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Book Review: Steven P. McGiffen, The European Union: A Critical Guide (London: Pluto Press, 2001, 200 pp., 35.00 hbk., 11.99 pbk.)

and

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Steven P. McGiffen, *The European Union: A Critical Guide* (London: Pluto Press, 2001, 200 pp., 35.00 hbk., 11.99 pbk.) and

Montserrat Guibernau (ed.), *Governing European Diversity* (London: Sage Publications with The Open University, 2001, 300 pp. £55.00 hbk., £18.99 pbk.).

Both books are intended as introductory texts to the European Union, but were written with different intentions and audiences in mind. McGiffen attempts to give a critical overview of the European Union's institutions, structures and working mechanisms in order to avoid ill-informed criticism but also to expose what he calls the myths of 'pro-EU propagandists' (p. xiv). His book is addressed to the general public and students as a basic guide to the EU to provide a basis for discussion about the political future of the Union. The compilation edited by Guibernau is one of an Open University Series on Governing Europe addressed to students of European affairs in the social sciences in general. Its purpose is to provide information and an evaluation of patterns of diversity and unity in Europe, to consider the emergence of a European identity and to explore processes of governance in Europe.

McGiffen, who works for the United Left Group in the European Parliament, divides his book into chapters on the treaties, the institutions, law-making procedures and policy areas such as CFSP, the Euro, Justice and Home Affairs, transport, the environment and industrial policy. The author admits to harbouring deep doubts about the European Union and rejects the determinism and inevitability of integration he finds to be inherent in much writing from and about the European Union. His chapters on the treaties and institutions are informative, if short, and interspersed with useful summarising boxes. However, his basic criticism of the Union—its lack of democracy—shows throughout the text: while rightly pointing to a low turn-out in European elections as a problem, he implies a lack of democracy in the set-up of European elections themselves. 'Clearly, the keener one is on the EU, the greater the chance of participation, and this

distorts the make-up of the Parliament' (p. 22). A fundamental doubt about EU policies manifests itself with the progression of chapters, culminating in the statement 'I have been unable to identify a single policy area in which the Treaty of Rome has had a beneficial effect' (p. 135). His criticism of the EU ultimately rests on a fundamental critique of capitalism and the neo-liberal agenda. The author sees the integrationist project as serving 'only one agenda—that of the multinational corporations' (p. 136). Thus, he calls into question the EU for subverting democracy by further removing power from citizens, imposing a free market logic, secrecy, and representation of only corporate interests. Rejecting a national perspective, he aims to show that the current EU is 'an obstacle to real co-operation across borders of language, culture and history' (p. 143).

While the purported 'straightforward account' (p. xiii) is not sustained and the presentation of facts is sometimes skewed, the book is nevertheless a useful contribution to the debate. It gives voice to a kind of criticism of the EU largely marginalised in the political debate. It has a good index and contains a valuable list of recommended reading as well as extensive references to relevant websites.

In comparison, *Governing European Diversity* represents the opposite of McGiffen's book in a number of respects. Written with a clearly academic purpose, it largely refrains from normative statements about the Union and aims to balance analysis with a presentation of facts. Focused on questions of diversity and the evolution of governance in Europe, the book explores a number of issue areas to illustrate the various dimensions of its underlying theme of diversity: regionalism, migration and citizenship, social movements, 'life politics', European and national identity, and the media. The introductory chapter outlines the main factors providing for European diversity and unity over time and presents the theme of governance. The exploration of the cultural frontiers of Europe over time and the presentation of the concept of governance could have merited a broader discussion. The restriction of space leads to a slightly superficial presentation that lacks references to the existing literature. It is also regrettable that the information on purpose, structure and content of the book is provided only at the end of the introductory chapter so that the reader misses the underlying thread at the start.

The ensuing studies of particular issue areas are well chosen and provide a good balance between the presentation of facts and analysis. The well-presented chapter on regionalism by James Anderson argues that a qualitative change in the relationship between the regional, national and EU level has taken place, but asserts the centrality of the member state level. Zig Layton-Henry's piece on migration and citizenship gives a comprehensive overview of the challenges that migration represents for the EU and its member states. Using Britain, France and Germany as case studies, he looks at and compares national responses to the challenges of

migration and of managing diverse societies. In a short section, he points to the main developments on the EU level and the tensions between EU citizenship and the rights of third-country nationals. In the chapter on social movements (Mark Smith), the example of the environmental movement is used to analyse changes in top-down and bottom-up governance processes. Changes in the socio-economic and cultural sphere and a failure of established parties to respond to popular concerns are presented as driving forces. The chapter concludes that the EU's ability to set realistic goals, verify results and secure the consent of the actors will be decisive for its success as a regulator. In another chapter, Catherine Lloyd looks at diversity in European 'life politics' and identifies dramatic changes in politics concerning family life and sexuality in the last decades, with rising divorce rates, increasing births outside marriages and falling fertility rates. She identifies as common to all European states a tension remaining between tradition and transformation. Nevertheless, the diversity of family forms across Europe remains characteristic for 'life politics'.

Asking 'What unites Europeans?', Josep Llobera finds that no single European public space has yet emerged, although European citizenship could play a role in fostering a European identity alongside national identities. He identifies linguistic diversity and emotional attachment as some of the factors privileging the national level as the focal point of identities. The well-structured chapter on media by Denis McQuail shows fragmented regulation across Europe and a common shift from the public to the private sphere. While the author acknowledges that national media policies are increasingly under international pressures and a rising percentage of news is concerned with European matters, he points out that coverage is largely 'domesticated' (p. 225). The interesting chapter on drugs and European governance (Eugene McLaughlin and Karim Murji) outlines the interaction of the global, European and national governance mechanisms as well as the role of governance 'from below'. The concluding chapter by Salvador Giner and Montserrat Guibernau summarises the findings and ties together the various themes, but remains too vague. It is hardly a new analysis when they say that the emergence of the EU as a governable entity depends 'on the strengthening of the Union's institutional network and its dialogue and interaction with a still incipient European civil society' (p. 266). Moreover, the authors deplore the lacking strength of civil society (p. 269) and point to the fact that a single European society has not yet been reached (p. 273) without providing the reader with indicators or thresholds to identify such an emerging society.

Guibernau's introductory volume is a mixed bag. While the opening and concluding chapters would have benefited from a more thorough analysis and the recommended reading on the general themes is rather eclectic, the chapters on the various policy fields will, on the other hand,

be highly useful to students. The layout of the book may have been improved by better structuring (highlighting key words or boxes in the margins) and the reference to other books of the Open University 'Governance' series in bold is unusual and seems unnecessary. Nevertheless, Guibernau's book achieves what McGiffen only promises to do: it gives a balanced and straightforward presentation of the facts and provides thoughtful analysis.

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