid-2007, Spaniards were among the most enthusiastic European citizens. In spring 2007, 73% declared that EU membership was generally a good thing, more than twenty points higher than Greeks, Italians or Portuguese. During 2010, with unemployment spiraling toward 20% and the markets turning on Spanish debt, confidence in the EU's ability to solve the crisis declined by 23% in just six months, the most precipitous decline in Europe. In 2007, 65% said they tended to trust EU institutions; by spring 2011, that figure was only 39% (about the EU-27 average). More troubling, still, is the steadily declining number who believe that EU membership has been beneficial for their country, from 75% in spring 2007 to only 39% (2 points below the EU-27 average) in spring 2011. Only 48% of Spaniards (74% in 2007) are optimistic about the EU's future.

Confidence in national political institutions has declined even further, however. Less than a quarter say they tend to trust their national parliament or government. While about 50% find corruption to be relatively common at the EU level, more than 70% believe it to be widespread in national, regional and local politics. Not surprisingly, then, Spaniards overwhelmingly support EU-level solutions to a range of economic challenges in significantly higher numbers than do their counterparts in Greece, Italy and Portugal. In November 2011, 63% of Spaniards continued to support the euro. Spain may no longer be a hotbed of unconditional Euroenthusiasm, but it is hardly a nation of Euroskeptics.

Spaniards' continuing support for the European project is grounded in a collective belief that Europe is central to the twin national projects of modernization—economic, political and social—and democratization. Spaniards were more likely than any other EU citizens to choose the words "modern" and "democratic" to describe the EU project. Over the last half of the twentieth century, overwhelming majorities on both the Left and the Right came to believe that European integration was the key to Spain's flight from backwardness and fratricidal conflict.

Does the Popular Party's (PP) absolute majority in November's general election thus mean an overwhelming, if reluctant endorsement for the ECB-German austerity recipe to be administered by Luis de Guindos, the new minister of Economics Affairs and former head of Lehman Brothers in Spain and Portugal?

At first glance, one might conclude that the PP's absolute majority means that the indignados movement has had little real impact on Spanish politics. However, it is important to remember that this multitudinous rejection of austerity attracted the interest of approximately 75% of Spaniards; of these, some 70% saw the movement as positive or mostly positive. In truth, the depth of the PP's mandate is questionable. The PP secured 10,866,566 votes (44.62%), increasing their vote total by only 588,556 versus the 2008 elections (422,769 fewer votes than the Socialists received in 2008). The Socialists, meanwhile, lost almost 4.3 million votes compared with 2008 and obtained only 110 seats in the Congress of Deputies, their worst showing since the Transition to democracy. Abstention increased five points, from 26.1-31.1% of the electorate and support for third parties also increased significantly. In other words, the real story of these elections was the Socialists' collapse and not the PP's dominance.

Eurobarometer data reveals that Spaniards are among the least informed Europeans. Their historically strong support for the EU is grounded in an idea of Europe that casts political and economic integration as the solution to the country's historical defects and contemporary foibles; for most Spaniards, dissatisfaction with specific European policies (when they are aware of them) provokes little more than grumbles, as uniquely Spanish solutions are viewed as potentially far worse. As a consequence, even if the deepening of austerity imposed by the PP is a response to demands from other EU member states and EU institutions, should austerity make matters worse in Spain, then the PP, not the EU, will be the central object of citizens' ire. Social conflict in Spain may well increase significantly in the near future; the EU however, enjoys sufficient goodwill in Spain to remain largely above the fray.

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EU and the Developing World Interest Section

The EU in Africa: managing the rise of China

Daniela Sicurelli

When the first Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation took place in Beijing, in 2000, it was clear for ministers of both sides that the interests of China on Africa were growing exponentially. China was increasing its presence in Africa through trade, direct investments, low-interest loans and diplomatic relations. Still, when African minister flew to Beijing in 2006 to agree on a common action plan with China, the EU realized it was unprepared to face this change. In 2007, the then High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, acknowledged that the rise of China in Africa represented a challenge for the EU (Solana 2007). In the same year, the EU and African governments agreed on an inter-regional Strategic Partnership in Lisbon in order to improve dialogue between the two parties. Attempts of the European institutions to foster trilateral cooperation with China and Africa also followed. So far, though, the EU is still struggling to adjust its Africa policy to the changed context.

This article investigates the nature of these challenges and the reasons why the attempts of European institutions to face the growing role of China in Africa have failed. It argues that this change in Chinese foreign policy has both economic consequences for the European states and implications on the identity of the EU as a development leader and model. The inability of the EU to adjust to the new context is due both to institutional and ideational obstacles to policy change. Divisions between European institutions, their lack of understanding of China's Africa policy and the resistance of the European model of development to adapt to local demands prevented it to manage these challenges effectively.

Firstly, China emerged as a competitor of the EU in the import of raw materials. In the '90s, with the opening of new markets in the countries previously under Soviet control, European trade with Africa stagnated. Since the early 2000s, with the emerging of China as an importer from Africa, the share of trade flows between Europe and Africa has further decreased. Still, EU member states remained the major trading partners of African countries. Parallel to the increase of Chinese import, the total amount of European trade flows with Africa started rising again (Lirong 2011). According to Eurostat (2010) from 2002 to 2008 trade flows between the EU member states and Africa increased ten-fold. This increase is especially evident in the cases of oil and gas, where interests of the EU on Africa have been revitalized, due to the ongoing instability in the Middle East (Ogunleye 2011).

So far the attempts of the EU to preserve preferential trade relations with African countries have been frustrated. Negotiations for the Economic Partnership Agreements between the EU and African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP), started in 2007, stressed the divergence between the interests of the European and African negotiators. The reluctance of the EU negotiators to make concessions raised contestation among African leaders against the coherence of European trade and development policies (Elgström 2009). The cleavages between the EU and African governments in the Doha development round of the WTO further remarked the distance between the two parties. In this context, the increasing trade ties between Africa and China contributed weakening the negotiating position of the EU.

A second area of contrast with China is the promotion of a model of development. Even though China participated in UN peace operations in Africa and ratified several UN treaties on human rights, Hu Jintao's government remarked its distance with the Western, and, more specifically, European approach to development cooperation. As opposed to the EU, it refused the label of donor, criticizing the asymmetric relationship European states have traditionally established with aid recipients, while stressing its role as equal partner. The model promoted by the Chinese government notably differs from that of the EU for its no-strings-attached approach. In contrast to European democracy promotion programs, Chinese aid mainly focused on short term tangible results, such as infrastructure and direct investments.

With the growing role of China in Africa, African leaders have had more opportunities to voice their opposition to the European model of development. Both African governments and regional organizations have increasingly charged the EU with neo-colonial ambitions, based on the use of double-standards and coercive tools of foreign policy such as sanctions and barriers to African trade (Sicurelli 2010). Democratic African governments did perceive China as a threat to consolidation of democracy in Africa. At the same time, though, the African Union explicitly welcomed the pragmatic approach of the Chinese government to development and conflict management (Taylor 2011). As Howorth (2011) noted, despite its "principled foreign policy", the EU proved unable to face accusations of selectivity and lack of coherence. These limits hindered the role of the EU in its value competition with emerging powers. This is especially evident in its relations with Africa.

As a reaction to these challenges, the EU produced several official documents that called for improving coordination with China to pursue shared goals. In 2006, the European Commission (2006) issued a Communication on "EU-China: closer partners, growing responsibilities, for a strategic partnership with China". One year later, the European Parliament published a resolution on "China's policy and its effects on Africa". In 2008, the Commission released a second Communication, on "The EU, Africa and China: Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation". This rhetorical exercise, though, was not met by concrete steps towards joint projects with China and reforms of European development policies. Carbone (2011) explains this difficulty showing how the institutional structure of the EU constrained effective decision-making. The European institutions were not able to conciliate their different goals and interests on the topic, and divisions within the Commission and the Council weakened the European position substantially. Besides, so far Africa did not rank among the priorities of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy appointed in 2009, Catherine Ashton. The slow reaction of the EU to the North African crisis in 2011 and inability to take a unitary position of on intervention in Libya was emblematic of the lack of a clear strategy in the EU's Africa policy.

Furthermore, having underestimated the potential of Chinese development cooperation, the EU failed at fully understanding Chinese Africa policy, which prevented it to find potential rooms to cooperate to achieve shared goals. EU officials claimed that Chinese policies represent a threat to human rights. Rather than negating human rights, though, the Chinese approach to development aimed at fostering collective development as the premise to human rights promotion (Taylor 2011). This misunderstanding has contributed to the inability of the EU to identify complementarities with China's Africa policy and turned out to be an obstacle to diplomatic dialogue.

Given the increasing contestation of its policies and the growing attractiveness of China as a partner for African governments, the EU engaged in attempts to reform its development strategy. In order to address criticisms against the paternalistic undertones of its method of democracy promotion, the EU Strategy for Africa, adopted by the European Council in 2005, endorsed the principle of African ownership of development promoted by the World Bank since 2003 (Woods 2008). Like the Bank, though, the EU is still struggling to clarify the operational details to integrate this concept into its democracy promotion agenda. These difficulties have been especially evident in the implementation of the Africa-EU partnership on democratic governance and human rights.

To preserve its trade ties with African governments and, contextually, improve its image as a development leader, the EU needs to address the demands of its African partners concerning market access and support for African-lead projects of development. Besides, it is crucial for the EU to identify fields where cooperation with China is possible and where the contribution of the two actors can be considered complementary. To that purpose, EU leaders should promote regular senior level meetings with representative of the Chinese and African governments in order to improve communication and learning between the parties. Finally, it is paramount that the EU works on the operationalization of the principle of local ownership. It needs to clarify the instruments and steps to actively involve local leaders and organizations in the elaboration of development programs, without undermining its efforts of democracy promotion. Unless the EU undertakes these steps, its diplomatic power on the African governments is expected to deteriorate further, leaving room of manoeuvre to the rising development leader.

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The Perceptions of the EU in Latin America

Roberto Dominguez

Introduction

The study of the image of the EU in third countries became part of the scholarly research agenda in the late 1990s. Since then, research on this topic has experienced a significant proliferation with studies led by Chaban and Holland (2008) as well as Fioramonti and Lucarelli (2008), just to mention a couple of pioneering scholars. In the case of Latin America, the study of perceptions of the EU in Latin America is in its initial stages and to great extent the inquiry about the perceptions of the EU in Latin America remains unanswered. In this regard, the argument developed in the following paragraphs is that the perceptions of the EU in Latin America are in contrast with the EU's self-representations. This is explained by the fact that despite an overall positive perception of the EU in Latin America, there are some variations depending of the specific nature and interests of the EU bilateral agenda with particular countries.

The Self-Representation of EU as International Actor

For several decades scholars have addressed the analytical challenge of deciphering the complexity of the EU as international actor (for instance Manners 2002; Sjursen 2005). As the EU has strengthened its institutions and policies in the area of external relations, the analytical challenge is not only the type of EU actorness (civilian power, normative power and gentle power, for instance), but also the effectiveness of the policies projected abroad. The EU projects both voluntarily and involuntarily international presence/image. While the former is reflected in the goals and objectives of foreign policy and purposely the EU develop policies to fulfill them, the later escapes out of its influence an result out of the mere existence of the EU (current economic crisis, for instance).

Thus, the self-representation of the EU is a parameter to identify the gap between the expectations of the EU as an international actor and the perceptions of the others. More precisely, the EU is endowed with institutional instruments such as the combined post of High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission (HRVP) and the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) supporting this post. Not only are both actors relevant in the promotion of the image of the EU, but also all EU institutions that in some way project an image. The common goal or expected self-image of their activity is based on the spirit enshrined in the consolidated version of the Treaty of the European Union (Treaty of Lisbon), particularly in Article 21 (2), which include the safeguard of values and fundamental interests; the consolidation of democracy, the rule of law, human rights; the preservation of peace and prevention of conflicts; and the support to sustainable economic, social and environmental development of developing countries, among other objectives.

Thus, the underlying assumption of the self-perception is that the EU follows values and principles translated into policies and actions that provide a distinctive actorness to the EU different from those of nation-states and other international organizations (Fioramonti and Lucarelli 2009).

Perceptions of the EU

Based on the analysis of surveys and print media in four of the main EU partners in Latin America (Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Mexico) between 2009 and 2011, one can extrapolate some estimates about the perceptions of the EU in the Latin American subcontinent.

The industry of opinion polls in Latin America has mushroomed in the past 15 years. However, polls including the perceptions of the EU remain limited and sporadic due to the overwhelming role of other items of the Latin agenda such as the relationship with the United States or immediate challenges facing national foreign policy. Despite these limitations, Latinobarómetro has over the years included a small number of questions on the EU in its annual public opinion surveys in the region. One of the most consistent questions in the Latinobarómetro survey focuses on the opinion of the state of the relations between the EU and particular countries. While the four countries hold a positive perception of the EU, Chile is the country that has the best perception of the EU (92 percent in 2004 and 96 percent in 2010), while Argentina's views have varied between 71.9 percent in 2008 to 82.3 percent in 2006 mainly due to agricultural disputes.

Colombia has also experienced a nadir (76.2 in 2004) due to the worsening of the war between the government and the guerilla groups and the EU criticisms of human rights violations; against this precedent, the relations between the EU and Colombia improved and paved the way for the negotiation and conclusion of an association agreement (89 percent in 2010). Interestingly, the variations in the cases of Chile and Mexico are alike, which is consistent with the fact that both countries have association agreements in place with the EU since the early 2000s.

The positive perception of the EU contrasts with the weak knowledge of the members of the EU in the Latin American public opinion. In 2004, in response to the inquiry of mentioning the members of the EU, Mexico ranked the highest with 4.1 correct answers, Chile 3.75, Argentina 2.82 and Colombia 1.4. As a follow up, the countries that were identified by the public opinion were Spain 36 percent, France 28 percent, Italy 26 percent and Germany 25 percent (Lagos 2011).

In the case of newspapers, a review of 1,685 news items published in the four Latin American newspapers between 2009 and 2011[1] (Dominguez 2011) indicates that the economic events in the EU received most of the attention in the news items with 51.57 percent of the total, followed by the news on EU politics (33.7) and EU social issues (14.73).

The general trend in the economic arena has been the steady attention to the European economic crisis, with more emphasis in the Argentinean and Chilean press, economies where the trade share with the European Union is high. The second area within the economic framework was trade: Mexico and Chile registered the lowest interest in trade because both countries have already implemented association agreements. Conversely, Colombia showcased high coverage of the negotiations for the association agreement with the European Union, underscoring the distinct positions of the Colombian and European negotiation teams. Argentina, on the other hand, experienced an increasing debate in press in light of the restart of the negotiations between the EU and MERCOSUR in 2010 and posed a critical position to the protectionist EU policies in the agricultural sector, particularly with regard to the Hilton quota beef.

Within the political frame, the EU received more attention in the area of external relations (58.6 percent of the political frame) in comparison to political events taking place within the borders of the EU (41.3 percent). In the former, while a great share of information peripherally mentioned the EU among other international actors, particularly the United States, the role of the EU as international actor was also underscored by the press in the EU policies towards Iran, Libya, Cuba and Haiti. In the latter, with regard to the political developments within the EU, the news items were focused on the problems of the ratification and implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, politics in Spain, the crisis of political parties to assertively face the economic crisis, as well as the controversies around the Schengen area.

The social frame received less attention in the press. Under this classification, three main areas stand out: the environmental model of the EU, the controversies around migration and the social problems of unemployment. Other sets of news focus are the emerging social movements as a result of the 2008-2012 economic crises, EU educational policies and the outbreak of health alerts and the responses of the EU.

The news items were also coded with regard to the central role of the EU in the narrative of the news. The EU was the central actor in 39 percent of the news items, while the European Commission was also the central actor in 20 percent of the news, followed by the European Central Bank, the Council of the EU/European Council, the European Parliament, the High representative of Foreign Policy and the EU delegations in the country. With regard to the EU members, Germany received most of the attention of the press in the four countries. In line with the historical links, Spain was ranked second and France was third. The United Kingdom kept a discreet role in the four countries, receiving more attention in Argentina due to the disputes regarding oil resources and the Falkland Islands. In this period, four countries were the center of attention as sources of instability: Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Italy.

Conclusion: Link between Self-Representation and Perception

Four different levels of linkages were identified between self-representation, as portrayed in the Treaty of Lisbon, and images, as analyzed in surveys and print media. The first level relates to the match between projection of the image of policy goals and the perception in Latin America. The four case studies perceived the self-representation of the EU as an environmental actor promoting multilateral cooperation and good global governance, particularly as a result of the EU's activism in implementing the Kyoto protocol on climate change and its position in the Copenhagen environmental summit.

The second level consists of those cases in which, while the EU's image in Latin America corresponds to the self-representation of the EU, the projection of the EU image was relatively weak or attenuated by the presence of other actors. This is the case where the EU projected its civilian power in mediation of international conflicts or assisting countries, but as a secondary actor and overshadowed by United States.

The third level noticed a gap between the self-representation of the EU and the perceptions of the third countries in the four case studies. This occurred in the area of the EU as an actor advancing international free trade. Particularly in Argentina, the image of the EU protecting the agricultural market was commonly portrayed in the press; to a lesser extent, the

Colombian press also asserted this characteristic during the negotiations of the association agreement. The fourth level identified assumptions and policies that were not confirmed or only implicitly suggested by the information in the three areas of analysis: the EU as a possible counterbalance to the US hegemony; the EU as a model of regional integration; and the EU as an effective actor to eradicate poverty.

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Endnotes

[1] La Nación-Argentina, El Tiempo-Colombia, El Universal-Mexico and El Mercurio-Chile.

EUSA Review

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Book Reviews

Andrew Williams. *The Ethos of Europe. Values, Law, and Justice in the EU*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

How the EU could become a just institution ? That is the question Andrew Williams tries to answer in this book untitled “The Ethos of Europe. Values, law and justice in the EU”. The question could seem at first sight rather provocative. Indeed, it has largely been assumed that the EU, despite major political indeterminacies underlined by the current economic crisis (Federalism vs inter-governmentalism; democratic deficit), is based on “just” values. Democracy, rule of law, human rights, respect and protection for minorities, form some rules- the ethos according to A. Williams- the EU claim to be its own. However, Andrew Williams’ book is not a purely philosophical essay on “justice”. Instead, “The Ethos of Europe” is highly accessible. Its author offers a readable point of view at the classical questions on the EU, but with an original input.

The volume is divided into two sections and nine chapters. The first section of the book is composed of the first six chapters. It addresses notions of peace, rule of law, human rights, democracy and liberty in the context of the EU. The second part of the book is divided into three chapters. The main argument of the author is developed: the EU suffers from an uncertain soul. The values the EU claims to be its own are deeply indeterminate. And to reduce the indeterminacy of these values in the EU, “both a revised Bill of Rights for Europe and a revised institutional structure of principles capable of understanding, monitoring and enforcing such rights effectively” are required (p. 20).

Chapter one describes the main objectives of the book. Among them, A. Williams intends to discuss the role and the place of law in the institutional ethos of the EU. Chapters two, three, four, five and six provide an overview of the history of each value. The next chapter presents a discussion of the philosophy of EU law. Chapters eight and nine present Williams’ argument for a research agenda for a “just’” institution. Among the assumptions the author proposes, the recognition of human rights as a core value in the revised Bill of Rights for Europe (p. 336).

Each chapter in “The Ethos of Europe” is structured similarly, starting with a short introduction, a description of historical processes through political declarations or Treaty articles, and then moving to discuss the role of values presented at the beginning of the chapter. A short conclusion ends each chapter. In each chapter, two main analyses are followed. First, A. Williams does not only look at how the EU should behave regarding each value. He looks also at how the EU really behaves. Among the examples that are discussed are the action of the EU in the Yugoslavian war. Second, the various dimensions of each value are analyzed. For instance, Liberty means both the EU’s role in maintaining freedom against external interference and the EU’s relationship with its ‘constituents’ (p.208).

The strength of the book is that it provides a coherent overview of what the EU is and what it does, but also where it might be going. A. Williams tries to simplify the structures of the EU, especially the role of the European Court of Justice, as well as the philosophical discourse inherent to the “values” of Europe, in a manner that makes the subject easily accessible to non-specialists. The structure of each chapter, historical overview, followed by analysis of the various aspects of each value, is really convincing. The conclusions at the end of each chapter are also very helpful in clarifying the argument. While A. Williams presents a strong argument for the need to revise a Bill of Rights for Europe and the EU institutional structure, he is less convincing at defining in a concrete way the institutional reforms that are necessary for the reformulation of the EU as a “just” institution. The assumptions remain sometimes too theoretical (chapter 8). However, in a context where the future of Europe seems highly unpredictable, “The Ethos of Europe” gives an insightful explanation of where the EU should go.

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Dyson, Kenneth and Quaglia, Lucia. *European Economic Governance and Policies*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

In two volumes entitled European Economic Governance and Policies, published in 2010, Kenneth Dyson and Lucia Quaglia bring together many of the original documents of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). In these volumes, the authors lay down the historical, institutional and policy context of the birth story of EMU and the subsequent decade. These volumes are important as they deal with documents that are at the cradle of Europe’s single currency, one of the most important institutional, economic, political and policy integration projects that gave rise to the creation of the European Central Bank (ECB) comprising the countries that have adopted the euro (V. I, p. 6). EMU has played a contradictory role in the European integration project. On one hand EMU served in strengthening the “differentiated integration in European macro-economic governance and policies” (V. II, p. 10). On the other hand EMU has been a uniting power for the integration project (V. II, p. 10).

Regardless of the effect of the creation of the single market, EMU and other institutions in the European Union (EU), a ‘new Europe’ in macro-economic governance has emerged that was beyond the vision of the 1930s and post-World War II scholars. The ECB was designed as an institution that would implement a single monetary policy first and foremost seeking to secure price stability in the euro area. This could have worked well if the euro area “functioned in an environment of legal, economic and political uncertainties that generated confusion, not least a serious lack of transparency surrounding European macro-economic governance” (V. II, p. 2). However, despite all this advancement and progress, an open-ended question that remains unanswered, which the 2008 financial crisis brought to the forefront—as highlighted in the European Economic Governance and Policies: “if there is a ‘new Europe’ in macro-economic governance and policies, is Europe adequately equipped, not just in policy instruments but also in underlying political solidarity, to tackle the spectrum of challenges that it is likely to face?” (V. I, p. 1). The financial crisis raises the question whether the EU will “identify and tackle the rationale for strengthened economic policy coordination” (V. I, p. 767). Will the financial crisis and the sovereign debt crisis push the EU members to finish what they started regarding EMU?

The two volumes offer a reading of the original documents based on delicate selection criteria for the official documents and treaties. The volumes are informative and the reader can trace the sequence of events leading to EMU design, creation and performance back to pre-1945 period. The importance of going back to the roots of the creation of economic governance in the EU, rather than referring only to secondary sources is “to uncover what expert and political elites meant when they wrote about European macro-economic governance and policies and how and why these meanings have changed” over time (volume II, p. 11). Another reason for going back to original texts, documents, speeches, elite interviews and minutes of meetings, etc., according to Dyson and Quaglia, is to offer a fresh and new reading of the creation and function of EMU since there is a gap in the social sciences resulting from using secondary literature and ignoring the examination of original documents, which might lead sometimes to misinterpretation or misunderstanding of European macro-economic governance and policies (V. I, p. 3, see also V. I and II, Introduction).

The first volume gives a detailed political (both international and domestic), institutional, economic and technical account of creating EMU supported by the original documents in addition to the main debates, negotiations, discussions and difficulties facing the leaders at that time. It also shows the influence of domestic calculations on the entire process. The analysis covers original documents dating back to even before 1914 to discuss the long ambition and dream of establishing “an economic and monetary union in Europe” (V. I, p. 6). The second volume analyzes the main documents focusing on the policies and technicalities of EMU from its launch on January 1, 1999 through the first ten years of its functioning and concluding with the global financial crisis and the onset of the sovereign debt crisis. As a complementary volume to Dyson’s edited book (2008) The Euro at 10, the second volume encompasses “how European macro-economic governance responded to the early phases of the post-August 2007 financial crisis and its mutation from September 2008, especially after the collapse of Lehman Brothers, into full-scale global financial and economic crisis” (V. II, p. 4).

The two volumes are a remarkable achievement since it is the first time that the most important and some controversial official documents that discuss economic governance in the EU and have led to EMU construction are collected and published in two volumes and analyzed in a chronological and systematic way. A large set of official documents is made available in English—various documents have been translated from other languages such as French or German. The two volumes are not just a collection of documents on EU economic governance. They also contain commentaries on each section that combine various documents under specific theme. Dividing the documents into sections and analytical commentaries provided by Dyson and Quaglia helps the reader form a better understanding of the original documents. Yet, it seems to me that Dyson and Quaglia tried to achieve too much in these two volumes. The authors sought to strike a balance between having a reference manual and an analytical commentary, which led them to have the documents divided into sections, and somehow it does not work very well. In my opinion, the commentaries do not offer any controversial or new understanding of the original documents that we do not already know. Besides, the commentaries read more as a summary of the literature on EMU creation and performance with the original documents used as supporting references. What would have been helpful is to have real commentaries on the documents as opposed to a summary of well-known analyses. It would have been nice to draw out any new understanding of the treaties, and highlight if these original sources bring different insights than those already established in the academic literature.

It is hard to cover all the documents that dealt with EMU since pre-1945 in two volumes. Therefore, Dyson and Quaglia had to establish selection criteria for what constitutes a key document ("relevant provisions from major agreements, conventions and treaties"; related EC/EU, EMU, "European Monetary Institute (EMI), and ECB legal instruments" in addition to "ECJ rulings"; relevant "interviews, letter, speeches, and minutes" of meetings"; "individual proposals […that] have triggered and enriched relevant debates"; and member states documents that have "relevant contributions" (V. I, pp.8-9; V. II, pp. 14-15)). They chose the following four selection criteria: "legal competences", documents focus on "why European macro-economic governance, based on EMU, developed in particular way that it did"; have significant and "innovative contributions"; and finally to be of historically relevant, important and not easily accessible (V. I, p. 9; V II, pp. 15-16). Although the selection criteria are important, however, they are too vague and the authors could have spent more time discussing their selection criteria. How do we define and measure historically important documents? Is it because of their ability to influence the EU agenda regardless of the outcome, or does the outcome matter? The volumes suffer from repetition; for example, significant parts of the introductions to Volumes I and II are identical. Section 4 in V. II, which deals with the Exchange Rate policy, is strongly related to the parts on external representation, enlargement and monetary policy, as highlighted by Dyson and Quaglia (V. II, p. 316). To avoid repetition and to offer a better understanding of these issues, why not put these sections in one section and analyze them as they interact together rather than having them in separate sections?

Despite these minor shortcomings of the two volumes, European Economic Governance and Policies offers an 'from A to Z' type encyclopedia on the development of economic and monetary governance in the EU in general and the creation and functioning of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) in particular. The two volumes are very important for anyone interested in tracing the evolution of EU economic governance back to the main documents rather than relying on secondary literature.

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Slapin, Jonathan B. *Veto Power. Institutional Design in the European Union*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011.

This volume provides an examination of the political dynamics of European integration in the specific context of the bargaining between the member states during European Union intergovernmental conferences (IGCs). Jonathan Slapin explores how member states can secure desired outcomes in the inter-state negotiations that have become central to the conduct of IGCs, against the broader question of how states get what they want in international organisations when there is no exit option. Slapin presents intergovernmentalism and institutionalism as two competing theories of bargaining power, the former emphasising state power and resources as crucial determinants of capacity to shape negotiations while institutionalism relies on the rules under which institutions operate, opening the way for those states to exercise veto rights whenever national preferences tend towards maintaining the status quo rather than to deepening integration. The author suggests that the veto rights which are available to each member state provide a way in which any state can affect the negotiations in the IGCs, and in particular the small states without political influence can still secure the outcome they want. Veto rights matter in the absence of an exit option, since the other states cannot pressure the 'laggard' state to either leave the organisation or vote progressively, that is with those states that seek deeper integration. Slapin's main contention is that institutional theories can better explain IGC outcomes, and that domestic politics affect intergovernmental bargaining through the process of ratification (either through national parliaments or by public referendum) and the ability of domestic actors (including national public opinion) to affect member state bargaining preferences. Referring to the extensive literature in political science, Slapin argues that institutional design matters to the political relations among states, and to the type of policy-making that is produced under the formalised rules that govern inter-state bargaining. The issue of veto power is then considered in the IGC negotiations conducted through 1996-1997 over the Amsterdam Treaty, and Slapin presents the results of a quantitative analysis of the preferences of the member states, as well as the European Commission and the European Parliament on 228 issues tabled in the IGC negotiations. Chapter two of the book provides a detailed discussion of the methodological approach and summarises the position of each member state on the individual issue areas. Chapter three presents the formal theoretical model used by the author to test the competing predictions of intergovernmentalism and institutionalism, while chapter four provides a detailed description of how the model was tested. Chapter five identifies the winners and losers in the Amsterdam Treaty negotiations, though the conclusions regarding the individual national positions are unlikely to surprise those who retain a watching brief over national politics and positions on matters of European integration. In fact, the conclusion that domestic politics matter in the international negotiations had already been demonstrated in previous IGC negotiations, and would do so again in the negotiations over the Nice and the Lisbon treaties. Appropriately to a study that supports the institutionalist explanation of European integration, chapter six reports on the bargaining among the member states over the voting weights in the EU Council of Ministers and the size of the European Commission. These two contentious issues remained unresolved in the lead up to the 2004/2007 enlargements, but the pressures from the smaller states to exercise their veto power and to retain the status quo against the demands from the larger states, notably France, Germany, Italy and the UK, to change the weighted voting system in the Council continued to resonate more than a decade after the Amsterdam Treaty was finally adopted. Chapter seven discusses the viability of veto power in intergovernmental negotiations, and draws on Albert Hirschman's work on the interaction of exit and voice to propose that where voluntary exit (or forced expulsion) is an option, there is less possibility for a state to exercise veto power and more likelihood that a state resistant to change may be forced to accept sub-optimal outcomes forced upon it by other states. Chapter eight reviews the exit threat/veto power options in the case of the British Labour government's threat to leave the European Community in 1974, and the debate over the British budget rebate under Margaret Thatcher in the course of the negotiations towards the Single European Act in the early 1980s. Slapin argues that Thatcher's use of veto power could be explained by the other states' calculations of the costs of not agreeing to her demands, in the calculation of possible missed institutional outcomes in the future if Britain was not there to support a Franco-German position. However, this discussion fails to consider the strong support by Thatcher for the market-widening strategy of the Single European Act, a policy that was very much in line with the neo-liberal policies launched by the UK Conservative government from the early 1980s. There was no need for the British prime minister to threaten exit from an expanding European market considered to be in line with national preferences by the government and domestic business interests.

The discussion of exit options offers some insight into the difficult situation facing the member states as the EU seeks to identify ways out of the financial and sovereign debt crisis that escalated throughout 2011. Jonathan Slapin's view is that laggard states may be powerful in resisting change even without the ability to threaten exit from the union, but this depends, as he rightly recognises, on the reaction of the other states seeking change. If these states do not really want the laggard states, then exclusion may become an option – and indeed recent EU treaty revision now provides an exit clause. At the start of 2012, the uncertainty surrounding the status of several countries in the eurozone and the continued weaknesses across the European financial sector may prompt the German and French leaders to review the exit options more trenchantly.

This strength of this volume lies in the application of political science and a quantitative analysis to capture the inter-state bargaining and the use of veto power to shape negotiation outcomes, where Slapin's methodological approach occupies a central place in the work. However, the book is limited to a snapshot of inter-state politics in the negotiations over the Amsterdam Treaty, which the author admits fell short of expectations. IGCs are only one arena in which European politics are conducted, and recent experience points to the continued importance of a range of factors that shape European integration, ranging from power politics to domestic forces, institutional rules, and global pressures, all of which interact in very complex ways to shape the dynamics of European integration. This complexity that adheres to the interplay of European political forces demands that we continue to take account of the social and political context in which European actors engage at national and international levels, and that we consider the historical and temporal influences on preference formation, and interest determination. As the constructivist approach in international relations emphasises, national interests are not pre-determined or unchanging but can be socially constructed in the dialogue and communication of social actors. There may be scope in this approach to explore when and how veto power might change over time, and how veto power might vary in different interstate bargaining settings.

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Richard Corbett, Francis Jacobs, and **Michael Shackleton**. *The European Parliament. 8th Edition*. London: John Harper, 2011.

Now in its eighth edition, this seminal work on the organisation, working methods, and powers of the European Parliament (EP) is fully revised to take into account the changes resulting from the 2009 European elections and the entry into force of the Lisbon treaty. Similar to earlier editions, the book is divided into three parts.

Part 1 provides 'The Framework', describing the main features of the EP in comparison to other legislatures and how Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are being elected. It also discusses issues arising from the EP's commitment to multilingualism and the distribution of its work between Strasbourg, Luxembourg, and Brussels. Part 2 deals with 'The Actors and Working Structures', starting with the background, role, and motivations of individual MEPs. Subsequent chapters deal with the composition, organisation, and operation of political groups, the EP leadership, committees, interparliamentary delegations, the plenary, intergroups, and the secretariat, respectively. Finally, Part 3 covers 'The Powers of the Parliament'. This part includes chapters on the role and prerogatives of the EP in the legislative process, in the adoption of the budget, in the appointment and dismissal of the Commission and the leadership of other EU organisations and agencies, and in scrutinizing delegated and implementing acts of the Commission. Other chapters outline Parliaments connections and communication channels to other European Union (EU) institutions and its openness towards interest groups, media, and ordinary citizens, as well as the role of national parliaments in EU law-making and their relations to the EP before and after the Lisbon treaty. Finally, the book concludes with a discussion of how the EP affected constitutional change over the years through its influence on successive treaty reforms.

As the outline of the book's content indicates, it probably provides the most comprehensive and currently up-to-date description of the European Parliament. Given the breadth of material covered, ranging from rather minute administrative details to politically salient powers, readers with different backgrounds will inevitably find some topics more interesting or relevant than others. From a political science perspective, I found the discussion of issues involving the selection of a uniform electoral system, the evolution of the political group system, the composition and roles of intergroups, the advantages and disadvantages of informal trilogues under the ordinary legislative procedure, the operation of the new budgetary procedure, and the varying appointment powers regarding different EU agencies most stimulating, often suggesting interesting questions for further research.

A big strength of this book is that it presents a wealth of factual information that is useful for teaching and research. Amongst other things, it provides tables on the electoral systems in use in different member states, the national voter turnout in EP elections, the gender balance in Parliament, the current national party membership in political groups, previous political experience of MEPs and their subsequent uptake of positions in the Commission or national governments, the details of current and often also past occupants of leadership positions in party groups, committees, inter-parliamentary delegations, and the EP as a whole, and the applicability of legislative procedures in different policy areas - including a reference to the relevant treaty article and an indication of which areas have been newly included in the scope of the ordinary legislative procedure by the Lisbon treaty. The book also includes lists of cases in which the EP used its right to formally request a Commission proposal and in which it tabled a motion of censure of the Commission. Finally, the appendix provides tables of all European elections results for member states since the first direct election in 1979. The value of the book as a source of statistics and qualitative information would have been even greater if it had provided direct references to primary sources. The appendix includes a general pointer to the EP's website and a bibliography of selected academic work on different aspects of the Parliament. However, to check the accuracy and possibly extend the information provided in the book, direct pointers to the relevant source material would have been useful.

In terms of substance, the book provides largely descriptive information and generally balanced discussions of the pros and cons of different features of the EP. Most of its claims are not controversial. The exception in that respect is Chapter 18 on the EP's influence on constitutional change in the European Union. After a description of the involvement and the positions taken by the EP with respect to treaty changes, the chapter concludes that the 'successive treaty revisions since Parliament became directly elected were all strongly influenced by the European Parliament'. This conclusion stands in stark contrast to most other academic work on the topic, which stresses the role of member states and possibly that of the Commission. Although the chapter succeeds in demonstrating that most constitutional changes successively agreed by member states in intergovernmental treaties were often also sought by the European Parliament, it provides little evidence for the claim that Parliament was able to convince 'at least some national governments to press its case'. Alternative theories of constitutional change and the possibility that the EP was just lucky rather than powerful - by holding the same position as the truly powerful actors - are not ruled out by the analysis.

However, these minor weaknesses cannot do away from the overall contribution of the book. As the current European Council President Herman van Rompuy puts it in his foreword, this is 'the authoritative guide to the European Parliament'. It is probably not a book to be read from cover to cover, but it is definitely a must-have reference work for anybody interested in the workings of the European Parliament and the political system of the EU in general.

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