

IEUSS REVIEW OF BOOKS

Mungiu-Pippidi, A. [Europe's Burden: Promoting Good Governance across Borders](#). Cambridge University Press, 2020.

The European Union (EU) prides itself on its firm commitment to promoting democracy and good governance. To help achieve this goal, it possesses several instruments including membership conditionality and development aid (among others). *Europe's Burden* is a thought-provoking critique of the EU's failure to fulfill its mandate, particularly in the field of corruption control. Mungiu-Pippidi offers a solid explanation of why the Union has underperformed in this issue field and provides realistic policy recommendations designed to reset its course. It is an important read not only for students and scholars but also for policymakers.

Consisting of 8 chapters, the volume opens with an illuminating example of how foreign intervention transformed Switzerland from a conflict-prone country with an ever-deficient budget and no public ethic in the 1800s into Europe's most competitive economy with full respect for ethical universalism in the 1900s. Mungiu-Pippidi convincingly asserts that what is labeled by the EU (and other actors) as "governance promotion" today are merely attempts to replicate this "Making of Switzerland" type of intervention. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 defines several concepts commonly used in the governance literature. In Chapter 3, Mungiu-Pippidi reviews various theories of change and constructs her own analytical framework. In Chapter 4, she provides an overview of the EU's strategies and instruments for good governance. The following three chapters offer in-depth analyses of the extent to which the EU has promoted good governance in old, new, and prospective members as well as several "outsiders" around the world. Chapter 8 concludes with recommendations for policymakers.

Chapter 2 offers a much-needed discussion of commonly used terms in the literature such as intervention and modernization. The discussion of how to define "good governance" and "corruption" is a welcome contribution as it offers a concise interpretation of these two loaded concepts. Moreover, Mungiu-Pippidi's review of the uses of the term "governance" in economics, historical sociology, and political science persuasively suggests that there is agreement among scholars in these fields regarding the conceptualization of this term. Her comparative approach successfully moves the chapter beyond the EU context and, therefore, provides scholars in different disciplines with valuable insight.

In Chapter 3, Mungiu-Pippidi lays out the foundations of her analytical framework. Following a detailed review of theories of change, she asserts that corruption control is an equilibrium determined by *opportunities/resources* for actors to engage in corrupt practices and *constraints* on actors' behavior. This equilibrium constitutes the basis of the Index of Public Integrity, which she uses liberally throughout the book to operationalize factors associated with governance performance such as administrative burden, budget transparency, and press freedom. Mungiu-Pippidi convincingly argues that control of corruption has a higher chance of success when there are external incentives for change when domestic will is missing. This is where international actors come into play. The chapter suggests that anti-corruption treaties have severely underperformed due to poor institutional design and the lack of monitoring and/or enforcement mechanisms. The subsequent chapters offer data-driven analyses elaborating on such criticism with a focus on the EU.

Chapter 4 initially explains how the EU's "infrastructure" to deal with corruption has developed over time. Various analyses here clearly show that EU aid has not had the intended impact due to the flawed design of its instruments and the inconsistencies in their operationalization. The only region where EU aid in the 2002-2014 period is correlated with meaningful improvement in corruption control is South-Eastern Europe. However, as the chapter notes, Turkey *wrongly* appears to be the only significant achiever here because the data does not capture its dramatic backslide since 2014. While the findings regarding EU aid's overall impact on judicial independence and press freedom are less gloomy, most EU aid projects lack a social accountability component. To address this shortcoming, Mungiu-Pippidi underlines the importance of empowering civil society to increase accountability.

The remainder of the book introduces in-depth analyses of several countries. Chapter 5 reveals that, due to the lack of an effective constraining mechanism and political will (at the national and the EU levels), poor governance has become the standard in almost all EU members (except for Northern Europe). The case studies of Greece and Italy indicate that European intervention has led to many formal changes in anti-corruption legislation but no meaningful institutional change to ensure successful implementation. Chapter 6 adopts a process-tracing approach to explore the impact of EU intervention where it has been the strongest: Central and Eastern Europe (in particular Romania), Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Turkey. The findings overwhelmingly suggest that EU influence on corruption control has been severely limited. Besides the reasons mentioned above, the EU's lack of support for civil society "on the ground" is another key determinant here. The picture does not look any brighter in Chapter 7, which focuses on "outside" countries like Ghana, Tunisia, and Ukraine (among a few others). Even in the limited number of cases where there

is significant improvement (Georgia), the findings suggest that domestic influence (not the EU) has been the engine behind reforms.

Chapter 8 serves as a final reminder of why the book deserves a special place in the literature as it offers EU policymakers step-by-step guidelines to promote sustainable anti-corruption practices in targeted countries. Not only does Mungiu-Pippidi reveal the shortcomings of the EU's current anti-corruption strategy but also she elaborates on sound policy recommendations customized for three different types of recipients: Countries where corruption is the norm and the rule of law is below average, countries with a developed economy and strong rule of law, and countries with high levels of corruption and heavy economic dependence on the EU.

Overall, its rich analytical content makes *Europe's Burden* an ideal text for students interested in developing a better understanding of the EU's (limited) impact on corruption control. Moreover, the author's elegant theory-building and solid research design are inspiring for junior and senior scholars of European integration. Finally, her detailed (and realistic) policy recommendations offer a bitter but also viable starting point for those policymakers who are genuinely committed to promoting good governance.

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