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Book Review : The Making of the European Union: Foundations, Institutions and Future Trends

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Whilst there are many books on the European Union (EU), this recently published book by four scholars is a comprehensive and important addition to the research on Europe. As the title of the book suggests, the EU is impacted by historical events and is shaped by future trends. The authors of this book include eight chapters on the EU that range from an analysis of the EU's development from a free trading area to having a common currency to how the EU is changing in terms of diversity and consumer trends. The book contains the most recent figures that are available on the EU and these figures are presented in useful tables to explain developments in the EU. This book stands out from the existing books on the EU by combining a cultural and historical analysis together with current discourse on the EU. The book is easy to read and is very suitable for both scholars, public policy practitioners and general readers who want a holistic book that incorporates a diverse range of topics on the EU.

The first chapter positions the book in terms of existing research by stating that a citizen's perspective is taken on the EU. This is a unique approach to take as most books do not specifically take a citizen's perspective but rather take a business or government approach. By highlighting the importance of people in the EU's development and future, the book's emphasis is on communities and regional development in the European context. The authors highlight that by taking a citizen's perspective this allows for the EU as a whole to be examined rather than focusing on geographical and political differences. Given that the EU has become more homogeneous with regards to tastes and preferences, this citizen's perspective suggests that more people in Europe regard themselves as being European citizens rather than from a specific country. However, given the recent turmoil with the European constitution this citizen's perspective is challenged by the renewed sense of nationalism within countries in Europe. As the EU moves towards more political integration it will be interesting to see how the business perspective of seeing Europe as a regional area will combine with the citizen's perspective of wanting to keep their national cultures intact. The introduction chapter provides a number of issues that makes the reader want to continue reading the book whilst at the same time providing vexing issues that will be discussed further in the book. The first chapter seemed to be quite short as compared to the other chapters. However, the contemporary situation occurring in Europe was discussed well and this linked well with the next chapter.

The second chapter discusses in detail the origins and historical development of the EU. For novice readers this chapter is important in understanding contemporary developments occurring in Europe. However, for readers who understand and have read about the origins of the EU, this chapter has useful historical information that is interesting to read. The development of Europe from empire states to small periphery states is discussed. The changing nature of states within the EU is largely a result of historical events and changing environmental contexts. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the resulting entry into the EU of Eastern European countries is discussed. The processes of integration in Europe are outlined with relevant treaties and events discussed. The role of religion in Europe is also highlighted with the main religions in Europe discussed and the role of religion in future developments in the EU proposed. The authors highlight the increasing percentage of people

who are Muslim and the changing demographics of European citizens such as the decreased birth rate and the ageing of the population. Given the recent street riots in France and the media focus on the growing role of Islam in Europe the role of religion is an important perspective. The Dutch Government's legislative steps to ban the burqa further illustrate the role of religion and the citizen's role in Europe. The question of whether the EU will allow Turkey entry also highlights the growing interest of religion in Europe. Whilst much has been written about the historical development of the EU, it is the role of religion in future development that will increasingly become more important.

The third chapter further discusses the role of history in the EU by outlining the patterns of inclusion and exclusion in Europe. The rationale behind the initial drive towards integration is highlighted with a focus on geographic integration rather than cultural integration. The geographic areas that Europe comprises are discussed in terms of the question of whether Turkey is in Europe or Asia or a combination of both. This poses the question of whether future inclusion of new members of the EU will move geographically further away from existing members to include countries like Israel. The chapter also discusses the economic rationale behind being included within the EU and what this has meant for the stability of the EU. The author discusses philosophical approaches to inclusion and exclusion that is interesting to read and an important part of understanding the EU's development. Philosophical approaches such as social constructionism are a way to help understand the citizen's perspective of Europe. Taking a social constructionist view, the integration of countries in Europe has thus been heavily influenced by the environmental context in which European citizens exist.

The fourth chapter discusses quite broadly the support for the EU and what this means for European citizens. The chapter has very interesting statistics and tables about what citizens in different European countries think and feel about various issues regarding Europe. As such the chapter would have been useful to be included closer to the introductory chapter or referenced in more detail in the introductory chapter itself. This chapter I found particularly illuminating and useful for understanding what European citizens feel about what is happening in the EU. Indicators for political support of the EU are stated that include reference to new and old EU members. A comparison of different European countries sentiment about what the EU means to them and their feelings about EU membership is included. The statistics suggest that it is more likely for EU members that have not adopted the euro such as the UK to have a less enthusiastic sentiment towards the EU. This may be why Sweden ranks the highest in terms of its citizens believing that EU membership is a bad thing. As the introductory chapter highlighted, the growing disparity between national and regional interests can be understood by the tables and statistics included in this chapter. With the EU being very successful in terms of economic and financial integration, it is useful to read this chapter to understand what will happen in the future in terms of further political integration in the EU. Although many EU countries have a social democratic government or political party, it will be interesting to see if these diverse political parties will be united under one political party. Having watched what has happened with the proposed constitution being rejected by voters in France and The Netherlands, it seems unlikely that one dominant political party in the EU will emerge. The dichotomy between being a European citizen and a citizen of a specific country is discussed in the chapter by providing interesting statistics about what people in Europe think. It is interesting to note that Hungary which is a relatively new EU member has citizens that rate the highest attachment to Europe. The question then is why do Hungarians have the highest attachment to Europe as opposed to other EU countries?

Whilst this question is hard to answer, it does highlight the cultural diversity in EU and the lack of consensus between all EU citizens.

Dutch citizens have the lowest attachment to Europe and this is an interesting finding since their country was amongst the earlier members of the EU. Perhaps this means that citizens in new EU member countries like Hungary believe their standard of living will increase from EU membership whilst older EU member countries like The Netherlands believe they are subsidising new EU members to the detriment of their standard of living. However, the differences between feelings of European citizens based on geographic location could also be examined further in terms of income levels and occupation. The chapter includes tables about what citizens in different European countries think will happen in terms of future EU enlargement.

Chapter five addresses the important issue of political integration in the EU. This is an important chapter particularly given that the next step for the EU is political integration. However, as the authors suggest, political integration is a vexing question and is very debatable given that it will mean EU countries give more control to EU institutions rather than their individual governments. Political integration is an interesting issue in the EU since European citizens have voiced concern about losing their national sovereignty. The existing European parliament has called for more political integration as it will allow for the diverse laws and regulations to be unified across all EU countries. However, the question still exists about whether European citizens want more political integration or whether they are happy with the current level of integration in the EU. Another debate exists amongst public policy watchers about whether pursuing more political integration will result in the dissolution of the EU and reverse the levels of economic integration achieved. The politics behind a common EU foreign policy are discussed that highlights the strong nationalistic sentiment towards military intervention in other countries. For example, the strong opposition to the war in Iraq is highlighted with many EU citizens being vocal opponents. The draft constitution is discussed in terms of what it would mean for political integration in the EU. There are very useful tables illustrating what citizens of different countries think about various political issues such as the role of globalisation. Globalisation has meant that many EU countries now compete across national borders but having more unified policies would help ease the transaction costs of the different taxes and tariffs. The farming subsidies given by the EU are another political issue that creates much debate in world politics. New EU countries like Poland have been beneficiaries of the farming subsidies but have been criticised for their costly and inefficient farming techniques. Many EU policies are now focusing on the knowledge-based economy and in particularly technology industries so it will be interesting to see how the policies will change with regards to EU farming subsidies. Given that many EU countries such as France have part of their national identity associated with farming, the high level of EU subsidies being given to farming is a contentious issue.

The sixth chapter continues on from the previous chapter by further discussing the role of political parties in Europe. Tables are included that show the different political parties existing in European countries. Many EU countries have similar policies being promoted by their national governments but different political parties. The issue of what the author's term "euroscepticism" is addressed and includes a discussion of what European citizens are sceptical about and this includes attitudes towards various policies. The recent elections in Sweden are an example of how the traditional political parties usually in the form of being Social Democrats are now challenged by political parties proposing reforms. The challenge of European citizens being both eurosceptics and nationalistic are discussed that opens the

way for the EU to try to combine both schools of thought is considered. The authors propose a typology of nationalistic sentiment in Europe based on what European citizens feel about their country. The role of geography in understanding euroscepticism is proposed in terms of the older EU members being closer towards Northern Europe and the new EU members being more towards Eastern Europe and Southern Europe. Religion is discussed in the chapter and the authors highlight how the traditional religions may be challenged in the future by more immigrants coming from Islamic countries.

The seventh chapter further discusses politics but emphasises the relationship between politics, globalisation and individualism. European citizens are increasingly trying to balance globalisation with their national identity as businesses create products and services for the global market but differentiate them for individual countries. This process commonly referred to as glocalisation instead of globalisation refers to citizens identifying with the world market and their national market. The authors highlight that Europe is becoming more homogenised as goods and services now move more easily across national borders. There is a discussion on the role of “politikverdrossaheit” which means in German the feelings a person has when alienated from politics. This is a very interesting point made by the authors and a novel concept given that the English equivalent for the word does not exist. As institutions such as the EU increasingly have more power, politikverdrossaheit infers that European citizens are feeling left out of general discussions. In the media rich world in which most European citizens live, it is amazing that there seems to be a distinction between being involved in politics and watching politics. The chapter includes a number of comparisons between countries in Europe the most interesting I found to be that Dutch citizens rank the highest amount of interest in politics and Spain the lowest.

The eighth chapter discusses in broad terms what the future holds for EU. This is particularly important for those interested in future ramifications of current EU policies and events. The authors suggest that there are a number of scenarios that the EU might take. This form of scenario planning is a novel approach to take and is beneficial given that no one seems to know definitely what will happen in terms of EU policies such as the constitution and farming subsidies. These scenarios also allow the reader to be aware that the EU is influenced by a number of different events and people that make it unique and interesting to read about. After the eighth and last chapter there is an appendix that provides a detailed chronology of European integration in terms of treaties and key events, member states, economic integration, political integration, crises and setbacks. This timeline is useful in terms of comparing the influence of new members on policy initiatives.

This book is well written and researched so that it provides a timely addition to the material in existence on the EU and in more general Europe. The book is written in a topical thought provoking way so that instead of seeming to be a textbook it comes across more as a novel or policy document on the EU. I found it enjoyable to read and a welcome addition to current research existing on Europe. The citizens' perspective taken in the book makes it seem that a lot of effort has gone into trying to balance economic theory with social developments occurring in Europe. I commend the authors on their book and highly recommend those interested in recent and historical EU developments to read it.