

BOOK REVIEW

Martin Holland (ed.) (2007)

The Europa Lectures: 2001-2006

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In recent years, the concept of Europe as an idea rather than as a place has enjoyed increasing support throughout the broad framework of academics and practitioners working in the field of European Studies. As such, Martin Holland's *The Europa Lectures 2001-2006* is a timely and welcome addition to the current literature on European Studies as it provides a unique collection of diverse perspectives on the past, present and future of the European idea. The publication is based on a series of high profile lectures hosted by New Zealand's National Centre for Research on Europe since the turn of the new century and it would not be impertinent to suggest that read as a whole, the volume presents one of the most succinct and thought-provoking analyses for quite some time of the challenges which the new Europe faces. It is perhaps surprising but indeed heartening to see such an original and important addition to the field of European Studies literature emanating from as far away as New Zealand but this is perhaps a reflection of how others are often more interested in contemporary Europe than Europe itself.

The contribution by the current Prime Minister of New Zealand, Helen Clark is indeed noteworthy as she shies away from the normal reserved statements of a sitting politician and using her original training as a political scientist, she makes a strong case for European enlargement from an "outsider's" point of view. A similar approach is taken by the former New Zealand Foreign Minister Phil Goff in his analysis of the nascent European External Action Service and the ramifications of an EU constitution for New Zealand.

From the European side, Mariann Fischer Boel, the current European Commissioner for Agriculture engages in an astute and unconventional examination of the advantages and disadvantages of the Common Agriculture Policy whilst Margaret Beckett, the former British Foreign Secretary discusses the challenges of EU enlargement whilst presenting a compelling and convincing argument on the economic benefits of climate change. Meanwhile, Chris Patten, the former External Relations Commissioner concentrates on bilateral EU-NZ relations in his piece with some very interesting observations on multi-lateralism and the expansion of the EU.

However, perhaps the most novel and innovative contribution to the volume is that of the former MEP and chair of the European Parliament Budgetary Committee, Terry Wynn who gives a fascinating insight into the machinations of the European Parliament and the nuts and bolts of the financing of the EU enlargement process. Wynn's article tackles many of the key issues affecting the EU enlargement process in a combative manner but his calculations on the structural operations of transfers from the EU budget are captivating.

The shortest piece in the volume will probably be the one that attracts most attention. The contribution of the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is as enlightening and contentious presentation on the Turkish candidacy for EU membership and his affirmation that 'the Turkish population is predominantly Muslim, and this should be seen as an added value to the EU', is sure to ignite debate in the current political climate. Erdoğan writes with refreshing honesty and his argument is compelling and one wonders whether we will look back at this lecture in the future in terms of an opportunity lost or taken.

All the aforementioned lectures are presented in chronological order but they work best when read as a set as the issues they grapple with are not time specific and it is quite remarkable how Wynn's 2001 lecture seems even more relevant today. What is interesting is that all the lectures were given in New Zealand and one wonders if some of these politicians would have been as candid and honest in their views and opinions if the lectures had taken place in mainland Europe under the watchful eyes of the European press and media. This is in many ways one of the real strengths of this volume in that one feels party to an exhibition of an increasingly rare honesty amongst European politicians regarding enlargement and the future of the EU with even the remarkable confession of Margaret Beckett that she was opposed to the U.K. joining the EEC in 1973 and how she campaigned for a "no" vote in the 1975 referendum on continuing British membership. Such anecdotes pepper the publication and although the lectures may seem quite informal at times, they are backed up by sound academic research and the availability of research teams in lecture preparation is evident in Wynn's complicated statistical analysis of EU transfers or Beckett's in depth examination of EU agricultural reform and their impact on the Doha negotiations of the World Trade Organisation.

These diverse lectures are somehow woven together in Martin Holland's excellent introduction and the brief pages of this introduction provide a terse and seminal guide to any interested party of what has really happened in the EU since the dawn of the new millennium. Holland brings together the major developments which have marked the twenty-first century trajectory of the EU and interspersing these with the perspectives of the various contributors to the volume, he manages quite remarkably to catch the essence of the entire publication in the introduction and one finds oneself increasingly referring back to then introduction as one progresses through the different pieces. There is also a very useful and informative preface which charts the history of New Zealand's National Centre for Research on Europe outlining its mission and funding strategy. This publication emanated from this body so it is obviously of interest to read of its other activities, projects and future objectives.

The only major drawback to this volume is its deliberately short nature for it leaves one with the desire to hear much more from the contributors. However, the questions it poses remain long after and although it may seem a long voyage to New Zealand to learn more about ourselves as Europeans, this book is definitely worth the trip.

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The first seven lecturers in the Europa series, first organised by the National Centre for Research on Europe at the University of Canterbury and now by the European Union Centres Network in New Zealand are an impressive list: The Prime Minister of New Zealand, Helen Clark; the Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister, Phil Goff; the Prime Minister

of Turkey, Recep Erdoğan, two EU Commissioners, Lord Patten and Mariann Fischer Boel; the Former UK Foreign Secretary, Margaret Beckett and the Chair of the European Parliament's Budget Committee, Terry Wynn.

A well-connected research centre in the EU would feel pleased to have amassed a group of this quality. The lecturers deal in the main with two issues, New Zealand's relationship with the EU and where the EU is going particularly in its dealings with the rest of the world. The lectures are all accessible and succinct but vary considerably in tone. Terry Wynn shows a passion for the European project which is infectious. Helen Clark provides a careful review of the various levels of linkage with the EU and the ways in which several of them might be developed, particularly in areas such as research and development. The clear general message is one of opportunity.

Since the lectures cover a six year time span they also provide a neat insight into the contemporary debate - starting by considering how the enlargement to 25 and then 27 members might go and ending with a consideration of further expansion to Turkey and Croatia. Chris Patten puts his finger on the key issue, that the EU has a strong emphasis on looking outward. As a joint entity it has enhanced influence over the sum of its parts and as a 'unified' market offers greater attractions than one with fragmented standards and rules. An emphasis on the Common Agricultural Policy is inevitable, with Mariann Fischer Boel encouraging the reader to note the extent of progress in reform, rather than lamenting how far away from free and fair trade the EU is in this field. However, while the participants are bound in this framework, financed by the European taxpayer, to focus on the positive, there are clear references to the downside. Recep Erdoğan points out that there is life for the prospective members outside the EU even if membership does not come and the EU runs the risk from not participating fully in the dynamic markets on its borders. Almost all the transition economies whether or not inside the EU are experiencing rapid growth and inward investment. Phil Goff sets out the challenge for New Zealand to compete with these countries and to benefit from their growth. Margaret Beckett raises the wider issues of poor progress on handling climate change and the current round of trade negotiations.

These lectures have proved an opportunity to set out an agenda and to try to advance the debate. They are continuing beyond this volume and it will be interesting to see what future speakers offer.
