

Alistair Jones. *Britain and the European Union*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007. x + 189 pp. \$18.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-7486-2428-7.



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Britain's relationship with the European Union (EU) continues to fascinate students of European integration. Of all the EU member states, Britain is regarded as being one of the least committed to the European project. It is a situation that has been influenced by a perception that Britain missed the bus when it did not participate in the negotiations that led to the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Moreover, when Britain did eventually join in 1973, the succeeding years of membership were dominated by debates over the renegotiation of its terms of membership, the British budget problem, and opt-outs from the social chapter and the single currency. These events have meant that Britain has been portrayed in numerous studies as an awkward, reluctant, and semi-detached member state at odds with Europe. It has even been suggested that Britain is an allergic European. Yet, the reality of Britain's engagement with the European project does, in fact, highlight a far more complex picture than this simplistic view suggests. In the early postwar years Britain's relationship with Europe was framed within an active foreign policy, concerning which there were notable reasons why it did

not want to pursue deeper European integration. When Britain eventually joined, the debates over the budget rebate often overshadowed the fact that Britain was one of the most committed member states when it came to implementing European legislation at the domestic level. Thus it could be argued that Britain's commitment to European integration could be said to be far greater than that of most other member states.

Alistair Jones underscores these points in his useful contribution to the study of Britain's relationship with the EU. As part of the Politics Study Guide series, this is a book aimed at the undergraduate student body. The purpose is to provide a basic introduction to the subject of Britain and the EU. In undertaking this task, Alistair Jones has departed from the path taken in traditional studies of Britain and the EU. These have tended to focus on either providing a historical survey of membership or examining specific dimensions of membership, such as the single market and the impact on government. One problem of these studies is that students are not always introduced to the basic dynamics and key debates which sur-

round Britain's relationship with the EU. This includes the need to be aware of EU institutional development, the relationship between deeper and wider integration, the impact on domestic political parties, and the role of the public in shaping government policy.

From this perspective, Alistair Jones has divided his study into ten chapters that are supported by a plethora of boxes and tables. He clearly organizes the book in a logical fashion, with chapters looking at the history and development of the EU, the role of the institutions, common policies, British influence within the EU, intergovernmentalism versus supranationalism, expansion versus integration, political parties, and public opinion. These core chapters are framed by an introduction that sets out the key issues and a conclusion that debates the extent to which Britain can rightly be depicted as a reluctant European. All of the chapters benefit from a summary of the key points, a glossary of terms, potential examination questions, useful websites and suggestions for further reading.

An important benefit of this structure is that students will get a useful snapshot of the key issues that surround Britain's relationship with the EU. The book is particularly good at conveying many of the complex points surrounding membership in a straightforward and easily accessible style. Students will certainly welcome the way in which the chapters are broken down into clear subheadings; this emphasis on pedagogy will ensure that the book is likely to be a favorite among them.

But while the important strength of the book is the way in which it gets students to consider the extent of the impact of European integration on Britain, from the impact on central government to the impact on local government and the regions, the trade-off for providing this broad survey is that the chapters do not go into a great deal of depth on any of these issues. The historical examination of Britain's membership of the EU is, for in-

stance, covered in just seventeen pages. This is a predicament that Alistair Jones has obviously given some thought to and the suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter partly make up for this deficit in content. There are, however, some notable omissions from the further reading at the end of each chapter. Moreover, given that the text is aimed at the introductory student market, it might have been useful for some narrative text to have commented on the relative strengths of the further reading sources so that students could be more directed in their reading.

Taken as a whole, Alistair Jones has written a very useful book. Although introductory studies that focus on the basics are often criticized for lack of sufficient detail, this study makes a considerable contribution by illustrating why Britain's membership of the EU cannot be summarized in terms of debates over the budget or the question of sovereignty. The issues are far more complex and the general public is often unaware of the extent to which EU membership has brought significant gains for the citizens of the member states. It should therefore be hoped that this user-friendly book will help to inform an educated debate on a subject that is often reduced to headlines presented in the popular press.

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