

IEUSS REVIEW OF BOOKS

Youngs, R. [The European Union and Global Politics](#). Red Globe Press (Bloomsbury), 2021. ([The European Union Series](#))

I know from personal experience that studying and teaching European Union (EU) related subjects comes with the risk of developing misconceptions about the EU's centrality, power, and influence in the world. *The European Union and Global Politics* is the book I wish I would have had access to during my own undergraduate and postgraduate studies many years ago. My books took me through all aspects of EU integration, decision-making, institutions, and policies, as well as the impact of EU policies on the rest of the world. However, looking back on my studies now, I realise I was never encouraged to consider the impact of international developments on the EU. Having broadened my focus to include Security Studies, I now see how easy it is to become absorbed by inward looking European perspectives when studying the EU. As Youngs rightfully states though, while this might have been understandable in the earlier stages of EU external action, a rapidly changing world means we can now no longer ignore the impact global developments have on the Union.

This book complements the more mainstream texts covering EU institutions, decision-making procedures, and policies very well, and provides a welcome and vital supplement to the outward looking perspectives on EU external action. It considers the EU's positionality in a continuously changing world. The book demonstrates how the Union's presence faces a wide range of external challenges, resulting in an ongoing battle for the EU to maintain its power. It argues that the EU is no longer a one-directional influencer, an exporter of norms and values, but is now itself being influenced by a new international order and a myriad of related challenges. The book is conceptually innovative and empirically rich, and a must-read for anyone with an interest in European Studies.

The book distinguishes itself from other textbooks by applying an inventive and original outside-in conceptual framework, reversing the traditional outward-looking approach to the study of the EU's role in the world. This framework allows for greater emphasis on how the EU is affected by and responds to international developments. It engages with the selected challenges through a lens of five themes: external challenges (and how the EU adjusts to them), unity versus diversity in the EU, a move away from the EU as a 'distinctive power', the introduction of protective security, and EU international influence. Through these themes, it reveals important adjustments that the EU's external actorness has made in recent years.

The book's empirical chapters all apply this conceptual framework methodically in a compelling manner. Challenges covered include a dwindling global order, the rise of protective security, geo-economic competition, enlargement, climate change, and democracy and human rights. The book furthermore engages with two geographical challenges that impact on the EU: geopolitical changes in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as war in Ukraine and the challenge presented by Russia. All these chapters are empirically impressive; the data provided presents a wealth of evidence with the latest information about ongoing developments. In addition, they portray thought-provoking analyses of how the EU has responded to change, and what this means for its global influence.

In short, the contributions of this book are both conceptual and empirical. It offers a much needed and fresh conceptual framework to help students and scholars make sense of how the EU responds to new and challenging international developments. It fills a gap in the literature by complementing mainstream academic debates with a conceptual approach that allows for a more systematic evaluation of the impact of the 'outside world' on the Union's behaviour. Empirically, the book's wealth of data across themes and geographical areas cannot be overrated, which means it will appeal to anyone looking to understand how current affairs influence the EU. While much debate has taken place on the EU's global role, less work has been done to

conceptualise its relationships with other actors and outside events. The book not only provides this conceptualisation, but it also applies it to informed data in an insightful manner.

This book is a vital source not only for students enrolled in European Studies programmes, but also for those studying International Relations and Security Studies at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Furthermore, students exploring international power relations, global governance, and international security issues will benefit from the detailed up-to-date empirical data and extensive analyses. In fact, this book is crucial to enable a more holistic approach to European Studies, thereby broadening the predominantly internal focus found in more traditional EU textbooks. Considering the pressing exogenous challenges that the EU has had to respond to, ignoring the 'outside-in' analysis is no longer an option.

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