

Europe Entrapped

By Claus Offe

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Today Europe finds itself in a crisis that casts a dark shadow over an entire generation. The seriousness of the crisis stems from one core political contradiction at the heart of the European project: namely, that what urgently needs to be done is also extremely unpopular and therefore virtually impossible to do democratically. What must be done - and almost everyone agrees in principle on the measures that would be needed to deal with the financial crisis - cannot be sold to the voting public of the core member states, which so far have been less affected by the crisis than those on the periphery, nor can the conditions that core members try to impose be easily sold to voters in the deficit countries.

The European Union is therefore becoming increasingly disunited, with deepening divides between the German-dominated ‘core’ and the southern ‘periphery’, between the winners and the losers of the common currency, between the advocates of greater integration and the anti-Europeans, between the technocrats and the populists. Europe finds itself trapped by the deepening divisions that are opening up across the Continent, obstructing its ability to deal with a crisis that has already caused massive social suffering in the countries of the European periphery and is threatening to derail the very project of the European Union.

In this short book, Claus Offe brings into sharp focus the central political problem that lies at the heart of the EU and shackles its ability to deal with the most serious crisis of its short history.

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Europe Entrapped By Claus Offe Bibliography

- Rank: #2240582 in Books
- Published on: 2015-01-27
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.80" h x .70" w x 5.70" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 104 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"The title of his book says it all: Europe finds itself in a trap of its own making. Offe has no easy answers as to how the continent might escape. But his 130-page essay is a model of analytical clarity and should be required reading for anyone who wants to grasp the core issues of the crisis—and eschew simple slogans and facile apportionment of blame to single nations (whether Germany or Greece)."
Current History

"This is a strangely heart-warming book. While Claus Offe analyses the weaknesses and failures of European integration with ruthless precision, he also reminds us powerfully of the values of the European ideal, and shows how we could come closer to realising them - if only political leaders had the will and tenacity to do so. In the current climate of Europhobia, this is the nearest thing to realistic optimism that we are likely to get."
Colin Crouch, University of Warwick

"Claus Offe has written a passionate, probing, and deeply perturbing book that both excoriates the European Union and provides a glimpse of hope in the struggle for a social Europe."
Gary Marks, UNC-Chapel Hill and RVU Amsterdam

"After so many years without a resolution, it is hard to feel hopeful about the euro crisis. If there are grounds for hope they lie in this volume. In it Claus Offe describes how the citizens of Europe, and of Germany in particular, frame the crisis. He explains how that framing defines the range of feasible policy options. Offe shows how it is in the capacity of those citizens and their leaders -- of European society, in other words -- to modify that framing in ways that open the door to a more constructive policy response. Offe's careful analysis deserves a wide audience. If it receives one, Europe will be a better place."
Barry Eichengreen, University of California, Berkeley

"At the core of this book is the proposition that, though the Euro was a mistake, its undoing would be a greater mistake. Around this insight, Offe describes the logic of the economic, institutional, political and cultural traps that have been sprung on European polities. The great merit of this book is that it poses the fundamental question implicit in any attempt to escape such traps: who is to be the agent of change? No one reading this book will think that this question has an easy answer; they will realise that an answer is desperately called for."
Albert Weale, University College London

‘Europe Entrapped brilliantly summarizes the huge complexity of the EU that hinders its effective crisis management, and comes with a passionate call for more material solidarity among EU citizens... Offe contributes a most welcome counterweight to all the short and simple arguments attributing blame for the crisis to a small group of people, persons, or institutions. For everyone interested in the Euro crisis and annoyed or confused by the barrage of media coverage on it, I highly recommend this book.’
International Studies Review

‘Offe provides a lucid explanation of the Eurozone crisis and how Europeans should reform their institutions. While assembling the intellectual tools to dissect this predicament, he paints a full picture of the challenges facing welfare states under globalization… The silver lining of this book is that it is partisan in

the best possible way: provocative but not distorting, critical but not irascible. Most of all: its political rallying cry to citizens, namely that the Europe we have is flawed and the one we stand to gain is worth fighting for, is both urgent and true.'
Constellations

'This is an important read for any Europhile who thinks that anything economically or socially rational must also be politically realistic.'
Times Higher Education

About the Author
Claus Offe is Professor of Political Sociology at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin. He is author of numerous books, including Contradictions of the Welfare State, Disorganized Capitalism, Modernity and the State, and Reflections on America: Tocqueville, Weber and Adorno in the United States.

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Janet Steele:

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Anthony Vice:

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