

British Government and Politics: Balancing Europeanization and Independence, by M. L. Mannin (Plymouth, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2010, ISBN 9780742536852); xx+381pp, £31.95 pb.

The work integrates the study of British politics with a consideration of the impact of europeanization. As such, it is structured as a conventional tour of the main elements of the British political system, working from structural factors, through institutions and into some policy areas. The text is clearly written and well-produced, with up-to-date material (including a postscript to bring events up to mid-2009) and helpful textboxes to explain particular points. Where it differs from other texts is in its efforts to highlight the changes that membership of the European Union (EU) has had on politics, policy and polity, treating this as an integral part of the system, rather than as a bolt-on or as an afterthought.

This integration is both the strength and the weakness of the book. On the positive side, the work represents a useful corrective to those British politics textbooks that fail to address the EU as a factor: all too often there is just a half-hearted chapter on 'Europe' or something noted in foreign policy. However, there is still not enough depth in this book to take the reader very far into europeanization as a subject of research: there is only a brief introduction to the subject in the introduction which is not elaborated on later on. This is made more problematic given the definition that Mannin settles upon for europeanization is not necessarily one with which all readers would agree. Likewise, the focus on the EU leaves insufficient space to adequately explore the other influences on British politics, not least the bilateral relations that the UK has with European states. Indeed, the inclusion in the annex of a briefly annotated explanation of the EU, taken from the Foreign Office website, does not suggest particularly high expectations of readers' knowledge of the Union itself.

Consequently, it is difficult to know at whom this book is aimed. As an introduction to British politics, this book as a useful role to play in giving students a different perspective from more mainstream accounts. However, its lack of depth or clear theoretical engagement with europeanization limits its usefulness as a core text for a course on that subject.

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