Since the path-breaking work of Karl Deutsch on security communities and Ernst Haas on European integration, it has been clear that international institutions may create senses of community and belonging beyond the nation state. Put differently, they can socialize. Yet the mechanisms underlying such dynamics have been unclear. This volume explores these mechanisms of international community building, from a resolutely eclectic standpoint. Rationalism is thus the social theory of choice for some contributors, while others are more comfortable with social constructivism. Still others combine the two. This problem-driven perspective and the theoretical bridge building it begets are the cutting edge in international relations theory. By providing more fine-grained arguments on precisely how international institutions matter, such an approach sheds crucial light on the complex relationship between states and institutions, between rational choice and social constructivism, and, in our case, between Europe and the nation state.

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International Institutions and Socialization in Europe

Edited by

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Over the past decade, there has been a notable and welcome shift in research on international institutions. If early work was preoccupied with showing that institutions mattered in world politics, more recent research explores the processes, mechanisms, and conditions under which they matter.

The present collection is part of this trend. Since the path-breaking work of Karl Deutsch on security communities and Ernst Haas on European integration, it has been abundantly clear that international institutions can – under certain conditions – create senses of community and belonging beyond the nation state. Put differently, they may socialize. However, the mechanisms and processes underlying such socialization dynamics have been less clear. It is precisely the latter on which this volume focuses.

In exploring these mechanisms of international community building, our emphasis is resolutely eclectic. Rationalism is the social theory of choice for some contributors, while others are more comfortable with social constructivism. Still others combine the two. This problem-driven perspective and the theoretical bridge building it begets are the cutting edge in work on international institutions and in international relations (IR) theory more generally. For sure and as our two concluding essays argue, middle-range theory of this sort faces challenges of its own, especially at the levels of research design and methods. Yet, by giving us more fine-grained arguments on precisely how international institutions matter, such an approach sheds crucial light on the complex relation between states and institutions, between rational choice and social constructivism, and, in our case, between Europe and the nation state. To employ a bit of IR jargon, it is “both/and,” and not “either/or.”

Our eclectic approach also generates significant empirical payoffs. Employing a variety of theories, methods, and data sources, the chapters in Part II offer fascinating, richly detailed, multicausal stories of how NATO, the European Union, and

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other institutions may socialize states and individuals, thus building new senses of belonging. However, a key phrase in that last sentence is “may”—for socialization does not always occur. Indeed, one of our central findings is that regional institutions in Europe socialize less than our theories and popular accounts would suggest. This is a striking result, one all the more important in a Europe marked by the twin processes of supranational polity building and enlargement.

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