

Introduction: Political economy and European integration

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There is something odd about celebrating political economy approaches to the study of European integration at a time when non-economic factors appear to hold sway over popular attention. The 'war against terrorism', enlargement, the European Convention, and European identity are currently among the most prominent issues of public debate. Meanwhile, conversation is more muted in relation to trade, industrial policy and economic and monetary union (at least inside the eurozone). European priorities were not always arrayed in this manner.

Many authors from different points of departure have stressed the economic basis for European integration. Ernst Haas's original study of European integration assumed mostly economic policies to be at the core of the integration process (Haas 1958). Fritz Scharpf (1996) relaunched the concepts of negative and positive integration, which typically refer to taking away rules and regulations that obstruct economic integration, and the creation of common rules and policies (which are usually in the area of economic policies). Andrew Moravcsik (1998) famously (and controversially) argued that economics and economic interests lie at the heart of integration in the European Union (EU) culminating in the Treaty on European Union signed in Maastricht in 1992. These and many other contributions have shaped our understanding of the European integration process. But how far can such emphasis on the political economy carry us in our understanding of contemporary developments in Europe?

Of course, any answer to the question depends on how the 'emphasis' is structured and what we mean by 'political economy'. The argument that unites this collection of essays is that how we study the EU is as important as what we choose to analyse. Throughout, what is at issue is not just the political economy, but also the political economy approach. The aim here is to provide the student of European integration with a framework for inquiry that can be more general than one which merely analyses an individual case study of one aspect of European integration. In a sense, we may also show the influence of

work by Haas, Moravcsik and Scharpf as well as many others who are cited in the articles which follow. We do not pretend to be original in positing this argument but we do hope to illustrate and to persuade that such an understanding of the relevance of political economy has merit. In particular we hope to offer a bridge between more specific accounts of European integration and the more general approaches, with political economy representing the broader literature.

The juxtaposition of methodological and substantive considerations makes for a difficult division of labour. When we originally conceived of this collection, we sought to get two representatives from international political economy and two from comparative. For each subdivision, we asked for one paper on agentic approaches and one on more structural or institutional accounts. Almost immediately, however, the Cartesian elegance of that division foundered on the more complicated reality of the methods and the subject we hoped to analyse. We simply could not do justice to a comprehensive survey of the existing literature of what might be categorized as political economy approaches to the study of European integration and nor did we really want to try.

The resulting papers offer extended illustrations of the more general point we hope to make. 'Political economy' offers a useful lens for studying European integration not just because it focuses attention on the intersection between politics and economics but also, and more broadly, because it provides a range of tools for analysing European integration issues. We claim that political economy would offer useful tools both in the typical political economy fields of study (trade, industrial policy, monetary integration) as well as in areas of study where the political and economic overlap is less apparent (for example, foreign policy, social policy, the construction of Europe, and European identity). Rather than outlining political economy approaches as a whole, we focus more narrowly on the nature of methodological divisions (Verdun), on the importance of omitted variables (Cowles), on the analysis of institutionalized relationships (Kassim and Menon), and on the implications of particular notions of causality (Jones). At the same time, we touch on a range of substantive concerns relating to analysis, decision-making, constitutional design, and popular support.

The intended audience for these papers is not limited to students and scholars of political economy. Although we hope to make some contribution to debates that are taking place in the literature, our larger objective is to provide a theoretical lens through which non-political economists can view and hence understand and participate in these debates. Thus the literature reviews in the following papers have a clear agenda which is to establish points of departure for opening up the debate. We leave it to the reader to judge the merits of this stylistic choice.

These papers constitute the first formal activity of the EU political economy interest section of the European Union Studies Association (EUSA) in the United States. The papers were all originally presented in draft form at the

May 2001 Biennial ECSA-USA Conference in Madison, Wisconsin.¹ The discussion of these papers was lively and the benefits derived by the authors have been considerable. Our ambition is that this activity will be the first in a long series of similar events. As editors, we would like to thank Jeremy Richardson and our eight anonymous referees for their support and attention throughout the review process. We would also like to thank our three other contributors, Maria Green Cowles, Hussein Kassim and Anand Menon, for participating and for agreeing to abide by our numerous requests. What lies in front of you is a collection of papers which aim to start a dialogue on political economy and European integration. We hope for a fruitful debate in the years to come.

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NOTE

1 EUSA was called the European Community Studies Association (ECSA)-USA until and including that conference. It changed its name immediately thereafter.

REFERENCES

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