



FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Published by the Council on Foreign Relations

[International Editions](#) | [Newsstand Finder](#) | [Job Board](#) | [Account Management](#) | [RSS](#) | [Newsletters](#)

SEARCH

[Login](#) | [Register](#) | [\(0\) My Cart](#)

What to Read on the European Union

By [Kathleen R. McNamara](#)

March 9, 2010

Summary: An annotated *Foreign Affairs* syllabus on the European Union.

KATHLEEN R. MCNAMARA is Associate Professor of Government and Foreign Service and Director of the Mortara Center for International Studies at Georgetown University.

Today's European Union, with its deep integration spanning a variety of policy arenas long thought to be the sole purview of sovereign nations, is a surprising and anomalous political creature. Neither simply an intergovernmental organization nor a full-fledged nation-state, it has resisted simple categorization -- and has repeatedly defied the predictions of scholars and pundits. Today, the EU sits at a difficult crossroads. Its dramatic increase in policy capacity has yet to be matched with mechanisms of democratic representation or streamlined decision-making, leaving it less than effective and often unloved. The best scholarship on the EU illuminates its fitful history, situates it in a broader theoretical context, and helps readers understand the challenges its unique form of governance presents.

***The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces, 1950-1957 (revised edition).* By Ernst B. Haas. University of Notre Dame Press, 2004.**

[Purchase at B&N.com](#) | [Purchase at Amazon.com](#)

***The Institutionalization of Europe.* Edited by Neil Fligstein, Wayne Sandholtz, and Alec Stone Sweet. Oxford University Press, 2001.**

[Purchase at B&N.com](#) | [Purchase at Amazon.com](#)

Required reading for anyone interested in the roots of today's EU, Ernst Haas' monumental work, first published in 1958, founded the field of European Union studies. In this sprawling book, Haas lays down the initial premise for functionalism, the idea that establishing policy capacity in one area will likely produce spillover effects in other areas -- with the result being that private and public actors will continue to push for ever greater integration. The founders of the EU themselves appear to have been driven by similar views, intending their creation as a way to lock in peace on a warring continent. Neil Fligstein, Wayne Sandholtz, and Alec Stone Sweet offer a sophisticated, contemporary assessment of the ways such dynamics have played out in dramatic institutional developments across a variety of European policy spheres.

***The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power From Messina to Maastricht.* By Andrew Moravcsik. Cornell University Press, 1998.**

[Purchase at B&N.com](#) | [Purchase at Amazon.com](#)

A modern landmark for the study of the EU, Andrew Moravcsik calls attention not to the subtle, incremental development of the EU described by the functionalists but rather to the forceful role of national governments and their leaders in moving integration forward. His magisterial overview of the pivotal historical moments of European integration, from its beginnings in 1958 to the Maastricht Treaty, reveals the role of domestic commercial interests in pressuring political elites in key countries to negotiate treaties such as those that established the early common market, later dramatically removed barriers in the Single European Act, and created the euro and EMU. Moravcsik's "intergovernmental" approach provides a crucial complement to the functionalist story, reminding us of the key role that national political leaders have played in the European experiment.

***European Identity.* Edited by Jeffrey T. Checkel and Peter J. Katzenstein. Cambridge University**

Press, 2009.[Purchase at B&N.com](#) | [Purchase at Amazon.com](#)***Euroclash: The EU, European Identity, and the Future of Europe.* By Neil Fligstein. Oxford University Press, 2008.**[Purchase at B&N.com](#) | [Purchase at Amazon.com](#)***Eurostars and Eurocities: Free Movement and Mobility in an Integrating Europe.* By Adrian Favell. Blackwell Publishing, 2008.**[Purchase at B&N.com](#) | [Purchase at Amazon.com](#)

Figuring out what the EU is can be hard -- but deciding who the Europeans are can be even harder. Early theorists of European integration anticipated a gradual replacement of national political identities with a shared sense of "Europeanness." This has not come to pass. Instead, something more interesting has happened: variations within countries and across social classes, age groups, and professions in the way people perceive themselves and their affinity to Europe. Jeffrey Checkel and Peter Katzenstein's edited volume provides a nuanced overview of the processes of political identity formation, while Adrian Favell investigates at the ground level how a group of "eurostars" (those professionals taking advantage of the single labor market of the EU to live and work outside their home countries) have a very mixed experience of assimilation. Fligstein's study of the ways in which the benefits of a single European market are unevenly distributed across income groups offers a cautionary tale for enthusiasts of European integration while offering up sociological analysis of the finest order.

The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century.* By Robert Cooper. Atlantic Monthly Press, 2004.**[Purchase at B&N.com](#) | [Purchase at Amazon.com](#)The United States of Europe: The New Superpower and the End of American Supremacy.* By T. R. Reid. Penguin Press, 2004.**[Purchase at B&N.com](#) | [Purchase at Amazon.com](#)

What role does the EU play on the global stage? Is it likely to ever get its act together in the foreign policy realm? The geopolitical stance of the EU and its superpower (non)status is one of the most hotly contested and open-ended areas of concern for EU watchers. Robert Cooper's provocative book lays out one vision for the EU in a broader geopolitical context as a normative postmodern superpower, a powerhouse because of the attractiveness of its liberal, rule-based system of governance (as opposed to a traditional military power like the United States). T. R. Reid's book is a cheerleading tour of the EU during a more sanguine, prefinancial-crisis time, yet its astute observations about the ways in which the EU is exerting its influence in the world are worth paying attention to, just as much as it is instructive to see what Reid's euro optimism has gotten wrong. Both books are written for a broad general audience and make for enjoyable reading.

***What Is Wrong With the EU and How to Fix It.* By Simon Hix. Polity Press, 2008.**[Purchase at B&N.com](#) | [Purchase at Amazon.com](#)

If you can read only one book on this list, make it this one. Simon Hix's crisp and clear diagnosis of the EU's problems focuses, counterintuitively, on the need for more, rather than less, politicization -- but politicization of the right kind. He argues that the EU's ability to undertake needed economic reforms and define its place in the world would be enhanced by clearer contestation between the winners and losers of its policies, allowing for the normal pull and haul of politics rather than the current default to technocratic solutions tempered with frequent deadlock. In addition, bringing more of the EU's decisions into the open would address the widespread apathy and disengagement that Europe's citizens feel about the EU's machinations. Given the astonishing developments of the past 50 years that have propelled the EU to where it is today, and the continued political challenges that are likely to plague it given contemporary economic distress, addressing the EU's shortcomings is a nonnegotiable goal. Hix's book charts a path forward.

Related

ESSAY, JAN 1965

The Search for Consensus

Paul-Henri Spaak

THE politics of Western Europe center around two great achievements--the Atlantic Alliance and the Common Market. At this point in time, one would be blind not to see that both are in danger. How

ESSAY, JAN/FEB 2008

Europe's Eastern Promise

Ronald D. Asmus

After the Cold War, NATO and the EU opened their doors to central and eastern Europe, making the continent safer and freer than ever before. Today, NATO and the EU must articulate a new rationale for

ESSAY, NOV/DEC 2006

Danger and Opportunity in Eastern Europe

F. Stephen Larrabee

The recent emergence of nationalist and populist forces in eastern Europe, coupled with the rise of Russia, now threatens to derail efforts toward further EU integration. weaken

could this have come about? [Read](#)

enlarging still further, once again extending democracy and prosperity to the East, this time in the face of a more powerful and defiant Russia. [Read](#)

NATO, erode the continent's stability, and damage U.S. interests. Washington must ensure that the region's new politics do not damage the European project, for a strong and cohesive EU is in everyone's interest. [Read](#)
