

Michelle Cini

No divides, continental or otherwise

In publishing a journal devoted to European politics, Palgrave's *Comparative European Politics (CEP)* enters a market already inhabited by quality publications such as the *Journal of Common Market Studies*, the *Journal of European Public Policy* and *European Union Politics*. These are hard acts to follow and supplement. Yet *CEP* has established itself as a worthy competitor by publishing high-quality, rigorously peer-reviewed articles in a broad but clearly defined research field.

Towards the end of its third year, the journal is well on its way to establishing for itself a solid record as a repository for excellent comparative political research on Europe. The first issue appeared in March 2003. Although now moving to four volumes a year, so far, three volumes have appeared annually. *CEP*, which is edited by Colin Hay of Birmingham University, Ben Rosamond of Warwick University, and Martin A. Schain of New York University, reflects in its editorial team the publisher's ambitions to bridge the transatlantic divide, which amounts to

trying to ensure that it is read as widely in the US as it is in the UK and the rest of Europe. It is too early to judge definitively whether this ambition has been fulfilled. Certainly, the editors have been successful in encouraging contributions from North American academics, even if the overall balance remains weighted towards European (and indeed West European) scholars.

An editorial in the first issue spelt out journal's scope and focus. It intends to publish research into comparative politics and the political economy of contemporary Europe within and beyond the EU, and to include in its coverage processes of European integration and enlargement, as well as the global place of Europe and its states. The journal's content to date reflects this agenda, even if there remains scope for encouraging more contributions from East European scholars on states situated on the Eastern periphery of Europe.

The editors also want to encourage work on the relationship between transnational, international and domestic processes and practices, whether this is based on empirical, theoretical or theoretically informed work. Interdisciplinary submissions are especially requested, as are those that are theoretically or methodologically innovative.

Otherwise, the editorial line is one of open-mindedness. The editors say they are not interested in pushing any particular school or approach, in reflecting their own personal research agendas or in limiting articles published to a particular perspective. They want to forge a "non-sectarian arena for debate". Moreover, they also emphasise that the journal was not born out of any particular frustration with the existing literature but aims to fill a gap in the market. There is room for a journal of this kind, given the wealth of research being undertaken on

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Europe. At the same time, the journal's remit is clear enough to be coherent but broad enough to ensure a continual flow of quality submissions and the potential to attract a wide audience.

So what kinds of articles have appeared thus far? The first volume comprises 13 individual articles. These include contributions from Craig Calhoun on European studies as a field of research, Johan Olsen on the legitimate role for citizens in the European polity, Claire Annesley on the transformation of welfare and gender regimes in the UK and Germany, and John Gould on democracy and privatisation in post-communist Europe.

There is an excellent review symposium on the "varieties of capitalism" literature that focuses on Peter Hall and David Soskice's edited book *Varieties of Capitalism* (2001). The symposium comprises review articles by Robert E. Goodin, Mark Blyth and Matthew Watson, followed by a response by Hall and Soskice.

The second volume comprises 17 articles, including a piece by J. Magnus Ryner on neoliberalism and social democracy in

Sweden, and a comparative article by Martin Brusis on patterns of governance in Bulgaria, Hungary and the Czech Republic, as well as an interesting article on the concept of subsidiarity by Kees van Kersbergen and Bert-Jan Verbeek.

A special issue on "Preference formation and EU treaty reform" edited by Dionyssis Dimitrakopoulos and Hussein Kassim provides a coherent set of seven articles. The first, by the editors, gives a general overview on the preferences of the EU's member states within the Convention on the Future of Europe. The other articles examine national cases: the UK (Kassim); France (Nicholas Jabko); Italy (David Hine); Spain (Carlos Closa); Belgium (Peter Bursens) and Germany (Eiko Thielemann). In each case, the point of departure is the limits of liberal intergovernmentalism in explaining national preferences and the relevance of institutionalist variables in providing a more complete and convincing account of domestic preferences towards the EU's future constitutional treaty.

Fourteen articles have been published in the three issues of

the most recent volume, including a piece on the European Central Bank by L. S. Talani and an article on the radical Left by Luke March and Cas Mudde. The first issue also includes a review article by John Ishiyama covering recent publications on political parties in post-communist politics. The first half of the second issue is devoted to a "special selection" of articles, edited again by Dimitrakopoulos and Kassim, and is a continuation of the special issue on preference formation and EU treaty reform.

For those interested, however broadly, in comparative politics and political economy, this is a journal that deserves to be read alongside other staples in these research fields. For those undertaking research on European politics, this is a "must-read", alongside and as an equal to other excellent journals covering cognate (and to a degree overlapping) research areas, such as the domestic politics of European states and the politics and the political economy of the European Union

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