

IEUSS REVIEW OF BOOKS

Bulmer, S. Parker, O. Bache, I., George, S. and Burns, C. *Politics in the European Union*, 5th ed., Oxford University Press, 2020

Writing successful EU texts brings considerable difficulties. Perhaps the greatest and ongoing difficulty, as I know only too well from personal experience, is pressure from the publisher to keep the book thoroughly updated, which is always a major challenge given that the European integration processes are seemingly constantly ongoing – both in terms of EU deepening (that is, the EU has unceasingly become ever more integrated over the years, in both institutional and policy terms) and also EU widening (that is, EU membership has grown to such an extent that it now covers almost all significantly-sized European states, including most of those in Central and Eastern Europe.)

At times, all authors of texts are tempted to ask of EU decision-makers: ‘why won’t you guys just stand still for a few minutes and let the dust settle on all of the changes you have been making?’ But, the policy-makers do not stand still, with the consequence that there are always new institutional, theoretical, and policy developments for textbook authors to describe and explain. Simon Bulmer and his colleagues at the University of Sheffield have long risen to this challenge in a wholly admirable manner by periodically producing informative new editions of their now well-established text that are both highly informative and easy-to-follow.

This latest edition is particularly useful in that it includes sections (running in total to over 150 pages) consisting of chapters on the subject area that students of EU Studies often find to be the most difficult and troublesome of all, namely integration theory. Moreover, the integration theory section in Bulmer *et al.*’s new edition is particularly useful not only because, unlike the contents of several competing texts, it is

actually present, but also because it includes valuable descriptions and explanations of the historiography of European integration theory (which can be something of a mystery to EU newcomers), but also clear and lucid accounts both of the nature of already well-established theories, including intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism, and also of new and emerging theoretical approaches, notably constructivism, critical political economy, and feminism.

Like most comparable textbooks on the EU, the bulk of the book focuses on history (including a new chapter that examines the recent crises in the EU –such as the eurozone and migration crises), EU policies and policy processes, and the EU institutions (including separate chapters on the Commission, the Council, the European Parliament, and the Court of Justice).

All chapters in the book have been thoroughly updated and are written in an easy-to-read and easy-to-follow manner.

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