

# Book Reviews

*Section edited by Carla Monteleone and Stefania Panebianco*

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**MAURIZIO CARBONE and JAN ORBIE**, *The Trade-Development Nexus in the European Union. Differentiation, coherence and norms* (London, New York: Routledge, 2015). 132 pp., £95,00 (hardback), ISBN: 9781138816701

The nexus between trade and development has been crucial within the European Union (EU)'s common commercial policy since at least the first Lomé Convention in 1976. Under the Convention, the EU essentially granted preferential access, aid, and investment to former colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (ACP). In the 1990s, the neoliberal agenda encapsulated in the World Trade Organization (WTO) agenda reduced the policy space for these kinds of agreements, forcing the EU to substitute the Lomé Conventions with the Cotonou agreement in the year 2000. In general, the pervasiveness of the neoliberal discourse and the rising diversification of development paths in developing countries have somehow led the European Union to rethink its approach to preferential trade agreements, aid for trade, and the complex dynamics between development imperatives and commercial interests at large.

A very rich and detailed account of all these issues is presented in this book edited by Maurizio Carbone and Jan Orbie, which is actually a reprinting of a special issue (March 2014) of the journal *Contemporary Politics*. We learn from the introduction that differentiation, policy coherence, and norms are the focus of the collective work, with the purpose of assessing the evolution of the nexus between trade and development while at the same time shedding light on the challenges the EU has to address in order to increase the credibility, and thus the effectiveness, of its trade policy vis-à-vis developing countries.

As far as differentiation is concerned, it seems that since the adoption of EU Commissioner Peter Mandelson's *Global Europe* agenda in 2006, on the one hand, the EU has put economic interests above other considerations, favoring free trade agreements with emerging powers, and on the other hand, Brussels has shifted toward reciprocity in dealings with the developing world and also gradually phasing out the general system of preferences for upper-middle income countries (Stephen

Woolcock and Gabriel Siles-Brügge respectively address these aspects in their chapters).

On coherence—or rather, (not surprisingly) incoherence—between trade policy and other policies of the European Union, the volume examines horizontal, multi-lateral, and partner coherence. For instance, tensions between Directorate General trade and Directorate General development are highlighted in Carbone's chapter, while Patrick Holden underlines how different discourses on regional integration, the free market, and pro-poor actions often collide, an exception being high coherence in the policy of sanctions between trade, development, and foreign policy (Clara Portela and Jan Orbis). Multilateral coherence (referring to the EU's relationship with international organizations) is examined under the lenses of International Labour Organization policies (Mark Langan on decent work) or the OECD Development Assistance Committee (Carbone on untying aid), but it is logically intertwined with partner coherence (the need to offer partners a practice in line with official discourse), such as in Patrick Holden's chapter on the WTO and the EU's aid for trade policy.

A third and final dichotomy in the book regards norms and interests because in the literature, some influential voices argue that the EU has become more similar to a self-interested realist power, thereby de facto abandoning (or at least strongly qualifying) its stance as a normative power or a “benign partner” (see Anders Ahnlid and Ole Elgström's contribution), which has always presumably been the defining feature of the EU as a global actor. In other words, the EU seems more and more interested in promoting its commercial interests at the expense of meaningful and sustainable development of local economies. Why is this so? Apart from the self-evident need after the Great Recession to tap into external markets' demand to help the recovery of the European economies, the authors offer some tentative explanations. For example, Siles-Brügge puts forward a political economy explanation, arguing that the EU is in search of open markets for its companies, and everything else is subordinated to acquiring and keeping leverage in free trade negotiations. Ahnlid and Elgström look to role theory to explain how the new EU realism might be seen as a reaction to the increasing role emerging economic giants claim on the global scene. Tony Heron refers to constructivist and historical arguments to explain how the problems with the reform of the ACP trade regime were caused by a divergence between institutional paths and ideas, with the former prevailing over the latter. Holden makes use of critical discourse analysis to give evidence of the deep undercurrent tensions in the EU's flow of policies and discourses on development and trade. Finally, under a “moral economy” perspective, Langan shows how the Economic Partnership Agreements will have “deleterious consequences for the lives of many poorer producers and workers in ACP countries,” and he points out that a serious reflection on possible alternative instruments is needed in order to overcome the “normativity-outcomes gap” that is weakening the EU's foreign policy consistency.

The general impression the reader gets from the valuable contribution to the literature found in this fascinating book is that political and economic differentiation among developing countries has found the European Union rather unprepared to

smoothly adjust its trade and development nexus, and, consequently, the EU reaction (also influenced by the EU's own internal dynamics) has led to general incoherence in a general environment of norm confusion, to the extent that Alasdair R. Young in the conclusive chapter talks about "a lack of common understanding of what a norm is." This seems to be quite a poor achievement for a regional bloc that is, as Carbone and Orbis pointedly remark in the introduction, "the world's largest trading power..., the biggest importer of products from developing countries..., [and] the largest provider of development assistance." Indeed, the EU looks like a confused actor striving to find its way within a rapidly evolving international order, with a real gap between (strong) power resources and (weak) effectiveness. It might also be the case that beyond the pro-poor rhetoric, the European trade policy under the present Commission, made explicit by the 2015 Communication "Trade for all," has a real focus on delivering economic opportunities' for "consumers, workers and small companies" alike within the EU market, sending development concerns to the margins of the discourse.

The EU, in fact, seems to be aware of contradictions in the trade-development nexus given that the new Horizon 2020 call for research projects also includes the specific theme of assessing the coherence of the EU trade policy with all other relevant EU policies. This is a welcoming sign: as Carbone and Orbis write at the end of their conclusion, it is necessary "to move beyond Brussels-centric analyses and concentrate on the effective impact of the EU's trade-development policies on the ground," adopting a clear interdisciplinary approach. In the meantime, this volume provides a wealth of knowledge and a true starting point for future research.

**Giuseppe Gabusi, University of Turin**

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**LORENZO CLADI and ANDREA LOCATELLI, *International Relations Theory and European Security. We Thought We Knew*** (London, New York: Routledge, 2016). 246 pp., £90,00 (hardback), ISBN: 9781138847279

European security and defense policies have been an object of analysis among international relations (IR) scholars for decades. However, it was the end of the Cold War that brought about a resilient cooperation on security and defense among European Union (EU) member states: beginning in the 1990s, the CFSP and the ESDP (both renamed CSDP, the Common Security and Defence Policy, by the Lisbon Treaty) emerged as key policies of European external action. The renewed military ambitions of the *civilian power*, as the EU as an international actor was initially understood, contributed to the creation of a number of institutions and agencies. Accordingly, in the last twenty-five years, the process of integration in the sphere of *high politics* (defense and security) after the remarkable integration of *low politics* (common market) inevitably attracted the attention of IR scholars.

Notwithstanding the considerable amount of academic literature and scholarship devoted to the topic, the EU's foreign and security policies still constitute an empirical puzzle. The phenomenon is too complex (due to the multiplicity of actors and institutions involved) and too *new* (since the EU is neither a state nor a traditional international organization but a new-flanged supranational political body) to be easily grasped by a single theoretical perspective. Above all, the hybrid political nature of the EU hinders analysis, and this is particularly true for the two main traditional paradigms of IR: Realism that relies on state-centrism and Liberal-Institutionalism focused on international organizations. However, the EU is neither a cohesive political unit nor an inter-governmental organization. The peculiarity of the European integration was captured by Kenneth Waltz in 1993 (and his words are still meaningful today) when he contended that “[m]any believe that the EC [*European Community*] has moved so far toward unity that it cannot pull back, at least not very far back. That is probably true, but it is also probably true that it has moved so far toward unity that it can go no farther. The easier steps toward unity come earlier, the harder ones later, and the hardest of all at the end”.<sup>1</sup>

In this view, the authors adopted an original theoretical perspective, inspired by *analytic eclecticism*, an epistemological approach that was recently suggested by Sil and Katzenstein.<sup>2</sup> It is particularly suitable for analyzing complex phenomena that are marked by multiple interactions in which different mechanisms and processes (drawn from different paradigms) are at play and that raise both practical dilemmas for decision-makers and academic debates. The CSDP comprises all these features. Thus, following this epistemological line, the book looks at the CSDP through the theoretical lenses of the main IR research traditions.

Analytic eclecticism applied to the CSDP could have ended up merely adding theoretical complexity to the complexity of the object of analysis. However, that risk was avoided—and this is the primary merit of the volume—for a number of reasons. First, even though the contributions differ on the theoretical perspective adopted, they are consistent on one point: in coming to terms with the CSDP, a single paradigm as a catch-all explanation is not convincing. Put differently, indulging in parsimony for theoretical elegance is not an appropriate starting point for seriously grasping the CSDP. Second, the complexity of the CSDP and the hybrid character of the European integration clearly invite a *problem-driven* approach rather than a *theory-driven* methodology based on a single paradigm. In this view, analytic eclecticism is neither a way to evade theoretical analysis nor an excuse for theoretical inaccuracy. On the contrary, its aim is to make inter-paradigmatic dialogue fruitful for investigating the causal drivers behind a complex phenomenon. Third, the book effectively uses the IR research traditions (and the possible dialogue among them) to shed light on three dichotomies concerning the drivers of the CSDP: material vs. ideational factors; national vs. systemic variables; and state vs. society interests.

Throughout the book, the relative role of—and interplay between—material and ideational variables is touched on. Even if the editors and contributors do not aim to ascertain whether a paradigm is better than others, they show how both material and ideational factors shape the CSDP. More empirical inquiries are needed, as the

editors admit in the Conclusion, but it is important to stress how the volume represents a promising starting point for using the dialogue between different paradigms to explain when, how, and why material or ideational factors prevail over the others. Chapters 2, 5, 6, and 10 already do that, but the same approach can be fruitfully applied to other policies related to the CSDP. The same argument can be used for the state vs. society dichotomy to determine when, how, and why states behave as unitary actors or how societal demands (within a state) affect government decisions. From this point of view, the volume offers a resilient, original, and promising contribution to the literature on EU security and defense policies and, potentially, on the European integration in general.

However, the distinction between levels of analysis—systemic vs. national—is more ambiguous. The editors and some contributors rightfully assert that both systemic and national variables are at play in the CSDP. However, even chapters that address domestic aspects (chapter 3 and 4) concede that systemic changes, particularly the end of the Cold War, cannot be easily discharged as negligible explanatory variables. Conversely, they seem to recognize, in part implicitly, that the new security environment has been the *permissive* condition for European cooperation on security and defense policies. Domestic factors were decisive for the CSDP's development but probably thanks to the opportunities offered by the new international scenario. In this case, the contribution of inter-paradigmatic dialogue between systemic and reductionist theories to grasp the CSDP are more elusive.

**Andrea Carati, University of Milan**

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**FABRIZIO COTICCHIA and FRANCESCO N. MORO**, *The Transformation of Italian Armed Forces in Comparative Perspective. Adapt, Improvise, Overcome?* (London, New York: Routledge, 2015). 162 pp., £95,00 (hardback), ISBN: 9781472427519

After the end of the Cold War, Western armed forces changed dramatically. The international context as well as the threats those armies were designed to face became increasingly nuanced and unpredictable. In particular, because the mutable nature of war is well-known among decision makers and military élites, *adaptation* became a sort of *mantra* in the process of reframing the most important Western defense bodies. After more than forty years of stability—or at least a clear and relatively static scenario—after September 11, Western armed forces entered into an era of relentless deployment vis-à-vis insurgencies, regional rivalries, and humanitarian emergencies. This transformation, however, did not follow a linear path.

Based on some of the authors' prior studies on the Italian army and, implicitly, on the strategic narrative of the Italian decision makers, *The Transformation of the Italian Armed Forces* investigates how that process concerned the Italian armed forces. A similar framework of analysis was also applied in part to the French and

British cases. The main scientific outcome of the manuscript is thus a clear and almost comprehensive overview of the ongoing evolution of the so called European way of war.

The preliminary assumption of Fabrizio Coticchia and Francesco N. Moro's study is that the evolution of Western armed forces requires interaction between *macro* and *meso* levels of analysis. These means of investigation are complemented with interviews and primary sources. The first part of the book (chapters 1 and 2) highlights the dimensions of the transformation of the armed forces, and the following sections (chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6) are focused on the process itself and its dynamics.

The third chapter is an exhaustive assessment of the defense transformation and its peculiarities in Italy, France, and the UK. Key official documents illustrate the main doctrinal changes that occurred in these countries both in the Nineties and after 9/11. One merit of the Coticchia-Moro study is that its analysis also involves budget transformations and the role played by NATO and the EU defense policy in the process of adaptation and, excluding Libya, operational convergence.

The empirical part of the work illustrates the Italian military operations undertaken since 2001. With the valuable aim of filling a gap in the security studies literature through an innovative approach, in chapter 4 the authors observe the degree of coherence along three different dimensions: a) the force deployment with the type of mission; b) the adaptation to the environment through the existing doctrines as well as the learning on the field; and c) the channels of communication among strategic levels. In the following sections, Coticchia and Moro summarize and discuss the contents of chapters 3 and 4 in order to subsequently illustrate the defense model that emerged in the last decades and some of the risks related to the ongoing international scenario and that way of war. Through this study, Coticchia and Moro have pursued—successfully indeed—the valuable aim of filling the gap between the operational reality of the Italian armed forces (involved in a range of military operations abroad such as ISAF, Antica Babilonia, Operation Leonte, and Unified Protector) and domestic indifference or misperception about their international stance.

A mixed explanatory and analytical intent shapes the entire book. Fresh empirical sources and a unique access to military and official documents, complemented by selective interviews with the key personalities involved in transforming the Italian army, enhance Western war-making literature with a nuanced picture of twenty years of activity among the three most important European defense forces in their relations with both the United States and the non-state actors of the 21st century international system.

Although *The Transformation of the Italian Armed Forces in Comparative Perspective* does not entirely fill the existing gap in this field of analysis, it of course serves as useful reading for those scholars and practitioners who aim at developing a critical view of the role of coercion in Italian foreign and military policy.

**Marco Valigi**, University of Bologna

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**MANLIO GRAZIANO**, *Guerra santa e santa alleanza. Religioni e disordine internazionale nel XXI secolo* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2015). 360 pp., €25,00 (paperback), ISBN: 9788815254382

In October 2015, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, in a speech to the Zionist Congress, said that “Hitler didn’t want to exterminate the Jews...he wanted to expel the Jews.” Netanyahu was referring to a supposed conversation in which the grand mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, had protested to Hitler that “they’ll all come here,” referring to Palestine. Netanyahu then quoted Hitler asking Husseini, “So what should I do with them?” and Husseini as answering, “Burn them!” This controversial speech came at a time of spiraling violence in which the Israeli leader had repeatedly accused Palestinians of lying, mainly about Israel’s actions at a contested holy site in the Old City. Most of the Israeli historians and some Israeli politicians joined Palestinians in denouncing Netanyahu for falsity in saying it was the mufti who gave Hitler the idea of annihilating European Jews during World War II. In *A Place Among the Nations. Israel and the World* (1993), Netanyahu had already argued against the perfidious West and the untrustworthy Arabs, affirming that the question of what to do with the large Arab population in Israel would be solved by massive Jewish immigration. The view that Netanyahu holds of Middle Eastern history is quite simple: endless betrayal by the West of promises made to the Jewish people, ferocious hostility by the Arabs, and heroic achievements by the Israelis.

Undoubtedly, the main quality of Manlio Graziano’s book is to suggest a more complex view of Middle Eastern and world history. As Graziano underlines, Husseini was first appointed grand mufti by the British, then he joined the Axis powers, and finally he became a third-world leader. The roots of his various “holy wars,” proclaimed from time to time against the enemies of his patrons of the moment, lie in the foreign offices of the most developed nations rather than in the sands where the Muslim tradition emerged. His commitment was part of a sort of pedagogy of hate that was paving the way for our times, when religions re-emerge instrumentally or by filling the political vacuum left by the de-secularization of the world. Facing the declining pillars of the Westphalia temple, also Israeli politicians are not unfamiliar with this post-secular trend in international relations.

Graziano’s book is divided into four sections. The first three cover, respectively, the theoretical, historical, and analytical perspectives on the “holy war” as a potential occurrence. The final section is devoted to the book’s main thesis, namely, the possibility of a “holy alliance.”

The theoretical section revolves around two discursive hinges or pivotal reasoning. First, the turning point of modern secularization started with the displacement of the geopolitical axis of the world from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic and Indian oceans. The powers confined to the Mediterranean, i.e., the Italian city-states and the Ottoman Empire, saw the beginning of their decline, and with that, the two religions that had their territorial center in the region started to decline. Second, the

theory of secularization with its two corollaries about the autonomy of the political and the sovereignty of the state are currently challenged by the “return of God.” This development takes place in today’s globalized world that was shaped by the decolonization process. Post-secularism is already visible in megacities, where—as a consequence of massive rural exodus and urbanization—there has been a revival of “universal morality” in the heart of the polis. The end of the capitalist expansion of the West that characterized the so-called *trente glorieuse* and the recent rise of Islamic capitalism both contributed to this outcome.

The historical part of the book is a broad and rich overview of the religious Great Awakenings that began in the seventies, although a sort of preview had already occurred in Indonesia (1965). These developments are manifest in the Islamization of Egypt (1971) and Pakistan (1973), in Israel and India since religious parties conquered the public sphere (1977), in the Iranian revolution (1979), but also in Sri Lanka, Burma, and even the United States. In particular, Graziano focuses on the case of Afghanistan (1979), where he observes the potential for international disorder or the coming of a holy war. He also puts the “catholicization of modernity” that arose after the election of Pope John Paul II (1978) in the context of this religious revival.

In the analytical part, Graziano overturns most of the stereotypes on which Huntington’s thesis of a “clash of civilizations” is based, but he also lays the foundation for criticizing the opposite commitments to dialogue or alliance of civilizations because these help spread the belief that the world is divided along religious fault lines. In particular, Graziano dwells upon the invention of the West, the supposed monolithic nature of Islam, the reality of bloody boundaries along Huntington’s fault lines (including Buddhism and Hinduism), and the features of religious terrorism. This part of the book is a general analysis of the nexus between religion and politics far beyond the study of international relations.

The last part of the book presents the thesis of the holy alliance. According to Graziano, in the post-secular world, the decisive fault line is global in scope, and it divides the last warriors of the Westphalia temple on one side from the new religious forces that are reshaping the globalized world on the other. To confront international disorder, the only possible way out would seem to be that of a holy alliance guided by a Catholic alliance. The thesis of a holy alliance led by the papal hegemony is twofold. On the one hand, it is based on the Vatican narratives, beginning with papal encyclicals. On the other, it depends on the nature of the Holy See, in particular its “power of statelessness” that makes the pope a geopolitical pivot.

If the first three parts are an excellent and essential discussion on the geopolitics of religions, the final argument seems rather an exercise in the “cosmopolitics” of religions. In 1990, Stephen Toulmin stated that the hidden agenda of modernity was a vision of Cosmopolis as a material society rationally ordered. Can the vision of Cosmopolis as a spiritual society morally ordered be considered the hidden agenda of post-modernity? Aside from the exclusion of other civilizations, can this project be implemented in the Holy See of Rome instead of in the Old City of Jerusalem?

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**SIMONA PIATTONI**, *The European Union. Democratic Principles and Institutional Architectures in Times of Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). 320 pp., £55,00 (hardback), ISBN: 9780198716273

Since its foundation, the European Union (EU) has been an innovative experiment that challenged many traditional principles of Western politics such as sovereignty and statehood. From the perspective of political science, the EU is a formidable research lab for a long list of classical topics. Among these, one of the most exciting exercises for scholars is to determine “the nature of the beast” by finding a new or existing political and institutional format that fits with the characteristics of the European Union. A second “cool” topic is the legitimacy of the EU in terms of both common values and democracy in the political processes. Nevertheless, in the last years, the crisis has presented complex challenges to the European Union and to scholars involved with analyzing its political system.

Moreover, the euro crisis necessitated a joint response to save the single currency, and European politics became more salient; for the first time, it was collectively perceived as strongly intertwined with domestic politics by European citizens. This edited volume explores the impact of the euro crisis on the institutional structure of the EU and proposes a theoretical frame for understanding the institutional changes that should take place in response to the existential threat that the Eurozone crisis represented. The book’s basic contention is that the crisis was a push factor for reforming the institutional structures of the EU and for increasing the level of citizens’ participation. Simona Piattoni, editor of the book and an Italian scholar with deep knowledge of and research experience on the European Union, has framed contributions from outstanding scholars in order to connect the topic of the EU’s institutional and governance structure with the problem of legitimacy and accountability of the Union’s political system, taking into account the shock effect the last economic crisis had on the people and governments of the member states. Based on the premise that in time of crisis, “the future of [the] EU will depend on its capacity to address broad societal problems in a way which is consistent with EU citizens’ preferences,” this book challenges the theoretical perspective of the EU’s “output legitimacy” and stresses the need to “stick to democracy as a basis for legitimacy.”

The substantive scope of this analysis means that the book addresses a number of ongoing debates in EU political science scholarship by providing a common frame for the analysis and evaluation of the quality of EU democracy. In her introduction, Simona Piattoni identifies six democratic principles, delegation, accountability, representation, transparency, responsiveness, and participation that serve as theoretical and methodological guides for contributors. The classical debate on the EU’s democratic deficit is discussed by Fossum and Pollak with a new perspective. They evaluate the democratic performances of the EU in the light of the six abovementioned principles without underestimating the challenge of “accommodating diversity” that the EU must face in designing its institutional

structure. Agn   and Neyer debate the notion of legitimacy in two different chapters. Agn  's contribution criticizes the actual institutional architecture of the EU because this latter does not provide citizens with the power to influence the common institutions and their work. Neyer argues that the EU should increase the role of national Parliaments in order to legitimize policy outputs, with particular regard to monetary and finance policy. Crum and Curtin and Nicola  dis, Burgess, and Fabbrini analyze the Union's actual institutional structure.

In particular, Crum and Curtin evaluate the accountability of the EU by analyzing executive power and decision-making procedures. They argue that the EU suffers from institutional and political ambiguities that determine lack of accountability. Nicola  dis applies the notion of "demoicracy" to the EU's political system in order to highlight the EU's specific needs in organizing its political system, with particular regard to the necessity of conciliating different and, in some cases, opposite requirements. Burgess approaches the democratic dilemma of the European Union from a federal perspective that is combined with a revisited version of historical institutionalism. In this perspective, he argues that some federal objectives as stated by the Founding Fathers marked a path that is still valid and they could contribute to establishing a political and institutional strategy for moving the EU forward.

Fabbrini, in his contribution, focuses on the double logic underpinning the EU's actual institutional arrangements: the supranational Union and the intergovernmental organization. Both logics coexist in the Treaty, but in times of crisis, they can be uncomfortable for the system in terms of both effectiveness and democracy.

In this perspective, Fabbrini argues the need for a Treaty reform in order to substitute the double logic of intergovernativism and supranationalism with a coherent model of compounded democracy that can reconcile the union of states and the union of citizens.

Smismans and Kr  ger analyze the Union's interest representation system. Smismans, in his contribution, discusses the main debates on modes of participation in the EU and identifies some basic principles that should be considered for every future reform of the EU's institutional architecture. Kr  ger frames the topic of democratic representation in the larger perspective of political equality and introduces the issue of representation deficit in the EU policy process as one of the main concerns for the EU's political system. Benz's chapter is focused on a further classical concept in EU studies: the multi level governance model (MLG). His analysis is centered on the reconciliation between representative democracy and the multilevel governance system in order to demonstrate that that MLG can be a democratic mode of governance.

The main value of this text is that it incorporates the institutional analysis of the EU into the debate on the legitimacy of the integration process with particular attention paid to the challenge posed by the economic crisis. It highlights the crisis's crucial role, not only showing that the crisis determined a request for more participation but also investigating how and by whom the institutional architecture of the EU should be reformed in order to face the new European environment.

The result is a collective volume that makes compelling reading and that will prove a valuable resource not only for EU scholars but more broadly for researchers in comparative politics.

**Francesca Longo, University of Catania**

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**ANDREA PRITONI, *Poteri forti? Banche e assicurazioni nel sistema politico italiano*** (Bologna: il Mulino, 2015). 256 pp., €24,00 (paperback), ISBN: 9788815257468

Located in the research tradition developed in the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the University of Bologna, which in recent years has been an important driving force for a renewed attention to “interest politics,” which had never found a solid base in Italy, Andrea Pritoni’s book attempts to give an answer to the classic Lasswellian question “Who gets what, when and how?” In order to do that, he focuses on the Associazione Bancaria Italiana (Abi–Italian Bank Association) and the Associazione Nazionale fra le Imprese Assicuratrici (Ania–National Association of Insurance Companies), two actors that so far had not been closely analyzed but that have always been identified as having “strong powers,” that is, powers that often if not always make them capable of enforcing their preferences and specific interests in decision-making processes that may be of concern to them.

The research objective of this book is to identify and measure these two actors’ access to policy making and to transform this access into a true influence on outcomes by focusing attention on three extremely important decision-making processes in the *policy fields* of credit and insurance: the conversion of Decree Law N° 223/2006 into Law N° 248/2006 (“Bersani’s first ‘lenzuolata’ of liberalizations”), the conversion of Decree Law 7/2007 into Law N° 40/2007 (“Bersani’s second ‘lenzuolata’ of liberalizations”), and the conversion of Decree Law N° 1/2012 into Law N° 27/2012 (the liberalizations made by the technical government headed by professor Mario Monti).

Before presenting the results of his empirical research, in the first two chapters Pritoni suggests a thorough review of the international literature on the lobbying capacities and strategies that groups may adopt. In particular, in the first chapter, the author, embraces the idea that before being a (more or less) relevant actor in the policy-making process, every group is also and above all a complex organization that needs a certain structure and specific resources. He then proceeds by classifying and identifying four ideal types of groups, each of which insists on a certain segment of representation and has a prevailing organizational mission.

The second chapter explains the research strategy and the methodology used. Here an interesting review of the literature regarding lobbying and policy analysis is proposed. Moreover, after having identified some approaches that in his opinion are

best suited to achieve the goals set, the A. elaborates some research hypotheses to explain the influence that specific groups have on decision-making and does that by looking at the relationships between organizational resources held by specific groups and the characteristics of the policy issues analyzed. Finally, Pritoni presents a series of proposals for operationalizing the concepts used.

The other chapters show the results of the research: the third describes the structure and the organizational resources; the fourth shows the lobbying strategies used; and the fifth focuses on the influence of groups in the three processes previously mentioned. As for the structure and organizational resources, the data used are easily accessible (different groups' statutes, the central and territorial organizational articulation, the number and types of bureaucrats, the extent of membership, representativeness, expertise, and skills that groups can mobilize, the symbolic resources, the confidence in the organization as assessed through surveys). Pritoni analyzes the type of lobbying and the tactics and strategies of influence in the decision-making process by looking at the activities of two groups in a specific year (2012) and, to identify these tactics, strategies and types of lobbying, conducts semi-structured interviews with the leaders of the organizations. Furthermore, the author attempts to reconstruct a series of group actions (mobilizations, civil disobedience, appeals to civil and administrative justice to change wrong policies, strikes, etc.). With regard to the problem of influence in the three decisional processes that were previously analyzed, Pritoni, perfectly aware of the difficulty of measuring this influence, opts for a minimalist strategy of research by suggesting control over the results of the decisional process, which measures the influence in terms of distance between the outcomes that have occurred and the demands expressed by all participating actors. To calculate this distance, the A. uses both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the content of important documents, especially the articles and subsections related to the issues to which the groups are considered most susceptible, and asks eight experts to estimate the innovations introduced by the legislation analyzed despite the presence of group preferences in favor of the status quo. It must be said that only three of the experts responded positively to the request for cooperation and evaluation, and this made the effort to attempt a quantitative analysis "disproportionate".

Overall, the results of the empirical research showed that the analytical-conceptual schema proposed in chapter one holds. The third chapter, in particular, shows a new image of the organizational traits of the two actors studied, and the hypothesized proximity to the ideal type of corporate interest group of both associations is confirmed by most of the empirical dimensions analyzed. As for lobbying and the logics of strategic action, although they show some contradictions, the collected data validate the roles of the insiders in both associations, including their possession of vast economic, political, and informational resources that allow the leaders constant access to both political and bureaucratic policy makers. This access, however, does not seem to turn into influence in any decision-making process analyzed in chapter five: in fact, the empirical analysis shows that neither the Abi nor Ania were able to exert any influence. Pritoni considers that because the three decision-making processes were not particularly complex and they concerned ex-

tremely important policy issues on which public attention is rather high, the lack of influence can be considered not surprising. He also considers that the Abi and Ania could nevertheless be considered strong powers *but not always strong*: especially when the issues are very important and/or poorly specific and technical, they appear to be forced to accept unwanted policy results.

As plausible as it is, this interpretation does not seem to be sufficient to eliminate some small doubt about the adequacy of the data collection tools and approaches used. It does not seem daring to assume that the relations between political actors and interest groups deserve more attention and that more attention should be given to that *gray area* between the “visible policy of the invisible policy,” which is definitely not detectable through the interviews with the organizations’ leaders but is also not absent. None of this, however, calls into question the scientific relevance and usefulness of the fine work of Pritoni, especially the theory and methodology discussions.

In conclusion, we can only agree with Pritoni, who considers his research to be the beginning of a study that has significant empirical evidence on two actors that political analysis neglected and that uncovers a reality that needs further investigation.

**Orazio Lanza, Università di Catania**

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**DONATELLA M. VIOLA, *Routledge Handbook of European Elections* (London, New York: Routledge, 2016). 786 pp., £150,00 (hardback), ISBN: 9780415592031**

This book, edited by Donatella Viola, is a remarkable work for a number of reasons: first, for its size—786 pages (in addition to the 36 pages of prefaces and the prologue) organized into 32 chapters plus a synoptic appendix on European politics and an analytic index; second, for its content. The heart of the book (“Part II – Country Reviews”) consists of 27 chapters concerning the EU member states written by academic experts from various countries. The different national cases are classified according to the historical evolution of the EU building process and of the chronology of the various enlargements. Only the case of Croatia, which joined the EU in 2013, is not analyzed because the book was originally an analysis of the 2009 EP (European Parliament) elections. The 2014 elections, however, are explained in a supplementary chapter written by the editor (where the Croatian case is included). These last elections appear crucial because of the electioneering process and the problematic outcomes in the context of the deepest economic crisis since the post-war period.

These chapters are organized according to a standard structure: after a brief but useful country-specific profile (geography, history, geopolitical profile, political parties, electoral system, and form of government), the results of all the European

elections (from 1979 to 2009) are retraced and usefully compared with the results of the national elections. Overall, this long section of the book precisely constitutes a valuable “Handbook” of European politics and elections. But there is more: It also offers a specific interpretation that is well underlined in the foreword by J.H.H Weiler, one of the main scholars on the politics of the European Union. In particular, he writes, “it is a virtue of this project that it understands that Europe in general, and the machinations of European democracy in particular, can only be understood by *close attention to the specificities of the national Member States*” (p. XXVIII, emphasis added). In brief, the national context is important, and indeed, the national dimension and the supranational dimension interact constantly. This fact does not mean that we should forget that the supranational level has its own “emerging qualities”; it is also true that institutions matter. However, there is no doubt that the Handbook describes a variety of features and specific outcomes of the single countries that highlight the differences between old and new member states (chapter 31).

But the *Routledge Handbook of European Elections* is also important for its specific topic. In this regard, the three chapters in Part I in with Viola outlines the general framework of the entire work are particular useful and interesting. Chapter 1 retraces a brief history of the European Parliament, underlining its transformation from an “appointed Consultative Assembly” to a “directly elected legislative body” and from a legislative body without powers to an institution with greater ability to influence European politics, that is, from a functioning to a functional body. Chapter 2 addresses the classical structural and functional analysis of the EP emphasizing the specificity of a supranational Assembly, starting from aspects such as the EP’s location in Strasbourg and Brussels (but also the Luxembourg headquarters of the General Secretariat of the EP) and multilingualism. From this chapter there emerges the exceptional nature of an elected international body that, having the role of representing many nationalities, has increasingly become a composite assembly in terms of size and number of states: from 142 seats of the six members in 1958 to 751 seats of the 28 member states in 2014. The chapter then addresses the political groups in the EP, identifying them as forms of transnational political proto-organizations. The dynamics of European parliamentary groups, especially if analyzed in the long run, are interesting in a number of respects: a) the evolution of the main European ideological families, 2) their internal variance, and 3) the instability of their composition during the same legislature. Photographs of European politics tell us much about the structural transformation of national politics.

The first part of the book ends with a chapter that looks at two main theoretical perspectives that have characterized the international debate on European elections: the second-order election model (SOE; also applied to regional and local elections, as well as to the mid-term elections in the United States) and the Europe salience (ES). The first theory emphasizes national voters’ perceptions of the European elections. This leads to identifying some typical characteristics of European elections (that tell us a great deal about the deficit of institutionalization in the EU as a polity): “1) low turnout; 2) focus on National issues rather than European issues; 3) the defeat of government parties; 4) defeats of major parties; and 5) the

impact of timing of EP contest within the domestic electoral cycle on the results for ruling and big parties” (p. 41). This voting pattern is closely associated with the distinction between expressive voting and strategic voting, where the voter’s choice is influenced by the expectations of a candidate or a party’s success. These expectations are usually higher in the proportional systems (generally used for European elections).

However, with the progressive evolution of European integration, although the SOE model has not disappeared, the Europe salience theory has gained ground; Europe-related issues increasingly have bearing on political parties’ programs and voters’ preferences. In particular, the salience theory involves three hypotheses regarding European elections: we have 1) better performances by Green parties; 2) gains by extreme parties; and 3) success of anti-European parties. After the economic crisis of 2007–08, the salience theory gained greater prominence, and the 2014 elections have been read as a success of the anti-European attitudes.

At this point, it is appropriate to shift the focus on Chapter 31 (“Final Remarks”). This chapter explicitly and systematically compares the first seven European elections (it would have been useful to also include the 2014 election, which instead is analyzed in the chapter that closes the volume) based on some divergent key features, i.e., whether the 27 member states are big or small (under the geopolitical profile), old or new democracy (pre or post-1974), pro-EU/Euro or anti-EU/Euro (soft or hard Euro-skepticism), but the chapter also aims to verify the SOE and ES models. Essentially, “the core postulates of the Second-Order Election theory continued to be upheld, even following the subsequent treaty changes that have gradually expanded the role of the European Parliament” (p. 696). European elections continue to work as a rematch over national competition. At the same time, “[the] European salience theory has gained some ground, since voters’ choices have slowly been directed to movements that confer an increasing relevance to Europe” (*ibid.*). That means the increasing diffusion of Eurosceptic and populist parties. Particularly, after the long and intense economic crisis of 2007–08, the last European elections showed the existence of some fractures or structural conflicts that may harm the EU’s existence: between euro-zone and non-euro-zone countries (United Kingdom, Scandinavia); between weak (southern European democracies plus Ireland) and strong (continental democracies) euro-zone countries; between Western and Eastern countries; and between the stronger states such as France and Germany that struggle for hegemony.

Ultimately, the volume is important because it draws attention to other issues related to European politics starting from the paradox between powers (increased) and legitimacy (in decline) of the European Parliament and of the EU itself. This raises some questions. How can a polity without politics exist, especially if the policies are perceived in a negative way by citizens? What is the relationship between parliamentarization and the “constitutional” equilibria that occur in the quadrangle made up of the supranational institutions (Parliament and Commission) and the intergovernmental institutions (European Council and Council of Ministers)? Are most decisive elections sufficient to ensure accountable and representative institutions? More generally, will they strengthen the EU’s legitimacy? In conclusion,

regarding the Tower of Babel depicted on the cover of the book, will there the negative side of the conflicts prevail or the positive side of the opportunities? More generally, the book, edited by Donatella Viola, leaves us with a (implicit) question: Does the EU mark a further development in democracy, from the city-states to the national states and, therefore, to a supranational order? In other words, does the EU herald the advent of a post-democracy?

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