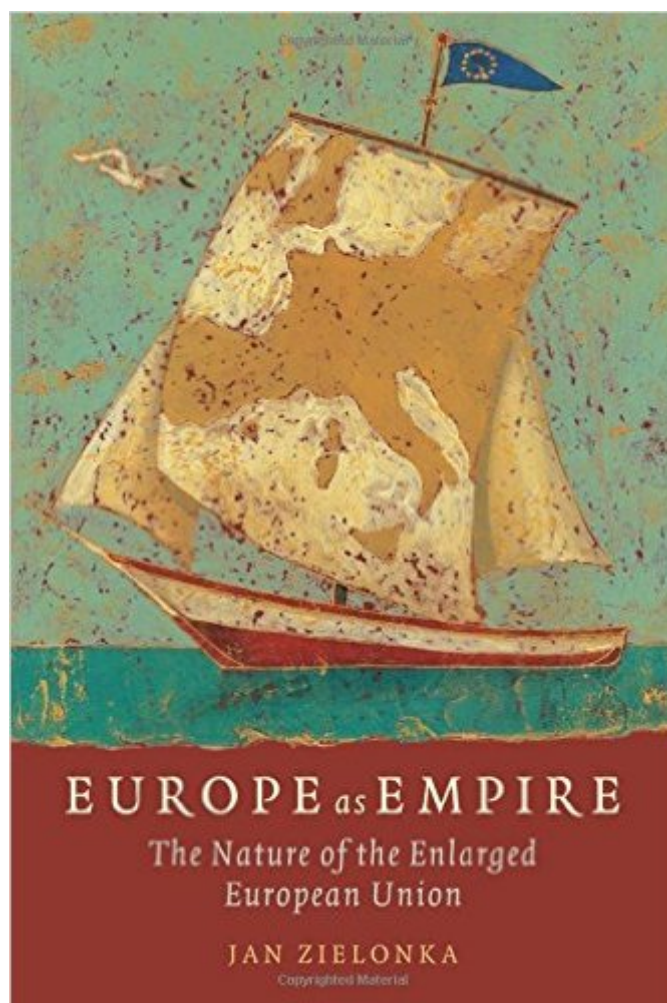# Europe As Empire: The Nature Of The Enlarged European Union

Synopsis

This book seeks to comprehend the evolving nature of the European Union following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the failure of the European Constitution. Its prime focus is the last wave of enlargement that has profoundly transformed the EU. Although there are many parallels between the European integration process and state building processes, the Union is nothing like a Westphalian super state. The new emerging polity resembles a kind of neo-medieval empire with a polycentric system of government, multiple and overlapping jurisdictions, striking cultural and economic heterogeneity, fuzzy borders, and divided sovereignty. The book tries to spell out the origin, the shape, and the implications of this empire. The aim of this book is to suggest a novel way of thinking about the European Union and the process of European integration. The book shows 'two Europes' coming together following the end of the cold war. It proposes a system of economic and democratic governance that meets the ever greater challenges of modernization, interdependence, and globalization. It identifies the most plausible scenario of promoting peaceful change in Europe and beyond. The author argues that mainstream thinking about European integration is based on mistaken statist assumptions and suggests more effective and legitimate ways of governing Europe than through adoption of a European Constitution, creation of a European army, or introduction of a European social model. The book covers many fields from politics, and economics to foreign affairs and security. It analyzes developments in both Eastern and Western Europe. It also gives ample room to both theoretical and empirical considerations.

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Customer Reviews

Zielonka wants us to view the European Union in new terms - - not as an international organization or as a nascent nation-state, but as an "empire." However, he enjoins us not to think in terms of absolutist empires. The EU is, he argues, a "neo-medieval" empire with soft and fluctuating boundaries, multiple sources of authority at many different political layers, multiple identities, and complex political processes varying by issue. Though Zielonka doesn't push the analogy, other scholars have compared the EU to the Habsburg Empire, and a similar logic is at work in this book.Despite the limitations of all such analogies, it's a compelling vision. It makes EU politics a matter of managing internal and external concerns, instead of trying to build a state. This vision celebrates cultural, political, and economic diversity within a single polity. Heterogeneity, not harmonization, is the watchword.At the same time, the neo-medieval empire struggles with democracy. Few decisions are made by vote of the people, and the important politicians are chosen indirectly or appointed by elected leaders. The system is far from transparent, and not at all legitimate.Zielonka's primary audience is Europeans but there are interesting points here for others as well. An American reader will see signs of similar changes on this side of the pond, in NAFTA, in our transatlantic relations with the EU and NATO, and in global economic institutions. It would be a useful undergraduate text in any class trying to escape the chains of statist ways of thinking about international relations.

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