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Alasdair Blair. *The Longman Companion to The European Union Since 1945.* New York: Longman, 1999. xv + 384 pp. $59.50 (paper), ISBN 978-0-582-36884-2; $92.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-582-36885-9.

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The European Union Since 1945

Research and writing on the complex and quickly evolving European Union (EU) abounds. Good work by political scientists, economists, historians and others is published with increasing rapidity on topics ranging from the EU's nascent single currency to the prospects for eastward enlargement. The crowded field of EU scholarship is indeed a potent measure of the theoretical and substantive importance attached to the fifteen member union by theorists and practitioners on both sides of the Atlantic. The minutiae of EU policies, institutional configurations and decision-making processes can, however, overwhelm the uninitiated student, researcher, or professional. It is in the spirit of helping such an audience overcome the EU's intricacies that Alasdair Blair's *The European Union Since 1945* is written. While the book provides nothing in the way of original research, it does ultimately serve its intended purpose and should be recommended as a handy desk reference.

The book is divided into thirteen sections. The weakest and least useful of these is oddly the first. The two-page Section I ("Overview") provides a 1951-1997 timeline as well as definitions of select terms (e.g., Council of Ministers, European Parliament, Legislative Process, etc.). This material is covered in some depth in subsequent sections and therefore proves unnecessary and ultimately redundant. Indeed, Section II ("Chronology") contributes a much more comprehensive 65-page survey of key dates in European integration. The chronology charts the union's evolution, beginning with its postwar ideals and exigencies and moving through the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, the Treaties of Rome, multiple enlargements, and the recent Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties.

Blair does a nice job of identifying crucial dates and events, and in so doing produces a ready resource for lecturers intending to document for their students the march of European unification. Section III ("Europe in Crisis: Detailed Chronologies") documents three particularly poignant events in the EU's evolution: De Gaulle's 1963 rejection of UK membership in the then-European Community; 1990s-style Euroskepticism marked by the initial Danish rejection of the Maastricht Treaty and Britain's exit from the Exchange Rate Mechanism; and the 1996 mad cow disease scare over British beef. It is at this point that the reader gets a first hint that Blair, a Research Fellow at Nottingham University, tailors the book to an audience that may be especially interested in the United Kingdom's role and experiences in European integration. This effort is made explicit later in the book (Section IX, "Britain and Europe"), wherein Britain's tenuous relations with the continent are documented. While it is clear the Blair wishes to "stick with just the facts," it also becomes evident by this point in the book that the detailed chronologies would be aided by some descriptive narrative.

The book's fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters provide some of the work's most valuable material. "European Institutional Development" walks the reader through the nuts and bolts of the EU's primary decision-making arenas: e.g., Commission, Parliament, Council of Ministers, Court of Justice, Committee of Regions, and Central Bank. "Major Community Policies" supplies helpful, albeit short, overviews of agricultural, social, economic, monetary, and single market policies. "Europe and the Wider World" describes the objectives and treaty bases for the emerging Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as well as the EU's more clearly articulated development assistance and humanitarian policies. Readers who have, for example, heard the term "CFSP" bandied about in recent years yet who know little of substance about it will find in the book a practical introduction and guide. The remainder of the book yields summaries of twenty-six EU summits (from the 1978 European Council meeting in Bremen to the 1998 Council meeting in Vienna), a quick description of the political characteristics (e.g., structure, leadership) of each of the Member

States, and biographies of key figures in the history of European integration as well as an array of contemporary office-holders. Students will be especially appreciative of the 73-page glossary (Section XI), which contains definitions of terms from "Accession" to "Yaoundé Convention." An annotated bibliography points readers interested in expanding upon the treatment in this book toward academic research as well as official EU documents. The bibliography will be of clear assistance to students, although more experienced EU-watchers will be disappointed that the listing includes only English-language texts and sources.

There is much to commend about this book as a reference source. It is largely accurate and is certainly expansive in its coverage. As such it can be an invaluable companion to the existing corpus of literature on the EU. Instructors teaching introductory courses on the EU should consider requiring their students to purchase the book as a supplement to more academic treatises. At a minimum, it should be placed on library reserve for such courses. For their part, scholars should keep a copy nearby if no other reason than the detailed chronologies. Professionals in non-EU countries who may encounter the EU in some venue should likewise consider the book and use it in much the same way a traveler to a foreign country would consult a pocket phrase book.

That said, one must quibble a bit with the promise made on the book's back cover to provide "information and analysis on all the key policy developments including economic and monetary union." Information yes, analysis no. An American audience might, further, be disappointed by the minimal coverage given to US-EU ties and tensions that are so salient given persistent headlines from the "banana war," the controversies over hormone-treated beef, and the earlier skirmishes over European business ventures in Cuba in the wake of the Helms-Burton Act. Readers must beware that because of the EU's "process of near constant change and adaptation" (p. 7) the book's accuracy is diminished in places simply because events have outpaced it. For example, although published in June 1999 the book fails to mention the events of early 1999 that constitute perhaps the most serious crisis of the EU's history, namely the resignation en masse of the European Commission amidst allegations of financial mismanagement. The book describes how the European Parliament's power over the Commission "has yet to be used" (p. 93); yet, it was indeed the Parliament's threat to dismiss the Commission by passing a motion of censure that brought down Jacques Santer's twenty-member Commission in March 1999. Blair cannot be faulted for this omission; it is, however, a cautionary flag for users that use of the book as a reference must be supplemented by more up-to-date sources.

Despite these limitations, the book remains a important contribution to the understanding of the European Union and its multifaceted experiments in economic, political, and social cooperation.

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