



European Institutions, Democratization, and Human Rights Protection in the European Periphery

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The European Union (E.U.), along with the Council of Europe, NATO, and the Office of Security and Cooperation in Europe are regional organizations which, despite their different missions, all are designed to support democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. The E.U. has required that all of its candidate countries for potential and actual membership adhere to these three criteria, along with free market practices, since its 1993 Copenhagen, inter-governmental summit. In this book, experts have contributed chapters on the European record of induced improvements in a variety of countries.

Current scholarship has debated whether the rational incentives of accession to membership (conditionality theory); the normative power of European identity (socialization theory); or international legal processes (institutional theory) have explained what some claim are significant improvements. Other scholars demur, arguing that the improvements have been superficial or ephemeral, or conversely, that real improvement would have occurred anyway. Still others argue that real improvements are reversible, especially after E.U. membership is attained and regimes revert to former or new ways that erode democratization. The E.U. and its peer institutions, they suggest, are not heavy anchors to democracy in periods of economic distress, rising nationalism and extremism. Yet others argue that out of these challenges, the E.U. has saved the Euro, built even stronger institutions, and remains a beacon of desired ideals and membership among countries that conceivably could graduate from its partner organizations and eventually join the E.U. as well.

Each chapter assesses what difference the E.U. and other regional organizations have made in the record of a particular country. These country chapters include those: that were candidate countries and became member states (Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 and Croatia in 2013); those that are now officially candidate countries (Iceland, Macedonia, and since 2014, Serbia); those have all signed stabilization agreements, which are usually precursors of E.U. candidature (Montenegro, Bosnia, Albania, and since 2014, despite being regarded as too large, the Ukraine, and too poor, Moldova); and finally, a new country (Kosovo), despite its non-recognition by five E.U. member states, which nonetheless appears to be on the road to eventual E.U. candidacy. This study is a highly nuanced picture of a varying European record fraught with conflicting interests, but portraying a picture of outer Europe struggling to improve because it seeks membership in a still powerful supranational organization.

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