

icivics government and the economy

icivics government and the economy explores the intricate relationship between governmental policies and economic systems, highlighting how civic knowledge shapes understanding of economic principles. This article delves into the foundational concepts of government roles in the economy, the impact of public policy on economic growth, and the ways in which civic engagement influences economic decision-making. Understanding icivics government and the economy is essential for grasping how laws and regulations affect markets, businesses, and citizens alike. The article also examines the balance between regulation and free-market principles, the role of taxation and government spending, and the importance of economic literacy in fostering informed civic participation. By providing a comprehensive overview, this discussion aims to enhance awareness of the dynamic interplay between political structures and economic outcomes. The following sections offer a detailed breakdown of these critical themes.

- The Role of Government in the Economy
- Public Policy and Economic Growth
- Taxation, Government Spending, and Fiscal Policy
- Regulation and Free Market Principles
- Civic Engagement and Economic Literacy

The Role of Government in the Economy

The role of government in the economy is a fundamental aspect of icivics government and the economy. Governments influence economic activity through various mechanisms such as regulation, taxation, and public spending. They establish the legal framework within which markets operate, ensuring property rights, enforcing contracts, and maintaining competition. Additionally, governments provide public goods and services that the private sector may not efficiently supply, such as infrastructure, education, and national defense. The government's involvement can vary significantly depending on the country's political and economic system, ranging from minimal intervention in free-market economies to extensive control in command economies.

Government Functions in Economic Systems

Governments perform multiple functions that shape economic outcomes. These include:

- **Allocative Function:** Determining how resources are distributed to satisfy public needs through public goods and services.
- **Distributive Function:** Redistributing income to promote social equity via taxation and welfare programs.
- **Regulatory Function:** Establishing rules and regulations to ensure fair

competition and consumer protection.

- **Stabilization Function:** Managing economic fluctuations through monetary and fiscal policies to maintain economic stability.

Interaction Between Government and Markets

Markets operate efficiently when supported by a stable government that enforces laws and regulations. The government intervenes to correct market failures such as monopolies, externalities, and information asymmetries. For example, environmental regulations address pollution externalities, while antitrust laws prevent monopolistic practices that can harm consumers. Understanding how government actions influence market behavior is central to icivics government and the economy.

Public Policy and Economic Growth

Public policy plays a critical role in shaping economic growth, a key topic in icivics government and the economy. Government decisions on infrastructure development, education funding, and research and innovation support can enhance productivity and long-term economic expansion. Policies promoting stable macroeconomic conditions, such as controlling inflation and encouraging investment, also contribute to sustainable growth. The effectiveness of these policies depends on their design and implementation, as well as the broader political and economic context.

Investment in Infrastructure and Education

Infrastructure investments in transportation, communication, and energy improve efficiency and connectivity, reducing costs for businesses and consumers. Similarly, government funding for education increases human capital by enhancing workforce skills and capabilities. Both areas are crucial for fostering innovation and competitiveness in the global economy.

Monetary and Fiscal Policies

Monetary policy, conducted by central banks, involves managing the money supply and interest rates to influence economic activity. Fiscal policy, controlled by the government, includes taxation and public spending decisions aimed at stabilizing the economy. Through these tools, governments can stimulate demand during recessions or cool down overheating economies, thereby supporting steady growth.

Taxation, Government Spending, and Fiscal Policy

Taxation and government spending are core components of fiscal policy that directly affect icivics government and the economy. Taxes provide the revenue necessary for governments to fund public services and programs. The structure

and level of taxation influence economic behavior, including consumption, investment, and labor supply. Government spending, in turn, allocates resources to essential areas such as social welfare, defense, and infrastructure, impacting economic activity and societal well-being.

Types of Taxes and Their Economic Impact

Different types of taxes serve various purposes and have distinct economic effects. Common tax forms include income taxes, sales taxes, property taxes, and corporate taxes. Progressive taxes aim to reduce income inequality by taxing higher earners at greater rates, while regressive taxes may disproportionately affect lower-income individuals. Understanding the balance between tax revenue generation and economic incentives is vital in civics government and the economy discussions.

Government Budgeting and Deficits

Government budgeting involves planning revenue and expenditures to achieve fiscal objectives. Budget deficits occur when spending exceeds revenue, leading to borrowing and increased public debt. While deficits can finance important investments during economic downturns, persistent deficits may pose risks to fiscal sustainability and economic stability.

Regulation and Free Market Principles

The balance between regulation and free market principles is a central theme in civics government and the economy. Free markets encourage competition, innovation, and efficient resource allocation, but they can also lead to inequalities and market failures. Government regulation aims to mitigate these issues without stifling economic freedom. The challenge lies in designing regulations that protect public interests while fostering a dynamic and competitive economy.

Market Failures and Government Intervention

Market failures occur when markets fail to allocate resources efficiently or fairly. Common examples include externalities, public goods, information asymmetry, and monopolies. Government intervention through regulations, taxes, or subsidies can correct these failures and improve economic outcomes. For example, pollution taxes incentivize firms to reduce harmful emissions, aligning private costs with social costs.

Debates Over Deregulation

Deregulation advocates argue that reducing government intervention promotes entrepreneurship and economic growth. Critics warn that excessive deregulation may lead to abuses, reduced consumer protections, and systemic risks. The ongoing debate reflects the complexity of achieving an optimal regulatory environment that supports both economic vitality and social welfare.

Civic Engagement and Economic Literacy

Civic engagement and economic literacy are essential components of icivics government and the economy. An informed citizenry can better understand government policies, economic issues, and their implications for society. Civic education programs, such as those offered by iCivics, empower individuals to participate meaningfully in democratic processes and advocate for sound economic policies.

Importance of Economic Education

Economic education equips citizens with the knowledge to interpret economic data, understand policy debates, and make informed decisions. This literacy fosters accountability and encourages participation in elections, public forums, and community initiatives related to economic governance. Enhancing economic literacy supports the development of a more transparent and responsive government.

Tools for Enhancing Civic and Economic Understanding

Several tools and resources assist in promoting civic engagement and economic literacy, including:

- Interactive simulations and games that illustrate government and economic concepts.
- Educational curricula focused on the intersection of civics and economics.
- Public forums and debates that encourage discussion of economic policies.
- Access to unbiased information and data on government performance and economic indicators.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the role of government in the economy according to iCivics?

According to iCivics, the government plays a crucial role in the economy by regulating markets, providing public goods and services, ensuring economic stability, and protecting property rights.

How does iCivics explain the concept of supply and demand in relation to government policy?

iCivics explains that supply and demand determine prices in a market economy, but government policies such as taxes, subsidies, and regulations can influence these forces to achieve economic goals.

What are some examples of government interventions in the economy discussed in iCivics?

Examples include setting minimum wage laws, providing unemployment benefits, regulating monopolies, and implementing fiscal policies like taxation and government spending.

How does iCivics illustrate the impact of taxes on individuals and the economy?

iCivics shows that taxes fund public services and infrastructure, but they also affect disposable income and can influence consumer behavior and business investment decisions.

What economic concepts does iCivics use to teach students about budgeting and government spending?

iCivics uses concepts like revenue, expenditures, deficits, and surpluses to teach students how governments plan budgets and prioritize spending to meet public needs.

How does iCivics address the balance between economic freedom and government regulation?

iCivics discusses that while economic freedom allows individuals and businesses to operate with minimal interference, government regulation is necessary to prevent market failures, protect consumers, and promote fairness.

Additional Resources

1. iCivics: Foundations of Government

This book introduces young readers to the basic principles of government, exploring the structure and functions of the U.S. government. It covers topics like the Constitution, the branches of government, and the importance of civic participation. With interactive activities and clear explanations, it encourages students to understand and engage in their civic duties.

2. Economics and You: Understanding the Market

Designed for middle school students, this book breaks down fundamental economic concepts such as supply and demand, scarcity, and opportunity cost. It explains how individuals and governments make economic decisions and the impact those decisions have on society. Real-world examples and interactive lessons help readers see how economics affects their daily lives.

3. The Role of Government in the Economy

This book examines the various ways governments influence economic activity, including regulation, taxation, and public spending. It discusses the balance between free markets and government intervention to promote growth and protect citizens. Readers will gain insight into policy decisions and their effects on businesses and consumers.

4. Citizenship and Civic Responsibility

Focusing on the rights and responsibilities of citizens, this book encourages

active participation in democracy. It covers voting, community service, and advocacy, illustrating how individuals can impact government and society. The book includes case studies and projects to inspire young readers to become informed and engaged citizens.

5. *Money Matters: Personal Finance and the Economy*

This book introduces the basics of personal finance, including budgeting, saving, and investing, while connecting these concepts to the larger economic system. It explains how personal financial decisions contribute to the economy and the importance of financial literacy. Practical tips and exercises help students develop money management skills.

6. *The Constitution and Economic Freedom*

Exploring the relationship between constitutional principles and economic freedom, this book highlights how laws protect property rights and promote entrepreneurship. It explains key amendments and Supreme Court decisions that have shaped economic policy. Readers learn how constitutional rights support a thriving economy.

7. *Global Economy and U.S. Government Policy*

This book provides an overview of how the U.S. government interacts with the global economy through trade, tariffs, and international agreements. It discusses the impact of globalization on domestic markets and government decision-making. Students gain an understanding of economic interdependence and policy challenges.

8. *Decision Making in Government and Economics*

Focusing on the processes behind government and economic decisions, this book explores budgeting, legislation, and economic forecasting. It highlights the complexity of balancing competing interests and limited resources. Through scenarios and simulations, readers develop critical thinking skills related to policy-making.

9. *iCivics Action: From Knowledge to Participation*

This book encourages students to take their understanding of government and the economy into real-world action. It provides strategies for effective advocacy, community involvement, and using technology for civic engagement. By connecting knowledge to participation, it empowers young citizens to make a difference.

Icivics Government And The Economy

iCivics: Government and the Economy

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Outline:

Introduction: The Intertwined Nature of Government and the Economy

Chapter 1: Government's Role in a Market Economy: Regulation, Infrastructure, and Public Goods

Chapter 2: Fiscal Policy: Taxation, Government Spending, and the Budget

Chapter 3: Monetary Policy: The Central Bank and Interest Rates

Chapter 4: Government Intervention and Market Failures: Externalities and Information Asymmetry

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Conclusion: The Ongoing Dynamic Between Government and the Economy

iCivics: Government and the Economy

Introduction: The Intertwined Nature of Government and the Economy

The relationship between government and the economy is intricate and dynamic. It's not a simple case of one influencing the other; rather, they are deeply intertwined, constantly shaping and reshaping each other. A government's actions—or inactions—directly impact economic activity, influencing factors like employment, inflation, and overall economic growth. Conversely, the economic climate significantly affects a government's ability to function effectively and achieve its policy goals. Understanding this complex interplay is crucial for any citizen seeking to engage effectively in the democratic process and to make informed decisions about economic and social issues. This exploration delves into the various ways governments interact with their economies, examining both the intended and unintended consequences of governmental policies.

Chapter 1: Government's Role in a Market Economy: Regulation, Infrastructure, and Public Goods

A market economy, while driven by the forces of supply and demand, relies on a functioning framework provided by the government. This includes establishing and enforcing property rights, ensuring fair competition through antitrust laws, and regulating industries to protect consumers and the environment. These regulations prevent monopolies, ensure product safety, and maintain fair labor practices. Further, the government plays a crucial role in providing essential infrastructure – roads, bridges, communication networks, and utilities – that are necessary for economic activity but are often not profitable for private companies to build and maintain. Finally, the government provides public goods, such as national defense, clean air, and a legal system, which are non-excludable (everyone benefits, regardless of whether they pay) and non-rivalrous (one person's consumption doesn't diminish another's). These provisions are vital for a healthy and productive economy.

Chapter 2: Fiscal Policy: Taxation, Government Spending, and the Budget

Fiscal policy refers to the government's use of taxation and spending to influence the economy. Taxes fund government operations and social programs, while government spending can stimulate economic growth through infrastructure projects, social welfare programs, and direct payments to individuals. A budget deficit occurs when the government spends more than it collects in taxes, while a surplus occurs when it collects more than it spends. The government's budget decisions have significant impacts on the economy. For instance, increased government spending can boost demand, creating jobs and stimulating economic activity, but it can also lead to inflation if the economy is already operating at full capacity. Conversely, tax cuts can stimulate investment and consumer spending, but they can also increase the national debt. Managing the budget effectively is crucial for balancing economic growth with fiscal responsibility.

Chapter 3: Monetary Policy: The Central Bank and Interest Rates

Monetary policy is controlled primarily by the central bank (e.g., the Federal Reserve in the US). Its main tool is manipulating interest rates. By raising interest rates, the central bank makes borrowing more expensive, slowing down economic growth and potentially reducing inflation. Conversely, lowering interest rates makes borrowing cheaper, stimulating investment and consumption, and potentially increasing inflation. The central bank also uses other tools, such as reserve requirements (the amount of money banks must keep in reserve) and open market operations (buying or selling government bonds). The goal of monetary policy is to maintain price stability, full employment, and sustainable economic growth. Finding the right balance is crucial, as overly restrictive policy can stifle growth, while overly expansionary policy can lead to high inflation.

Chapter 4: Government Intervention and Market Failures: Externalities and Information Asymmetry

Sometimes, markets fail to allocate resources efficiently. Two common types of market failures are externalities and information asymmetry. Externalities are costs or benefits that affect parties who are not directly involved in a transaction. For example, pollution from a factory is a negative externality, while education provides a positive externality through a more skilled workforce. Governments often intervene to correct these failures, such as through pollution taxes or subsidies for education. Information asymmetry occurs when one party in a transaction has more information than the other. For example, a car seller may know more about a car's defects than the buyer. Governments may regulate to address such imbalances, such as through consumer protection laws or disclosure requirements.

Chapter 5: Social Welfare Programs and Economic Inequality

Social welfare programs, such as unemployment benefits, food stamps, and social security, aim to alleviate poverty and economic inequality. These programs redistribute wealth from higher-income earners to lower-income earners, providing a safety net and improving social welfare. However, these programs can also have unintended consequences, such as potentially disincentivizing work or increasing dependency. The debate over the optimal level and design of social welfare programs is ongoing, with different perspectives on the balance between social welfare and economic efficiency.

Chapter 6: International Trade and Economic Policy

Governments play a significant role in shaping international trade through tariffs (taxes on imported goods), quotas (limits on the quantity of imported goods), and trade agreements. These policies can protect domestic industries but may also raise prices for consumers and reduce overall economic efficiency. International trade agreements aim to reduce barriers to trade, fostering economic growth and interdependence. Negotiating and implementing these agreements requires complex diplomatic and economic considerations. The impact of international trade on national economies is a subject of ongoing debate, with differing views on the benefits and drawbacks of globalization.

Chapter 7: Economic Growth and Government's Influence

Economic growth is a primary goal of most governments. Governments can influence economic growth through various policies, including fiscal and monetary policies, investments in education and infrastructure, and regulations that encourage innovation and entrepreneurship. The role of government in promoting innovation and technological progress is particularly significant in the modern economy, as technological advancements are key drivers of long-term economic growth. Sustained economic growth leads to higher standards of living, reduced poverty, and improved overall societal well-being.

Conclusion: The Ongoing Dynamic Between Government and the Economy

The relationship between government and the economy is a continuous and evolving interaction. Effective government policies are essential for a thriving economy, creating a balance between economic growth, social welfare, and environmental sustainability. Understanding the intricacies of this relationship is vital for informed citizenship and effective policymaking. Citizens need to engage actively in the political process, holding their representatives accountable for responsible economic policies that serve the broader interests of society.

FAQs:

1. What is the difference between fiscal and monetary policy? Fiscal policy involves government

spending and taxation, while monetary policy focuses on interest rates and money supply.

2. How does government regulation affect market efficiency? Regulation can improve market efficiency by correcting market failures, but excessive regulation can stifle competition and innovation.

3. What are the main goals of social welfare programs? Social welfare programs aim to reduce poverty, provide a safety net, and improve overall social well-being.

4. How do tariffs and quotas affect international trade? Tariffs increase the price of imports, while quotas limit the quantity of imports, both potentially harming consumers and global efficiency.

5. What is the role of the central bank in managing inflation? The central bank controls monetary policy, manipulating interest rates to influence inflation.

6. How does government investment in infrastructure contribute to economic growth? Infrastructure investments improve productivity, reduce transportation costs, and create jobs.

7. What are externalities and how can governments address them? Externalities are costs or benefits imposed on third parties; governments address them through taxes, subsidies, or regulations.

8. What is the impact of government debt on economic growth? High levels of government debt can crowd out private investment and hinder long-term growth.

9. How does government policy affect income inequality? Government policies, such as taxation and social welfare programs, significantly influence income distribution.

Related Articles:

1. The Impact of Taxation on Economic Growth: Explores the effects of various tax systems on economic activity.

2. Government Regulation and Market Competition: Analyzes the balance between regulation and fostering a competitive market.

3. Monetary Policy and Inflation Control: Details the tools and techniques central banks employ to manage inflation.

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8. Market Failures and Government Intervention: Provides examples of market failures and government solutions.

9. Economic Growth and Development Policies: Explores government strategies to promote sustainable economic growth.

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icivics government and the economy: American Government 3e Glen Krutz, Sylvie Waskiewicz, 2023-05-12 Black & white print. American Government 3e aligns with the topics and objectives of many government courses. Faculty involved in the project have endeavored to make government workings, issues, debates, and impacts meaningful and memorable to students while maintaining the conceptual coverage and rigor inherent in the subject. With this objective in mind, the content of this textbook has been developed and arranged to provide a logical progression from the fundamental principles of institutional design at the founding, to avenues of political participation, to thorough coverage of the political structures that constitute American government. The book builds upon what students have already learned and emphasizes connections between topics as well as between theory and applications. The goal of each section is to enable students not just to recognize concepts, but to work with them in ways that will be useful in later courses, future careers, and as engaged citizens. In order to help students understand the ways that government, society, and individuals interconnect, the revision includes more examples and details regarding the lived experiences of diverse groups and communities within the United States. The authors and reviewers sought to strike a balance between confronting the negative and harmful elements of American government, history, and current events, while demonstrating progress in overcoming them. In doing so, the approach seeks to provide instructors with ample opportunities to open discussions, extend and update concepts, and drive deeper engagement.

icivics government and the economy: Democracy and Philanthropy Eric John Abrahamson, 2013-10

icivics government and the economy: No Citizen Left Behind Meira Levinson, 2012-04-23 While teaching at an all-Black middle school in Atlanta, Meira Levinson realized that students' individual self-improvement would not necessarily enable them to overcome their profound

marginalization within American society. This is because of a civic empowerment gap that is as shameful and antidemocratic as the academic achievement gap targeted by No Child Left Behind. No Citizen Left Behind argues that students must be taught how to upend and reshape power relationships directly, through political and civic action. Drawing on political theory, empirical research, and her own on-the-ground experience, Levinson shows how de facto segregated urban schools can and must be at the center of this struggle. Recovering the civic purposes of public schools will take more than tweaking the curriculum. Levinson calls on schools to remake civic education. Schools should teach collective action, openly discuss the racialized dimensions of citizenship, and provoke students by engaging their passions against contemporary injustices. Students must also have frequent opportunities to take civic and political action, including within the school itself. To build a truly egalitarian society, we must reject myths of civic sameness and empower all young people to raise their diverse voices. Levinson's account challenges not just educators but all who care about justice, diversity, or democracy.

icivics government and the economy: Team Being Gary Gemmill, Michael Schoonmaker, 2020-01-12 Team Being is a book about creative collaboration—what it is, how it works and how to maximize chances of doing it well. The book is built upon years of experience working with thousands of nascent teams from education, business and government where participants were expected to generate results in formations from two to twenty-five people. The book shares complex insights on collaboration combining direct observations of creative teams in action, extensive reviews of ground-breaking research in the field and insights from leaders of professional creative teams. Team Being goes beyond other teamwork books incorporating compelling insights and perspectives from psychodynamics, neuroscience and quantum physics, all of which help to illuminate the often-hidden forces at work in collaborative environments. The more aware leaders are of these forces, the more empowered they are to lead teams by influence rather than blind authority. Learning how to work well with others is an inconvenience, not unlike what grammar is to writing. Teamwork is an essential skill for the 21st century work force, but there is currently no natural, convenient or effective place to learn it in most institutions of education.

icivics government and the economy: *International Practices to Promote Budget Literacy* Harika Masud, Helene Pfeil, Sanjay Agarwal, Alfredo Gonzalez Briseno, 2017-06-28 Budget literacy is defined as 'the ability to read, decipher, and understand public budgets to enable and enhance meaningful citizen participation in the budget process'. It is comprised of two main parts - (i) a technical understanding of public budgets, including familiarity with government spending, tax rates and public debt and; (ii) the ability to engage in the budget process, comprising of practical knowledge on day-to-day issues, as well as an elementary understanding of the economic, social and political implications of budget policies, the stakeholders involved and when and how to provide inputs during the annual budget cycle. Given that no international standards or guidelines have been established for budget literacy education to date, this book seeks to address this gap by taking stock of illustrative initiatives promoting budget literacy for youth in selected countries. The underlying presumption is that when supply-side actors in the budget process -- governments -- simplify and disseminate budget information for demand-side actors -- citizens -- this information will then be used by citizens to provide feedback on the budget. However, since citizens are often insufficiently informed about public budgets to constructively participate in budget processes one way to empower them and to remedy the problem of budget illiteracy is to provide budget-literacy education in schools to youth, helping them evolve into civic-minded adults with the essential knowledge needed for analyzing their government's fiscal policy objectives and measures, and the confidence and sense of social responsibility to participate in the oversight of public resources. This book elaborates on approaches, learning outcomes, pedagogical strategies and assessment approaches for budget literacy education, and presents lessons that are relevant for the development, improvement, or scaling up of budget literacy initiatives.

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inter-jurisdictional territory, this book proposes a model of 'Balanced Federalism' that mediates between competing federalism values and provides greater guidance for regulatory decision-making.

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icivics government and the economy: *The Political Classroom* Diana E. Hess, Paula McAvoy, 2014-11-13 WINNER 2016 Grawemeyer Award in Education Helping students develop their ability to deliberate political questions is an essential component of democratic education, but introducing political issues into the classroom is pedagogically challenging and raises ethical dilemmas for teachers. Diana E. Hess and Paula McAvoy argue that teachers will make better professional judgments about these issues if they aim toward creating political classrooms, which engage students in deliberations about questions that ask, How should we live together? Based on the findings from a large, mixed-method study about discussions of political issues within high school classrooms, *The Political Classroom* presents in-depth and engaging cases of teacher practice. Paying particular attention to how political polarization and social inequality affect classroom dynamics, Hess and McAvoy promote a coherent plan for providing students with a nonpartisan political education and for improving the quality of classroom deliberations.

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icivics government and the economy: *Pitch, Tweet, or Engage on the Street* Kara Alaimo, 2020-12-29 The second edition of *Pitch, Tweet, or Engage on the Street* offers a modern guide for how to adapt public relations strategies, messages, and tactics for countries and cultures around the globe. Drawing on interviews with public relations professionals in over 30 countries as well as the author's own experience, the book explains how to build and manage a global public relations team, how to handle global crisis communication, and how to practice global public relations on behalf of corporations, non-profit organizations, and governments. It takes readers on a tour of the world, explaining how to adapt their campaigns for Asia-Pacific, Europe, the Middle East, the Americas, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Along the way, readers are introduced to practitioners around the globe and case studies of particularly successful campaigns. This new edition includes updates to country profiles to reflect changes in each local context, as well as expanded coverage of social media and the role of influencer engagement, and a brand-new chapter on global crisis communication. The book is ideal for graduate and upper-level undergraduate public relations students, as well as practitioners in intercultural markets.

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test, some answers may change because of elections or appointments. Applicants must be aware of the most current answers to these questions. Applicants must answer these questions with the name of the official who is serving at the time of his or her eligibility interview with the USCIS. The USCIS officer will not accept an incorrect answer.

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icivics government and the economy: The European Union Kristin Archick, 2019-09-15 The European Union (EU) is a political and economic partnership that represents a unique form of cooperation among sovereign countries. The EU is the latest stage in a process of integration begun after World War II, initially by six Western European countries, to foster interdependence and make another war in Europe unthinkable. The EU currently consists of 28 member states, including most of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and has helped to promote peace, stability, and economic prosperity throughout the European continent. The EU has been built through a series of binding treaties. Over the years, EU member states have sought to harmonize laws and adopt common policies on an increasing number of economic, social, and political issues. EU member states share a customs union; a single market in which capital, goods, services, and people move freely; a common trade policy; and a common agricultural policy. Nineteen EU member states use a common currency (the euro), and 22 member states participate in the Schengen area of free movement in which internal border controls have been eliminated. In addition, the EU has been developing a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which includes a Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), and pursuing cooperation in the area of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) to forge common internal security measures. Member states work together through several EU institutions to set policy and to promote their collective interests. In recent years, however, the EU has faced a number of internal and external crises. Most notably, in a June 2016 public referendum, voters in the United Kingdom (UK) backed leaving the EU. The pending British exit from the EU (dubbed Brexit) comes amid multiple other challenges, including the rise of populist and to some extent anti-EU political parties, concerns about democratic backsliding in some member states (including Poland and Hungary), ongoing pressures related to migration, a heightened terrorism threat, and a resurgent Russia. The United States has supported the European integration project since its inception in the 1950s as a means to prevent another catastrophic conflict on the European continent and foster democratic allies and strong trading partners. Today, the United States and the EU have a dynamic political partnership and share a huge trade and investment relationship. Despite periodic tensions in U.S.-EU relations over the years, U.S. and EU policymakers alike have viewed the partnership as serving both sides' overall strategic and economic interests. EU leaders are anxious about the Trump Administration's commitment to the EU project, the transatlantic partnership, and an open international trading system-especially amid the Administration's imposition of tariffs on EU steel and aluminum products since 2018 and the prospects of future auto tariffs. In July 2018, President Trump reportedly called the EU a foe on trade but the Administration subsequently sought to de-escalate U.S.-EU tensions and signaled its intention to launch new U.S.-EU trade negotiations. Concerns also linger in Brussels about the implications of the Trump Administration's America First foreign policy and its positions on a range of international issues, including Russia, Iran, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, climate change, and the role of multilateral institutions. This report serves as a primer on the EU. Despite the UK's vote to leave the EU, the UK remains a full member of the bloc until it officially exits the EU (which is scheduled to occur by October 31, 2019, but may be further delayed). As such, this report largely addresses the EU and its institutions as they currently exist. It also briefly describes U.S.-EU political and economic relations that may be of interest.

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