

Geoffrey Pridham, *Designing Democracy: EU Enlargement and Regime Change in Post-Communist Europe*, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan. 2005, ISBN 1 04039 0318 2.

While democratisation literature on Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) has traditionally stressed domestic factors, much work on European integration and enlargement emphasises relationships between states and European-level politics. *Designing Democracy* is the latest in a growing literature attempting to bridge this divide and assess linkages between the two. Pridham's book, which draws on extensive interviews with policy-makers and politicians in the EU, Western Europe and CEE, first seeks to contextualise post-1989 CEE democratisation and EU enlargement into the region. In 1990s, all CEE states were undergoing 'democratic consolidation' with some states such as Romania and Slovakia showing semi-authoritarian tendencies and all states experiencing problems of democratic quality. Eastern enlargement, decided upon in principle at the 1993 Copenhagen summit, was the latest and most ambitious in a series of EU 'enlargement waves' but one characterised by tougher and more extensive accession conditionalities, including significant democratic conditionality (DC). DC had been an implicit to enlargement debates since at least 1960s and became more explicit with enlargement into Southern Europe in 1980s. However, the size and complexity of Eastern enlargement, uncertainties post-communist reform and changed post-Cold War security context saw DC rapidly expand to rival more traditional legal and economic aspects of the *acquis*. However, although EU democratic conditionality became increasingly concrete and well monitored in the course of CEE accession, the Union,

Pridham finds, lacked any coherent underlying conception of democracy or democratic consolidation. Instead, DC was an inconsistent mix of requirements driven by a logic of 'bureaucratic incrementalism', which strongly emphasised some areas (minority rights or public administration), whilst neglecting others (civil society and political parties). Pridham then considers the extent to which the push for EU membership in CEE was socially rooted or, as usually assumed, elite driven.. Here, somewhat unconventionally, he sees CEE elites and institutions as caught between the demands and pressures of the EU and those of potentially rebellious domestic electorates. He therefore first examines CEE political elites' own thinking and motivations regarding accession, concluding that in comparison with accession politicians in previous waves, they were concerned more with security and economic benefits and accepted democratic conditionalities passively or instrumentally but without demur. Two subsequent chapters then examine the role of intermediary institutions in CEE: political parties and the media, as shapers of public perceptions; and more socially rooted bodies such civil society organisations and socio-economic actors. Here, Pridham argues, the effects of accession on democratic development, have been mildly positive, if limited and uneven, with few signs of a populist backlash against the bureaucratic top-down policy-making used to adopt and implement the *acquis*. However, he suggests, enlargement's most significant effects on democracy in the region so far have been indirect, through impacts on economic structures and public administration, rather than the political arena *per se*. Overt political impacts have been confined to sections of CEE political and bureaucratic elites and political parties (through Euro-parties) with few apparent repercussions on everyday political competition or mass political behaviour.

*Designing Democracy* is admirably thorough in reviewing concepts and linkages in both democratisation literatures and integration theory. It is also undoubtedly right to see the relationship between CEE domestic politics and integration as dynamic and multi-layered. In places, however, such thoroughness obscures the book's more telling points. For example, its careful tracing of enlargement policy-making in EU institutions and CEE governments, stressing policy makers' recruitment, learning and socialisation, poses clear challenges to influential intergovernmentalist accounts, which paint a more simple picture of the EU as an external actor 'levering' CEE democracy. Similarly, many revealing incidents and comments uncovered by field research are relegated to endnotes of lessens the book's impact. Readers thus need to turn to footnote 41 page 235 to discover that the first draft of the Copenhagen Criteria was roughed out during an informal conversation between officials in a Brussels bar – a graphic illustration of the importance of Euro-institutions in enlargement policy-making, 'bureaucratic incrementalism' and the role of informal elite contacts. Overall, however, *Designing Democracy* is an empirically rich and thoughtful addition to the literature, which offers a useful counterpoint to the schematic certainties of big picture US political science on the subject.

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