

Book Review

Thomas Christiansen and Christine Reh (2009)

Constitutionalizing the European Union

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

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As the title clearly indicates, this book focuses on the constitution-building process within the European Union, following the continuous constitutionalization that started in the 1950s and discussing the uncertainty of what the authors call the future of the constitutional 'saga', meaning the EU's trajectory post-Lisbon Treaty. Christiansen and Reh analyse the evolutionary character of the constitutional order by intertwining discussions on the public authority beyond the nation-state and the integrated legal order (p. 4) with full accounts of the mechanisms, actors and structures involved in the process of constitutionalization.

The book is divided into ten chapters. The starting point is a concise introduction (Chapter 1) where the aims and arguments of the book are being laid down. The next chapter (2) prepares the ground for the assessment of whether the EU has a constitution, by addressing and assessing the constitutional criteria and the legal and political order, while the following chapter (3) introduces the constitutionalization of the EU, by intertwining discussions on processes, mechanisms and discourses (p. 24). The next two chapters (4-5) look at the importance of Intergovernmental Conferences (IGCs), as well as the significance of national, supranational, sub-national and non-governmental actors, who are part of constitutional decisions. The following three chapters (6-8) individually treat a different stage of the IGC policy processes. Chapter 9 reviews the European Convention and Constitutional Treaty, the subsequent IGCs, the ratification failure of the Treaty Establishing a Constitution of Europe and the Lisbon reforms (p. 229), before the authors conclude their post-Lisbon reflections in Chapter 10. Each chapter objective is analysed thoroughly, with clear subtitles assisting the readers in understanding the substance and procedure of constitutional change from the 1950s until the present day.

The book is part of the *European Union Series* and carries the shield of approval of the Series. Since the process of constitutionalization has been a key development in the post-Cold War Europe and a prominent topic of discussion within European Studies, this book is a timely, critical and informative historical analysis of how constitutionalization has had an impact on the EU and enhances the reader's understanding of the complex interplay between the mechanisms, theories, actors and discursive dimensions of this process. The book is therefore an excellent contribution to the field of EU studies and would be very useful for academics and practitioners with an interest in the area.

The book is highly readable for two main reasons. First, Christiansen and Reh are experienced scholars in the field of European Studies, helping to open the way for further discussion and debate on the future of constitutionalization and the role of key actors in the construction of a European Constitution. This makes the book an intriguing new reflection and critique on and an indispensable reading for anyone interested in constraints and possibilities of EU constitutionalization. Second, the authors intertwine a significant range of themes, such as discourse and legal studies, which should make the book appeal to legal experts and discourse analysis scholars interested in these areas. By doing so, the book attempts to deal with a plethora of issues and shows the interdisciplinary socio-legal knowledge of the authors and testifies of their desire for deep analysis of the constitutional phenomena in the EU.

If there are any 'quibbles' with this book, it is in the fact that the authors focus on the EU Constitution, but it becomes rather confusing when referring to it as "European Constitution". As a reader, I would have preferred the authors to make an attempt to define why the Constitution should be called "European", when it only refers to an act that concerns the EU states, and not other nations who are not EU members, but define themselves as European. This could have saved the book the trouble of being criticised from this perspective. Beyond this, for more eager readers, the book chapters may seem a little short.

Overall, the book makes a valuable contribution and will be of great interest to those working on EU studies. All in all, this is a very versatile and stimulating book that ought to find a home in both the social sciences and the legal sections of university libraries. There is no doubt that future research will derive from the many important issues covered in this book.
