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# 1. Introduction: Understanding the European Union in the 21st century

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There is no shortage of books on the European Union (EU) in the literature. The experience of European integration has attracted the attention of many social scientists, at the crossroads of the study of international organizations, public policy analysis, and the more normative issues of political theory.

## THE EUROPEAN UNION BEYOND ITS CRISES

There is often a temptation to analyse the European Union through its crises. However, it is an analytical limit to consider the European Union only in terms of crises. It also produces rules on a daily basis that affect the economic and political future of European Member States without necessarily being the subject of extensive conflict. There is a normality in the political work of the European Union that must not be forgotten simply because of the focus on history making events such as Brexit or the debt crisis within the Economic and Monetary Union. For anyone thinking about a Companion to the European Union, the question of its structure and special added value immediately arises. The main challenge is precisely how to capture the normality of the European Union's politics without neglecting moments of crisis and political breakdown. This is exactly what we are proposing in this edition.

To do this, we feel important to act in a similar diversity to the European Union, i.e., by bringing together a range of excellent scholars from different Member States and different disciplines and academic traditions. The social sciences too often suffer from a kind of theoretical and methodological 'clannism' that a Companion must absolutely avoid. The aim is to offer readers, especially undergraduate and graduate students, a collection of concise and well-documented chapters that can be read independently of each other. A bit like what used to be called in the past an encyclopaedia, the Companion is a book that does not necessarily aim to develop one specific research hypothesis, but seeks to be very well informed, clearly written and with bibliographical references helping go further on every topic related to the European Union. The Companion is divided into five parts.

## THEORIES AND CONCEPTS

In the first part, the authors outline the main theoretical approaches that have been developed to analyse the European Union from the perspective of social sciences (four chapters).

While the number of theoretical approaches has increased spectacularly since the beginning of European integration in the 1950, three grand theories remain central in structuring the debate: the founding theory of European integration, neofunctionalism, followed, after the

## 2 *The Elgar companion to the European Union*

Empty-Chair-Crisis of 1962 by the development of an intergovernmental reading of European affairs, leading to the theory of liberal intergovernmentalism at the beginning of the 1990 to, and finally, constructivism, focusing on the influence of ideas and cognitive frames on decision-making processes of the European Union. In Chapter 2, Sabine Saurugger presents the core elements of these theories as well as their historical development as answers to specific empirical phenomena in European integration. However, in the last decade, these theories have been increasingly challenged by ‘real world events’. New variants of these theories have emerged which are presented and discussed with regard to their capacity to ask relevant questions and guide scholars and the public in their analysis of how to make sense of empirical developments in European integration.

New institutionalism developed as a research agenda in EU studies from the 1990s. It reflected the EU’s deepening integration arising from the single market and the Maastricht Treaty as well as wider developments in political science and practice, including the ‘governance turn’. Beyond identifying the importance of institutions to political and policy outcomes, the precise imprint of institutions came to be defined by the different variants of institutionalism. Rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism, sociological institutionalism and, most recently, discursive institutionalism developed with different methods, assumptions and research foci. In Chapter 3, Simon Bulmer explores the institutionalist turn, the differences between the four variants and their analytical contribution, including principal-agent analysis and the ‘failing forward’ perspective. It takes stock of the insights each variant of institutionalism has made to analysis of the EU, while pointing to possible future research arising from recent policy challenges and crises.

According to François Foret, the search for legitimization has become the most pressing challenge for the European Union. Legitimization is understood as the social process by which actors justify their ends and means and strive to maximize the congruence between the ideal and actual political order. In Chapter 4, François Foret documents the main political and intellectual debates and the key historical moments shaping the EU as a political community in-the-making. It then offers two case studies related to recent communicative and policy narratives of the EU: ‘European values’ and ‘way of life’. The conclusion offers some prospects for the future.

In Chapter 5, Kalypso Nicolaïdis and Ulrike Liebert provide an overview of the main elements of democratic theory, its philosophical tenets and concrete policy implications. It argues that the democratic third way is more demanding politically and sociologically than the goal of a federal state, grappling as it does with the uneasy but indispensable entanglements between peoples, and not only states. The chapter is structured in four parts. The first and second succinctly situate democratic theory (1) as part of critical social theory both in positive/descriptive terms and in normative terms, (2) in relation to other theories of European integration, specifically liberal intergovernmentalism, as well as functionalism and constructivism. The third (3) addresses its critics while highlighting its fluid and contested nature. The fourth (4) reviews open questions, contentions and dilemmas regarding European democracy and highlights some key questions for future research. The chapter concludes by pointing to the challenges ahead.

## APPROACHES AND METHODS

The second part analyses the EU through the lenses of history, law, sociology and international political economy, as well as through the methodological controversies at work in European Union studies (six chapters).

In Chapter 6, Laurent Warlouzet explains that the field of European integration history has been revamped. It has moved away from the old-fashioned traditional debate between the federalist narrative and Alan Milward's *Rescue of the Nation* book (1992), which has remained influential, nonetheless. Nowadays the field is blossoming thanks to recourse to even more diversified archival records and the studies of new types of actors – notably European institutions and transnational networks. It has renewed our perspective on more general debates, such as those on global history, neoliberalism, and the nature of European institutions in international relations.

In Chapter 7, Lola Avril explores the relationship between law and the EU and the way this relationship has been addressed in social science literature, in particular political science. It highlights that the initial framing operated a triple narrowing, focusing on one category of law – judgments – and one institution – the Court of Justice of the European Union. Finally, the relationship between law and the EU described in this first literature is, following a neo-functionalist perspective, that of a deepening of the integration process through law. The chapter then presents the scientific developments of the last few decades, in particular how political science has dealt with this relationship through the prism of classical integration theories before prompting a sociological and historical turn in the study of European law. This turn revealed the full political dimension of law and placed the Court in a network of institutions and actors. Finally, the chapter reviews the most recent work on the role of law in the European 'polycrisis'.

In Chapter 8, Céleste Bonnamy and Hugo Canihac show that the use of rigorous sociological methods to investigate the social transformations brought about by the emergence of the European Union (EU) constitutes the core of the scientific subfield known as 'sociology of the EU'. It revolves around concepts such as European identity, transnational fields, Europeanization or social integration. The chapter first presents the historical development of the sociology of the EU, and the early debates it faced. Then, it delves into the main issues with which sociologists of the EU are busy today, and reflects on the new directions the discipline has been following in recent years.

In Chapter 9, Mark Copelovitch and Stefanie Walter discuss how insights from international political economy (IPE) research, and political economy research more generally, improve our understanding of the constraints under which European countries cooperate and interact in the context of the EU. International political economy is the study of how domestic and international politics shapes the economy beyond the nation state, and how the international economy shapes both domestic and international politics. This chapter reviews some of the areas where IPE research has made significant contributions to our understanding of EU politics and economics, discusses historical developments and current policy debates, and sketches out the main challenges and promising avenues for EU-related IPE research. A key insight is that the political economy trade-offs and political conflicts confronting EU policymakers and national politicians in EU Member States are not entirely novel, but rather parallel similar trade-offs and struggles across space and time in the global economy.

Interviews and *in situ* observations have been at the heart of research on European integration since at least the mid-1970s. These two methods gradually became standardized in the 1990s. Yet, contrary to other subfields of social sciences, the use of these methods has not been systematically and reflexively assessed within EU studies itself. The contribution this text written by Thibaut Joltreau and Andy Smith therefore seeks to make is to revisit these research techniques successively, discuss what they have brought to EU studies, and how the latter could do even better with these methods. In this Chapter 10, they show firstly that research on European integration can and should benefit from generic scientific propositions which reflexively analyse the use of semi-structured interviews. Such guidance enables research to go considerably beyond mere ‘fact-finding’ to target instead recurrent and structuring actor practices and representations of ‘reality’. The chapter then proceeds to describe the opportunities and constraints offered to researchers who have conducted *in situ* observations within EU-relevant political arenas. Finally, they conclude on the benefits of EU studies now taking a further step towards rigorously constructed mixed-methods research designs which provide researchers with robust options for triangulating interviews and observatory participation with other qualitative methods and – when relevant – quantitative methods as well.

Quantitative analyses of the EU have flourished over the years after being largely absent in this field of research. Yet, the existing literature provides few historical accounts and almost no contemporary overview mapping out whether and how political scientists have analysed the EU using quantitative analyses over the years. In Chapter 11, Thomas Laloux and Cal Le Gall propose to fill this gap by providing an historical overview of the development of quantitative analyses of the EU until the 2000s. In addition, they survey the evolution of quantitative analyses of the EU in the main journals dedicated to European integration and examine the main topics studied in this framework. By taking a step back from the production of quantitative knowledge in EU studies, they identify blind spots and gaps thereby suggesting new avenues of research.

## GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY

In the third part, the authors analyse the range of actors and decision-making processes specific to the EU, including non-governmental actors such as political parties, interest groups and citizens, and also a synthesis of specific research on Brexit (six chapters).

In Chapter 12, Olivier Costa presents the key institutions involved in EU governance (Commission, European Parliament, Council, European Council) and the way they interact in policy-making. He underlines the fundamental originality of the ‘Community method’ invented in the 1950s, and describes the main evolutions of the EU institutional system, taking into account both the formal changes that occurred and the development of informal practices. Then, the chapter underlines the complex relations that have emerged with the institutionalization of the European Council and the progressive empowerment of the European Parliament. Overall, the chapter highlights the three main logics that are at play in the EU institutional governance. First, it shows that the ‘Community method’ is not dead yet. However, the EU has also undergone a reinforcement of the intergovernmental logic that emerged in the 1960s, and that has been vivified by the various crises which hit the EU since the mid-2000. Paradoxically, there is a third trend, that takes the form of a deep process of parliamentariza-

tion of EU governance. EU institutional governance is thus complex and ambiguous, but also efficient and resilient.

In Chapter 13, Aline Bartenstein and Wolfgang Wessels explore the role of Member States in the EU, highlighting the position of Member States as ‘masters of treaties’ and their central role in the institutional architecture. Against this background, they discuss the theoretical approaches that differ considerably in the significance they give to Member States and, consequently, how Member States cope with European integration. They identify a fundamental dilemma of national states between trying to jointly solve the problems in their national interest and their basic instinct to preserve national ‘sovereignty’. The European Council is the main arena in which the highest representatives of the masters of the treaty deal with this challenge. Given the output and impact of the consensus-based decisions of this key institution, they argue that the nation leaders themselves, through limited actions, have transformed the EU and also their own role in European politics.

EU institutions are sometimes depicted as ‘lobbyists’ paradise’ where especially business interest representatives will find a favourable hearing for their wishes, concerns and political interests. In Chapter 14, Marcel Hanegraaff and Joost Berkhout identify a number of unique features of the EU lobbying environment: a narrow EU-only media environment, multilevel institutional structure and the market-regulatory policy focus of the EU. They subsequently discuss existing academic studies into the mobilisation, strategies and policy influence of all organizations that attempt to influence EU decision-making. Due to the Transparency Register, the organizations mobilized to lobby the EU are currently relatively well-known, and, seemingly largely attracted to the policy areas where the EU has strong legal competences such as competition and market regulation. Interest groups narrowly target their engagement and in particular circumstances benefit from several EU funding schemes. Interest groups also strategically select the most favourable institutional venues for their messages. Academic studies are inconclusive regarding the relative policy influence of different types of interest groups. They suggest that particular issue characteristics such as salience in public opinion or media attention largely determine whether business interest representatives or other actors find their preferences attained in public policy outcomes.

In Chapter 15, Laurie Beaudonnet focuses on the role and behaviour of political parties in the EU. By creating a new level of government and reorganizing interests, European integration has disrupted party systems and the political game, dividing national parties, and leading to the creation of European parties that are still maturing. Integration has transformed the political environment in which parties operate, bringing new opportunities but also new public policy challenges that do not fit easily into existing cleavage structures. These changes have produced partisan realignments, internal divisions, new parties. Moreover, structural changes such as the increase in the powers of the European Parliament over the last decades and the recent increase in competition for executive power since 2014 have had a strong impact on the organization and role of parties in the European political system.

The many ‘crises’ the EU has faced over the past two decades have put its legitimacy into question. While for a long time Euroscepticism was thought of as a marginal phenomenon, citizens’ reactions to European integration are increasingly at the heart of both public and scholarly debates on the EU. But have European citizens become increasingly Eurosceptic over the last two decades, turning their backs on European integration? On the heels of the increasing EU politicization, a well-established literature focuses on the conceptualization, causes, and consequences of support for and opposition to European integration. In Chapter

16, Virginie Van Ingelgom addresses ongoing theoretical and methodological issues and the main contemporary challenges in this field. Although a growing literature has sought to explain individual support for European integration, more work is needed to understand the ways in which citizens' reactions are shaped by their national and social contexts. This chapter suggests that citizens' reactions to European integration cannot be reduced uniquely to a rise in Euroscepticism, but that indifference and ambivalence need also to be brought into the picture.

The British decision to leave the EU in the referendum on 23 June 2016 sent shockwaves around the world, destabilizing the country's long-standing membership of the EU, and unleashing powerful political forces into the politics of the UK. Now that several years have passed since the fateful referendum, we have an opportunity to look back on the Brexit 'process' and to take stock of the consequences of the UK's decision. In Chapter 17, Benjamin Martill does so through a threefold focus on the main *dilemmas*, *developments* and *debates* associated with Brexit. By *dilemmas*, he focuses on the immediate tasks and issues raised by the Brexit vote, including the practicalities of withdrawal, how to interpret the referendum mandate, what EU–UK relations might look like, and what the political fallout of the vote would be. In terms of *developments*, the chapter charts the key milestones in the Brexit process from the referendum itself to the rejection of Theresa May's Withdrawal Agreement in early 2019, and from formal withdrawal in January 2020 to the coming into force of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) the following year. And finally, it discusses the broader *debates* that Brexit has engendered, including the origins of the Brexit vote, the negotiating styles of each side, the extent of political change in the UK and the EU, and the implications of Brexit for the wider world.

## MARKET AND REGULATION

The fourth part is devoted to public policies related to the internal market, its regulation and redistributive policies including monetary policy, the common agricultural policy, the cohesion policy, the social and health policies and the gender equality policy (six chapters).

The single market is the core business of the EU. It is a project where policy and politics meet. In terms of policy, the single market has been developed around the goal of achieving freedom of free movement in relation to goods, capital, services, and people. This has implied an extension of the original core of the single market to a full range of policy domains, most recently the digital dimension of an integrated market. In terms of politics, over the years the single market has exposed the differences among Member States on models of capitalism and regulation, as well as the tension between integration as pursued by the European Commission and the protection of national sovereignty in key policy domains. Policies to complete the single market have also raised concerns and political contestation in civil societies and political parties – the debate on the vision, achievements and limits of single market has gradually become more politicized. In Chapter 18, Alison J. Harcourt and Claudio M. Radaelli review the evolution of the single market project, discuss its achievements, present the innovations brought about by the digital single market, and provide a compass to read analytically this governance architecture of markets.

In Chapter 19, Dora Piroska reviews the EU's economic and monetary policies that target the European financial market. She first reviews historically the key regulatory changes to banking and finance since the 1990s up until the 2008 global financial crisis. Next, she analy-

ses the key regulatory changes to the EU's financial architecture that were introduced as crisis responses and aimed at strengthening the stability of the EU's financial market. In particular, changes enacted to state aid policy, fiscal coordination, central banking, and bank supervision are reviewed. These regulatory changes are evaluated, on the one hand, for their capacity to decrease the scope of democratic decision making in Member States. On the other hand, the lack of democratic oversight they inserted at the empowered EU-level decision making institutions. Finally, several reform suggestions are presented in the areas of state aid, fiscal coordination, the Banking Union, Capital Markets Union that collectively aim at increasing democratic responsiveness of the EU's economic and monetary institutions and policies, while also ensure more evenness in the EU's unlevelled financial playing field. The last section also draws attention to new challenges of the EU's financial architecture such as climate change, inclusiveness, and resource distribution across EU citizens.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is one of the oldest EU common policies. This redistributive policy has never been cast in stone; over the last 60 years it has adapted itself to deal with changing conditions and expectations about its goals and performance. Most of these changes, however, have taken place within the boundaries of a closed policy community consisting of a limited group of actors, interests and ideas. As a result, reforms have been limited and gradual and often been made to protect the core of the policy regime. To address challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss, more radical changes of the CAP appear to be required. When it comes to addressing these challenges, however, the CAP is the 'elephant in the room'. While attempts are being made for pointing out this elephant by outsiders that try to gain access to this community, their efforts have limited success. Increasingly, actors located outside the closed agriculture policy community are moving to different (neighbouring) rooms where the impact of agriculture on climate change and biodiversity loss is not ignored. By doing so, they try to affect the broader institutional and discursive setting in which policy-making of the CAP takes place. In Chapter 20, Gerry Alons and Pieter Zwaan first describe this development and its consequences for the CAP from a historical perspective after which they focus in more detail on how actors outside the policy community have tried to affect changes in the CAP, as well how these changes are responded to by existing policy elites.

The role of the EU's cohesion policy – the topic developed in Chapter 21 by Peter Berkowitz – is to promote and support the 'overall harmonious development' of its Member States and regions. It accounts for close to a third of the EU budget and as a result has been closely linked to negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). Discussions about cohesion policy since the early 1990s have been centred on four issues – redistribution vs allocative efficiency, EU priorities vs subsidiarity, geographical coverage and accountability vs simplification. Over time, the policy has become more closely linked to the delivery of EU policy objectives and integrated with new structures of economic governance. This has driven a major set of reforms in 2013, consolidated in 2021, that reflect a new balance of interests. However, in the coming years this model faces a number of challenges linked to the evolution of disparities and convergence, a changing EU budget landscape, an evolving system of economic governance and the development of new delivery mechanisms. In the context of complex MFF budget discussions for the next financial period post 2027, it is likely that many of the perennial policy issues within cohesion policy will reemerge.

In many ways, the Covid-19 pandemic has shed light on the embeddedness of national and EU policy in the realm of social policy and healthcare. Looking back at, for instance, the

creation of the European Social Fund, the European Social Dialogue, the soft coordination of employment policy initiated in 1990s, or the austere response to the 2010 debt crisis, scholars and decision-makers have argued about whether the EU can effectively enhance social cohesion at the scale of the continent. Three main lines of reasoning can be distinguished claiming that the EU's social and health policies are either irrelevant, catching-up, or dangerous. Similarly, there are different views about whether its competences in this realm should be strengthened or, on the contrary curtailed, going forward. Any attempt to reinforce the EU's social action is impeding by resistance from a number of governments and corporate actors. In the face of rising inequality and acute old and new forms of poverty, the EU has nevertheless gradually expanded its toolbox yet without succeeded to address effectively inequality both within and between Member States. The conjunction of the European Green Deal and the outbreak of Covid-19 have brought about a new political momentum as the EU institutions are now promoting the notion of 'just transition' in an attempt to reconcile environmental sustainability and social justice. Yet, as Amandine Crespy explains in Chapter 22, to see whether, and how, this emerging agenda will articulate with the existing policy instruments for social policy.

In Chapter 23, Sophie Jacquot aims at presenting the specificities, content and transformation of EU action in the field of gender equality promotion. This policy was initiated as soon as 1957 with the introduction of the principle of equal pay for equal work between men and women workers in the treaty of Rome. Gender equality is now a common value and a transversal mission of the EU. In a first part, the chapter starts with an exploration of the concept of gender equality regime which allows to grasp the specific nature of EU gender equality policy, especially in contrast with national policies. Then, a second part presents the content of the EU gender equality policy, its different instruments, institutions, and actors, as well as their recent evolution. In a third part, the chapter comes back on the present situation, analyses the main contemporary challenges of the EU gender equality policy – austerity politics, illiberal attacks, and institutional blockages – and reflects about its way forward in front of these difficulties and constraints. The main message of the chapter is that the EU-level gender equality policy is at a crossroads and that its future will be very telling as to the identity of the EU, what it is and what it should be according to its members.

## WORLD AND GLOBAL ISSUES

In the fifth and final part, the authors provide keys to understanding the strategies and instruments of action of the EU to act in the world and respond to global issues such as climate change, migration or war (six chapters).

Trade policy is the oldest of the EU's external policies, but since the late 1950s, both the scope of the EU's trade policy as well as the actors involved in making it, have changed considerably. Today, the EU's role in trade is under increasing pressure, both internally and externally. EU trade policy – analysed by Guri Rosen in Chapter 24 – entailed an extraordinary transfer of sovereignty when it was established, through the delegation of powers to the Council of Ministers as a collective decision-maker, to the Commission as the key negotiator and implementer. However, parliaments at the European, national, and on occasion also the subnational level, have become more assertive in the area trade. Together with the recent politicization of large trade agreements, it has made negotiation and decision-making processes



more unpredictable. Furthermore, with significant changes to geopolitical and global trade patterns, the pressure to reform EU trade policy has increased, prompting a debate not only about the delineation of competences between Member States and the EU, but also the purpose of trade policy and its democratic legitimacy. The EU has always been an ardent defender of free trade, but new approaches indicate an increasing acknowledgement of the need to protect European interests as well. Although rule-based multilateralism is likely to remain the EU's main strategy, to what extent this can be reconciled with a growing concern for own interests will be a balancing-act that also will depend on how the Union is able to reconcile pressure from within, as well as from the world surrounding it.

Energy is one of the core policy areas of the European integration project. From supply security to the economic, social and environmental impacts of its production, distribution, and consumption, energy occupies the heights of national and EU politics, often challenging solidarity among its Member States. Energy also plays a significant role in the EU's relationship with its neighbours and often is the source of tensions, most recently exposed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The EU is undoubtedly the global leader in renewables and response to climate change. However, the evolution of the EU's energy policy is rife with differences in national energy mixes and competing external relationships and thus, closely intertwined with matters of national security. As a result, the Commission has often handled energy policy indirectly through environmental and internal market policies to steer the Member States in a common direction. Its latest push to decarbonize the economy by 2050 comes rife with unprecedented investments and notable progress in related research and development, and the need to break free from Russian fossil fuel supplies. In Chapter 25, Samuel R. Schubert analyses the evolution of the EU's energy policy, addresses what energy security means for Europe, and the implications of its current agenda. He introduces some of the most significant dilemmas faced by the EU, particularly how its vulnerability to supply disruptions continues to affect its solidarity. Finally, he shows the difference between this latest approach and those of the past asking whether this time it can permanently enhance EU energy security.

In Chapter 26, Viviane Gravey considers EU environmental action through four perspectives useful for evaluating the success of EU environmental action: impact on the EU polity (the emergence of the EU as a quasi 'Green State'), centrality to EU politics (the growing debates on climate action, or greening agricultural policy), emergence of a strong body of policies (the environmental *acquis*) and their impact in practice in Europe and beyond. She shows how, while environmental action is now central to the EU's identity, and, with the European Green Deal, at the heart of its political agenda, the EU is nevertheless failing to stop and reverse environmental harm both inside its borders and internationally. Its new 8th Environment Action Programme pledges both global leadership and profound systemic change, marking a sharp turn towards renewed environmental activism in the Commission after a decade of stagnation. But in order to deliver change on such magnitude, the EU will need to maintain credibility both in and outside Brussels, ensuring it remains strong in its commitment to the environmental aims of the EGD (resisting endless extensions and carveouts for highly polluting sectors) and to its social ones – delivering a just transition that leaves no one behind.

In Chapter 27, Sandra Lavenex retraces the hesitant development of common EU policies on asylum and immigration since the 1990s and identifies their limits. While geopolitical challenges and the endurance of violent conflicts and economic inequality around the world confront the EU Member States with a mounting immigration pressure, calling for common approaches, sovereignty and identity concerns have spurred political contestation over both

immigration and Europeanization, preventing governments from fully engaging with supranational solutions. The result is a glaring gap between the high ambition and low achievement of common EU asylum and immigration policies. While Member States and the European Commission have sought to circumvent these internal divides through intensified external cooperation with third countries of transit and origin, the lack of internal commitment remains one of the weak points of the European project, pointing at the limits of political integration.

In Chapter 28, Jolyon Howorth examines the EU's attempts, since the turn of the century, to emerge as a credible security and defence actor. After a brief historical overview of the complex emergence of a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the chapter assesses the main security challenges that have faced the Union in its attempts to stabilise its neighbourhood. To the East, a newly assertive Russia has changed the strategic chessboard in the Eurasian space. To the South, destabilization of North Africa and the Sahel, following the Arab Spring, have posed serious new challenges from new forms of terrorism. At the same time, the EU has attempted to redefine its relationship with its main ally, the United States, by taking up the US challenge on burden sharing in NATO and by asserting its ambition of attaining 'strategic autonomy'. Over the past ten years, new initiatives, instruments and capacity have been generated, but internal divisions and institutional rivalries between the Member States and the European agencies have stymied progress. With the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the reassertion of US hegemony within the European security space, the overall geostrategic picture remains both uncertain and unpromising.

For long, European integration in the area of 'foreign policy' progressed only slowly and tenuously. With roots in the 'European Political Cooperation' of the 1970s, it picked up speed and gained substance after the end of the Cold War, not least in the wake of the Yugoslav wars, EU-Eastern enlargement, and a resurgent Russia. New legal bases in the Maastricht Treaty of 1993 and in particular the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 strengthened the EU's role in foreign policy and made it an essential part of the evolving twenty-first-century international order. However, the EU has not developed a unitary foreign policy, Ulrich Krotz, Lucas Schramm and Katharina Wolf explain in Chapter 29. Rather, a set of different actors and bodies together shape EU foreign policy. EU foreign policy, furthermore, involves several domains of activity such as the CSDP, the politics of EU accession and association, international trade, and development cooperation. The twenty-first century has brought about a range of challenges for EU foreign policy. These include Russia's military invasion in Ukraine; complex and unstable ties with some of its neighbours (e.g., Turkey, Northern Africa); a loss of EU influence in relation to other global players, notably China; an uncertain future relationship with the UK; and a challenging enlargement in the Balkans.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Although the end of the EU is often predicted in the public debate, it should be noted that the EU always had an extensive capacity to adapt to the changing context of the European continent and the rest of the world since its creation in the 1950s. However, the future of the Union will certainly depend on a shift in the *raison d'être* from a concern for the internal prosperity of European economies through 'inward narratives' to a search for growing power in the international system by developing 'outward narratives' of the EU. The EU, which was conceived in the aftermath of the Second World War as a project to reject – or at least rationalize – the

state power, is now faced with a strong reflection about being a power in a competitive world. If this Companion is ever to be revised in the future, the question of the ‘geopolitization’ of the EU is likely to have to be reinforced as a priority. In essence, the EU of the 90s, which had somewhat abandoned the register of international relations for the sociology of public policy, is more than ever returning to international relations. This may have an impact on the evolution of theoretical debates. A true epistemological history of European Studies as a field of research does not exist yet, but it would be fairly easy to show that it has oscillated since its beginnings between taking into account an object of international relations and that of the state formation.

‘More than a regime and less than a federation’:<sup>1</sup> this is how the political scientist William Wallace described the European Community in the early 1980s; 40 years later, Wallace’s observation is still valid as the balance between the international regime and the federal state has never been a zero-sum game. The EU is condemned to remain a permanent hybrid borrowing to each model, which makes its study difficult but also original. The scholar of the EU does not have to love ‘pure’ political regimes. On the contrary, she has to like hybrid forms and interstices. This is precisely what often makes the analysis of the EU confusing for undergraduate students who would like to see it as a model that fits in more with general political science theories. But this is to a certain extent a very salutary side. The day any scholar is empirically confronted to a political science object, by observing actors and processes from the field, she realises that pure models never exist in politics. It is in this sense that the study of the EU does an enormous service to the whole of the social sciences working on political objects.

As its name suggests, a Companion should be a fellow that everybody must have in her pocket to understand the particular experience of the EU, but also to reflect on the evolution of politics beyond the nation state while not falling into the illusion that the nation state has lost all its power and legitimacy. Desires to return to an exclusive nation state still exists among citizens, as the Brexit experience has demonstrated, but there are also desires to join the EU in order to better face the world, as Ukraine’s application for membership following Russia’s military intervention has shown. These contradictions in citizens’ expectations need to be observed, compared and understood as they show that uniformity is hardly the model that governs the EU. Once again, complexity prevails over ‘pure’ models. For this reason, the decipherments of the best authors who have accepted to write for this Companion are a necessary support to the reader who wants to go beyond a too simple reading of the EU in particular, and of politics in general.

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<sup>1</sup> William Wallace, ‘Less than a Federation, More than a Regime: the Community as a Political System’, in William Wallace, Helen Wallace and Carole Webb (eds.) *Policy-Making in the European Community* (Chichester: John Wiley, 1983), pp. 403–436.