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**Book Reviews. Economic adjustment and political transformation in small states by Erik Jones**

Kurt Vandaele



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## West European Politics

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Jarle Trondal <sup>ab</sup>; Gideon Rahat <sup>c</sup>; Sarah L. de Lange <sup>d</sup>; Oleh Protsyk <sup>e</sup>; Stein Kuhnle <sup>f</sup>; Richard Sakwa <sup>g</sup>; Kostas A. Lavdas <sup>h</sup>; Kurt Vandaele <sup>i</sup>; Amandine Crespy <sup>j</sup>; David Richards <sup>k</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of Agder, <sup>b</sup> University of Oslo, <sup>c</sup> Hebrew University of Jerusalem, <sup>d</sup> European University Institute, <sup>e</sup> European Centre for Minority Issues, Flensburg <sup>f</sup> Hertie School of Governance and the University of Bergen, <sup>g</sup> University of Kent at Canterbury, <sup>h</sup> University of Crete, <sup>i</sup> ETUI, Brussels <sup>j</sup> Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), <sup>k</sup> University of Sheffield,

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## Book Reviews

**Unveiling the Council of the European Union. Games Governments Play in Brussels**  
Edited by Daniel Naurin and Helen Wallace  
*Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, 2008, 344 pp., £55.00, ISBN-978-0-230-55504-4 (hbk)*

This volume brings together prominent researchers that offer state-of-the-art accounts of the Council of the European Union (Council). The rationale for publishing this book is the improved availability of data on the Council, increased methodological pluralism, and refined theorising. This would prompt a ‘golden age’ of research on the Council (p. xi). It is argued by the editors that ‘research into the workings of the Council ... has reached a new phase of sophistication’ (p. 1). The volume should partly be read as a stock-taking exercise on the Council – empirically, theoretically and methodically. One central empirical puzzle is institutional continuity and change generally. More particularly, the book enquires whether the 2004 ‘Big Bang’ enlargement has profoundly transformed the way the Council ticks and works, potentially leading to a gridlock in Council decision-making.

The book unveils the inner life of the Council – exploring the games governments play – with emphasis on four topics: coalition building (Chapters 2, 3, 4), consensus formation (Chapters 5, 6), dynamics of deliberation (Chapters 7, 8, 9), and leadership in and of the Council (Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13). The last two chapters include a methodological debate on how to best study the Council – by the use of in-depth qualitative methods (Chapter 14), or by ‘normal science’ that embraces the use of ‘systematic research designs and explicit hypotheses’, often involving the use of formal modelling (Chapter 15, p. 279).

What are the main *new* findings in this volume? In brief, the 2004 enlargement has not profoundly changed the way the Council operates. Most authors see ‘business as usual’ – characterised by a culture of co-operation and consensus, a fairly low level of conflicts as measured by the number of roll-call votes and the preference structures, a strong geographical pattern of contestation, however, supplemented with party-political patterning and partisan conflicts, and finally the co-existence of different behavioural logics of decision-making. ‘The Council is a composite institution with many faces’ and several hats (Lewis, p. 166). The composite nature of the Council, however, is driven by different underlying causal mechanisms – including rational utility maximisation, the logic of appropriateness, and the logic of deliberation/arguing. One of the main faces or hats of the Council is still that of an intergovernmental legislator. This has changed only marginally since the Big Bang enlargement in 2004. Institutional persistence in the Council may be explained by the fact that (i) the basic organisational features of the Council have not changed profoundly – being still largely territorially organised; (ii) because the Council has created autonomous organisational capacities – such as the power of the Presidency and the Council Secretariat; and (iii) because new players tend to be socialised into consensual norms of the system. However, despite the co-existence of multiple decision-making dynamics in the Council, states still matter (Chapter 13).

One obvious strength of this volume is the collection of excellent case studies of the inner life of the Council. Another strength is that the editors so clearly display scholarly disagreements in the book – most explicitly shown by the methodological dispute between Dorothee Heisenberg and Gerald Schneider. As with most edited volumes, however, it suffers from the lack of a coherent theoretical template and thus also a dearth of general theoretical lessons that could be drawn from the overall exercise. The separate chapters include well-known theoretical disputes. The overall book, however, would have benefited from a theoretically grounded discussion of the research themes that organises the book (see above). In effect, the case selection is not theoretically grounded – and seems partly to be guided by the availability of data and partly a wish to sum up recent Council projects – concerning empirical findings, theoretical debates, and new data sets. The role of the editors seems more that of the collector than that of the idea entrepreneur (p. 5). This role is of course legitimate, but does not leave out the concern for a more coherent theoretical anchoring of the book. To conclude, the empirical lessons from the book are indeed tremendous and will probably serve as standard references on the Council. Moreover, the book shows that research on the Council has achieved exactly what that research on the European Commission has not managed so far: constructing time series that enables cumulative research of institutional change and persistence.

*Jarle Trondal*  
*University of Agder and University of Oslo*

### **The Selection of Ministers in Europe: Hiring and Firing**

Edited by Keith Dowding and Patrick Dumont

*Routledge, London, 2009, 235 pp., £70.00, ISBN 978-0-415-43081-4 (hbk)*

This book is the first product of a joint cross-national project whose goal is to systematically analyse the selection and de-selection of political elites. It is clearly a highly successful first move, and lays solid foundations for the next steps in an ambitious project. The book contains invaluable background information on the structure and formation of governments, and rich data on various aspects of the hiring and firing of ministers in ten West European democracies (Germany, France, the UK, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Portugal, Sweden, Ireland and Iceland). It also includes a chapter on ten new post-communist democracies. The book is useful for many purposes – from information-gathering in order to prepare an informed class on cabinets and ministers to conducting research. If one is studying the government in a single country, it offers data to put the subject in a comparative perspective. If one aims at a cross-national comparison, this volume is a good starting point.

The chapters of the book re-affirm past findings, for example, concerning the proportional allocation of ministries among coalition partners and the bias of over-representation of the smaller partners. At the same time, the chapters illuminate considerable differences among governments, including significant disparities in the levels of expertise and political backgrounds of the ministers. These differences, and others, make the case for the claim that parliamentary regimes are, after all, a family and not a single form of government. Knowing and understanding the options that exist within the parliamentary setting is especially important for those democracies where there are pressures for reform of the government system and in which the debate is uninformed and, thus, adversarial between the supporters of presidentialism and parliamentarism.

What I particularly like about the book is that it provides solid foundations for future research. *The Selection of Ministers in Europe* is an example of how an

ambitious study should start – exploring the various factors and phenomena (that in the future will turn into ‘variables’) in various political systems, under the guidelines of a general framework that outlines the main issues to be addressed. What testifies to this strength is that when reading the book and thinking about future research, one can, without prior knowledge of the subject, start to outline the missions that are still ahead. These would include theoretical as well as methodological issues.

In terms of theory, a decision will have to be made on the future path that this study should take – an institutional one, which will emphasise selection, or a behavioural one, which will stress recruitment, or maybe an attempt to use both. The selection element will require the creation of a sophisticated way to analyse and measure the relative powers of the various actors who are likely to be involved in ministerial selection and de-selection – the prime minister, party leaders, party factions, and interest groups, among others. Other methodological issues will include, for example, the standardisation of the categories of the reasons for the termination of the ministerial term, or asking what can be learned from comparisons of the ministerial survivor index.

Reading the book, in short, whets the appetite in anticipation of the future products of this research, and triggers a hope that its leading researchers (and the country experts) will continue their systematic and solid progress towards the goal of understanding the process of ministerial (and other elites’) selection and de-selection.

*Gideon Rahat*  
*Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

### **Cabinets and Coalition Bargaining: The Democratic Life Cycle in Western Europe**

Edited by Kaare Strøm, Wolfgang C. Müller and Torbjörn Bergman

*Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, xi + 443 pp., £60.00, ISBN 978-0-19-829786-4 (hbk)*

The third volume to come out of the *Comparative Parliamentary Democracy Project*, *Cabinet and Coalition Bargaining* is a worthy successor to *Coalition Governments in Western Europe* (2000) and *Delegation and Accountability in Parliamentary Democracies* (2003). The volume investigates the practice of coalition politics in West European parliamentary democracies, adopting a life cycle approach that sees ‘coalition politics as a sequence of mutually interdependent stages of bargaining and decision-making’. It integrates research on government formation, maintenance, termination and elections, and argues that what goes on during one phase of the life cycle has an impact on the phases that follow. Ambitious when it comes to theory and empirics, the aim of the volume is to present better theory, better data, and better methods that will help advance the study of coalition politics and set a new standard in the field of comparative politics. The editors achieve these aims without any problem, assisted by the many outstanding scholars that have contributed to the volume. The quality of the individual chapters is exceptionally high, with each chapter generating new theoretical and empirical insights about the four phases of the democratic life cycle. More importantly, the volume, when taken as a whole, becomes more than the sum of its parts. The adoption of a uniform theoretical framework and the use of the same data-set in the chapters mean that they speak to each other, which also becomes apparent in the general overview of the findings presented in the conclusion of the volume.

The two pillars and greatest assets of the volume are the theoretical framework and the data-set. The first integrates insights from previous studies and identifies six sets of factors that matter for coalition politics: 1) country and temporal factors; 2)

structural attributes; 3) actors' preferences; 4) institutions; 5) the bargaining environment; and 6) critical events. Although not necessarily exhaustive, the list of factors brings together variables that have been found relevant in inductive and deductive and large-n and small-n studies, thus covering the vast majority of prior studies in the field. The second is the result of a large data collection effort, known as the *Comparative Parliamentary Democracy Data Archive*. The dataset, which can be downloaded from the project's website, includes 11 dependent and more than 250 independent variables, encompasses 424 cabinets formed between 1945 and 1999 in 17 West European countries and as such is considerably larger than the one used in *Coalition Governments in Western Europe*. The only limitation of the data-set is that the data collection stopped in 1999, as a consequence of which it cannot shed light on the most recent developments in coalition practices in Western Europe.

The empirical chapters use the theoretical framework and data-set to explore patterns of government formation, portfolio allocation, coalition agreements and conflict management, and government termination and duration. Each of the chapters provides an overview of the state-of-the-art in the subfield, presents a number of testable hypotheses, and maps cross-national and cross-temporal trends. The statistical analyses in the chapters produce interesting, and sometimes unexpected results. Most authors find that a combination of variables, drawn from each of the six explanatory factors, explains the patterns they observe. At the same time different factors come into play in different phases of the democratic life cycle. Structural attributes and actors' preferences are for example more relevant in earlier phases of the cycle, while the bargaining environment and critical events are more relevant in later phases.

In most chapters the theoretical discussions are fairly condensed and the contextualisation of results is minimal. The ambitions of the volume as a whole might have put constraints on the extent to which authors have been able to explore details of coalition politics especially relevant to their chapters. Since the chapters address six sets of factors, the space for detailed discussions of theory and empirics is limited. The chapter by Andeweg and Timmermans is a noteworthy exception to this rule, because it combines a test of general hypotheses with case studies of coalition management mechanisms in Ireland and the Netherlands. It illustrates that knowledge of general patterns should go hand in hand with detailed case knowledge and confirms that a mixed-methods approach is the way forward in coalition research. Despite this minor point of criticism, the volume signifies an important step forward in the study of coalition politics. It re-affirms that that theoretical and methodological integration is the way forward in coalition research and underlines that coalition research is, once again, at the forefront of comparative politics.

*Sarah L. de Lange*  
*European University Institute*

### **Semi-Presidentialism in Central and Eastern Europe**

Edited by Robert Elgie and Sophia Moestrup

*Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2008, 296 pp., £65.00, ISBN 978-0-7190-7535-3*

This edited volume is a response to the proliferation of semi-presidential constitutional arrangements in Eastern Europe. It is the third in a trilogy on the topic of semi-presidentialism produced by the authors. The first volume, edited by Elgie, focused on a mix of West and East European cases. The second, co-edited by Elgie and Moestrup, examined cases of semi-presidentialism outside Europe. And now comes a volume exclusively devoted to the post-communist region. The book is a welcome addition to the literature on causes and effects of institutional choices.

The editors should be credited for bringing together an impressive team of country specialists. Some of the 12 countries discussed in the volume's individual country chapters have received very little coverage in the academic literature to date. The project adopts a minimalist definition of semi-presidentialism, which explains the large number of cases of semi-presidentialism identified in the book. The editors require the authors to address three key issues. The first one is to explain the initial choices that led to the adoption of semi-presidentialism. The second one is to analyse the distribution of powers among key constitutional actors. And the third assignment involves identifying the effects of constitutional choices on democratic survival and government performance.

In executing these three tasks the volume succeeds unequally. The parts of the volume dealing with the origins of semi-presidential institutions are the most rewarding. A number of perspectives brought to bear on the question of why choices in favour of semi-presidentialism were made in the first place gives justice to the complexity of circumstances surrounding initial constitutional decisions. The discussion of institutional origins helps to challenge the now dominant view of constitutional provisions as a product of self-serving decisions by powerful political actors. Regardless of whether the reader will find the alternative frameworks for understanding constitutional outcomes entirely rewarding, challenging an orthodoxy of rational choice institutionalism is thought-provoking and stimulating.

The parts of the volume dealing with the distribution of powers among key institutional actors under semi-presidentialism focus on Shugart and Carey-inspired analysis of the formal powers of presidents. All countries' constitutions are rated using these authors' index of presidential powers, which is a helpful heuristic device for understanding the constitutional strength of presidential authority in different political systems. Little systematic effort, however, is made to develop alternative ways of thinking about measuring presidential powers that would address some of the problems with how the existing indexes of presidential powers are constructed. Many individual country chapters nevertheless succeed in highlighting informal or partisan sources of presidential power.

The volume's discussion of the effects of constitutional choices on democratic survival and government performance is the most problematic. Part of the problem is how the outcomes of interest are conceptualised and dependent variables are operationalised. Take, for instance, democratic survival, which is a key concern of the book. This outcome is influenced by a great number of factors. Both editors and chapter authors are well aware of the fact that this outcome is over-determined, yet they proceed to devote a lot of space to identifying some marginal effects of semi-presidentialism on this crudely constructed dependent variable. A different type of challenge is posed by the overall research design. Is semi-presidentialism a causal factor or a scope condition? At times the discussion seems to oscillate between, on one hand, examining the effects of the variation in types of semi-presidentialism and, on the other, examining the effects of semi-presidentialism as a system distinct from parliamentarism and presidentialism. Case selection choices made by the editors allow for the former but limit the possibility for making the latter type of claims.

Despite these limitations, the volume constitutes a very valuable source of in-depth knowledge on political regimes which are increasingly identified by the not entirely satisfactory but highly resonant and therefore increasingly accepted label 'semi-presidentialism'. It will inevitably stimulate a perceptive reader to start thinking about formulating further hypotheses about the causes and effects of semi-presidentialism and about developing more nuanced measures for testing the truth of these hypotheses.

*Oleh Protsyk*  
*European Centre for Minority Issues, Flensburg*

**Nationalism and Social Policy: The Politics of Territorial Solidarity**

By Daniel Béland and André Lecours

*Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, x + 255 pp., £45.00, ISBN 978-0-19-954684-8 (hbk)*

There are many studies of national identity and welfare, but seldom have social policy issues been discussed or analysed in the context of sub-state nationalism. This book is a contribution to the study of the interaction between sub-state nationalism and the emergence of modern welfare states. Neither specialists on nationalism nor experts on welfare state development have been (much) concerned with the role of social policy for political mobilisation, identity- and solidarity-building at the sub-state level in multinational states. The relationship between nationalism and social policy is studied in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Belgium, all examples of multinational democracies with strong movements for sub-state nationalism in Quebec, Scotland and Flanders. Social policy has long been recognised as important for democratic nation-building at the state level, but how important is it for national community-building and territorial solidarity at the sub-state level? What is the potential impact of a nationalist movement on the welfare state?

The book highlights the importance of political institutions, policy legacies, the role of ideas and framing processes as well as the impact of social and economic cleavages. The authors formulate six, rather elaborate, claims about the relationship between sub-state nationalism and social policy. Claims are rather cautiously formulated, e.g. that 'social policy often becomes a major component of the effort of nationalist movements to build and consolidate national identity, and an important target for nationalist mobilization', and 'the consequences of sub-state nationalism for social policy are variable, and the presence of strong nationalist movements does not necessarily favour an erosion of welfare at the state or sub-state level'.

The rationale for selecting the three cases is that they are, along with Spain, the only Western countries with extensive social policy systems and strong nationalist movements. Spain is excluded from the analysis for the practical reason that the country features not one, but two, strong nationalist movements. The adjective 'strong' helps keep Wales out of the picture in the UK. The comparative study of the three chosen cases is inspired by process tracing, or systematic process analysis. Focus is on social policy development and restructuring and on sub-state nationalism and (central) state nationalism. The historical evolution and intersection of these processes are analysed within the frame of concurrent institutional, economic, ideological and cultural processes. Agency is embodied in the concept of 'nationalist movement'.

In both Canada and the UK social policy has been important for (central) state nationalism, especially after World War II. Social policy has been a powerful nation-building tool, and the authors argue that this is also true for sub-state nation-building. In all three cases it is found that nationalist movements seek control over social policy to build *their* national community: in the cases of Scotland and Quebec the discourse is linked to visions of progressive, collectivist, and egalitarian societies, while in the relatively rich Flanders, where social policy preferences are also seen as part of identity-building, these preferences concern less, rather than more redistributive and solidaristic social policy. Language and culture have been more important than social policy for nationalism in Flanders.

The book offers detailed analysis of the three cases and it has implications for the study of nationalism and social policy in general. It contributes to a strong modification of claims made in works on nationalism that sub-state nationalism necessarily is an 'ethnic' and/or reactionary, anti-modern phenomenon, often perceived as a contrast to the 'civicness' of states. Rather, nationalist movements may focus on social policy issues partly as an attempt to avoid the tag of ethnic nationalism. One apparent lesson one can certainly draw – or which the book helps

reinforce – is that social policy is important at any territorial and political level in (multinational) democracies. The book is an important contribution to the study of the politics of territorial solidarity.

*Stein Kuhnle*

*Hertie School of Governance and the University of Bergen*

### **Understanding Post-Communist Transformation: A Bottom Up Approach**

By Richard Rose

*Routledge, London, 2009, 223 pp., £80.00, ISBN 978-0-415-48218-9 (hbk), £22.99, ISBN 078-0-415-48219-6 (pbk)*

This book brings together the great bulk of Rose's contribution over the course of two decades on the transformation in post-communist eastern Europe. Most chapters have been published earlier as articles or working papers, and are now presented here, usually in a modified and abbreviated version. Thus this book makes available in an easily accessible form Rose's evolving views on the great transformation that continues to unfold in the eastern part of our continent. An indication of the sheer volume of Rose's work in this area is provided by the three pages devoted to his works in the eight-page bibliography at the end. The fundamental database on which Rose draws is provided by public opinion surveys from the New Europe Barometer, that have been conducted regularly under his supervision since the fall of the wall in 1989.

The work provides a unique account of what the mass of the public thought about the changes, and how they coped with the extraordinary pressures generated by the multiple transitions. There is plenty of material to make cross-national comparisons about a region that began with certain similarities inherited from their common past as members of the Soviet bloc, but in which countries and sub-regions swiftly diverged. The view from the bottom up, however, can be as superficial as from the top down, and although now ten former communist countries from the region are members of the European Union, this in itself does not indicate that the 'transition' for them is in any way 'completed', or that only Russia and other former Soviet states (excluding the Baltic republics) are uniquely 'burdened by their Soviet legacy', as the book seems to suggest. There is an implicit teleology at work in such a view, and occludes the profound changes taking place in Russia and the former Soviet state. Their history may not end with membership of the EU, but that should not be taken to devalorise their singular experience of post-communist transformation.

These considerations aside, this is a wise and profound study. From the very beginning, when Rose came to the UK and demonstrated how American political science at its best can be applied, he soon became the doyen of British political science, and this is amply demonstrated here. The book is marked by extraordinary erudition and wisdom, based on extensive empirical analysis and a firm grasp of detail. Rosean themes in the study of post-communist societies of the last two decades are reprised. The text is particularly useful for those not familiar with the region, but it can also be read with profit by those who know the area well. There is an extraordinary range and breadth in what are in effect nearly two dozen separate studies presented in the 20 chapters. For example, Chapter 9 deals with health and stress, Chapter 10 has particularly interesting things to say about freedom, Chapter 11 returns to Rose's well-known thesis about democratisation taking place 'backwards' in the region, while Chapter 18 discusses Russian 'normality' and Rose has important things to say about all these issues. However, Chapter 4 on patience appears redundant and dated.

The critic, moreover, could point to the frustratingly episodic and disjointed character of the work, with no over-arching theme or sustained analysis of any particular case. Issues are raised and dropped with alarming speed. The text is marred by a certain didacticism, in part derived from the lack of focus on who is the intended audience. This is not particularly directed towards the specialist audience, since references are rather sparse, but certainly the general reader and student can profit enormously. Although there is no unifying theme, there are numerous ideas generated by Rose in decades of fruitful study of the subject. Some of these may be contested, as his idea of the communist countries as 'anti-modern' societies (Chapter 2), and possibly inaccurate, as his statement that there is little demand for law in Russia (p. 22). The great achievement of the work, however, is its wealth of sociological and survey data.

Anyone who has watched the crumbling of the avaricious institutions of modernity over the last 30 years can only wonder at the hopeless naivety of the criticisms of the communist order. Accurate they may be, but the ontological problem is a far deeper one, and thus in this case we are ultimately left with only half a book. Many of the symptoms and pathologies of post-communist societies are generated by the European tradition itself, although of course expressing themselves in a local idiom and assuming a regional inflexion, and thus 'Europeanisation' is certainly far from the panacea for the region, although it may solve certain general problems for a time. Rose wisely counsels patience, but rather more critique may be equally valid advice.

*Richard Sakwa*  
*University of Kent at Canterbury*

### **The Limits of Europeanization: Reform Capacity and Policy Conflict in Greece**

By Kevin Featherstone and Dimitris Papadimitriou

*Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2008, 247 pp., £55.00, ISBN 978-0-230-00706-2 (hbk)*

This is a well-told tale of considerable comparative significance. Featherstone and Papadimitriou do a first-rate job in describing episodes of policy conflict and attempted policy reform. The core of the book consists of three case studies of policy change: pension reform, labour market reform, and the restructuring of the national airline (Olympic Airways). They are all presented in a concise yet remarkably informative way. By looking at the episodes of attempted policy reform, the book gives one a clear view of the way in which Greece's limited reform capacity hinders Europeanisation.

The *explanation* of limited reform capacity is another matter, however. The three case studies highlight the constraints on structural reform in Greece. The 'systemic nature' of the main problems identified in the case studies is ultimately linked to interest politics and the 'structural power of key domestic actors'. Hardly a groundbreaking conclusion, albeit one that represents a welcome addition to the growing literature which focuses on interest politics in Greece, aiming to move beyond the familiar evocation of century-old 'clientelism'. At the same time, however, as the authors acknowledge (and Featherstone's own work has repeatedly demonstrated in the past), the country's reform capacity has varied between sectors. Perhaps a research design that would tackle both failures and successes in policy reform would be better equipped to bring to the fore the exact nature of factors responsible for policy change and its limits.

Leaving aside questions of research design, there are two shortcomings. The first concerns the account of the role of individuals. The assessment of the relative

qualities of particular individuals is often questionable (as in the case of the ministers of national economy and the ministers of labour) while their role is overstated in some cases, downplayed in others. The second weakness is of greater import. In short, the limits of Europeanisation cannot be explained solely by pointing to structural constraints and key actors. The impact of Europeanisation on allegiances, commitments and preference formation is of equal significance. By far the least convincing aspects of the book are to be found in the brief encounters with political culture and with the 'models of capitalism' debate. Classifying Greece as an outlier is an easy (too easy) way out; most cases could be classified that way when brought against models. Granted, the authors try to reconcile their cases with a framework embracing both 'Europeanisation' and 'models of capitalism' discourses, suggesting that Europeanisation concerns the range of legitimacy devices and strategic opportunities that 'appear beyond the reach of modeling capitalism', while the latter approach helps define choices within a particular context of prevailing market conditions. Hence the two approaches 'can be viewed as two sides of the same coin: each is concerned with that not covered by the other'. But how far can this travel? The absence of a consistent framework on the interactive relations between domestic interest politics and European stimuli makes itself felt.

These comments notwithstanding, this is a valuable addition to the literature (and the debates) on Europeanisation: rich in empirical evidence and asking the pertinent questions. Probably the main reason why the literature on cases of Europeanisation is significantly more useful than the writings on its theory, is the impasse reached by so-called conceptual accounts. And because there is no paucity of data when it comes to examining the multitude of policy areas and fields of debate affected by 'Europe', the theoretically informed analysis of cases represents considerable promise – and accomplishment, as this timely book demonstrates.

*Kostas A. Lavdas*  
*University of Crete*

### **Economic Adjustment and Political Transformation in Small States**

By Erik Jones

*Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, 277 pp., £47.00, ISBN 978-0-19-920833-3 (hbk)*

From its title – in the absence of a sub-title to provide clarification – it is unapparent that *Economic adjustment and political transformation in small states* deals with just two countries, namely, Belgium and the Netherlands. In six chapters (including an introduction and conclusion) of very uneven length, the author elaborates a gloomy statement that claims validity for other small states. Jones argues that the Low Countries are becoming less successful in their adjustment to the world market, and that this is mainly the outcome of a long-term process of political transformation. While the Belgian and Dutch societies might in the past have been described as consociational democracies, political behaviour has shifted to a more pluralist style that has undermined the traditional approach to economic policy-making and adjustment along consensual lines, fostering more majoritarian strategies. This political transformation, it is argued, is in itself the result of the self-destructiveness of consensual adjustment because 'over time, the citizens of small states begin to chafe under the discipline that such consensual politics implies' (p. 10).

After a lengthy introduction detailing this argument, the interesting first chapter builds up a framework – inspired by Katzenstein's seminal *Small States in World Markets* – for interpreting the politics of economic adjustment in Belgium and the Netherlands. In a well rehearsed analysis, Jones discusses what it means for a

country, in economic terms, to be small, and explains the economic policy preferences of small states and the two specific instruments used for facilitating economic adjustment. These are regional integration used abroad, for pro-actively avoiding the need for adjustment and corporatism, used reactively at home to ensure rapid adjustment with a minimum of social conflict. The author is right to emphasise that neither the framework for economic policy-making nor the regional integration and corporatist intermediation are structurally determined and that it is essential that both these instruments enjoy popular support or legitimacy. By means of a historical account of Belgium and the Netherlands, based on secondary literature, the bulk of the book endeavours to supply empirical evidence for this interplay between the electorate's acceptance of regional integration and corporatist policy-making and the (perceived) effectiveness of these instruments in achieving adjustment.

The manner in which the comparison between the two countries is conducted is to some extent inconsistent. While the second chapter provides separate historical narratives for Belgium and the Netherlands, in the following two chapters and the conclusion the accounts of developments in the two countries are interwoven. Moreover, although Jones acknowledges growing dissimilarities between the two countries, the focus on common strategies does not allow this growing divergence to appear with sufficient clarity. Chapter 2 covers the period from 1945 until the end of the 1960s and demonstrates effectively how both consociational democracies, influenced by their relative size and position in the world economy, adhere to the policy preference for free trade, fixed exchange rates, hard currencies and accommodating macroeconomic policies; how the institutions used for regional integration and corporatism have been built up (though the experiments of the 1930s are underestimated); and how and to what degree these institutions facilitate economic adjustment. The next two chapters are mainly devoted to the decades of the 1970s and 1980s respectively when the 'virtuous circle of cooperation, effectiveness and legitimization' (p. 78) was weakened by economic crisis and by the 'depillarization' of the national political culture, depriving the Belgian and Dutch societies of their self-discipline and encouraging competition among elites.

Jones sees in the economic adjustment strategies, pursued by the Belgian and Dutch (narrow) centre-right coalitions in the 1980s and supported, according to him, by the electorate, evidence for the fact that corporatism works better in hard economic times. This judgement is somewhat surprising, insofar as is debatable whether the Belgian government had a popular mandate for its economic recovery programme and whether corporatist intermediation at the macro level was re-emerging, given that the government was ruling by special decree and the employers' organisations and a significant part of the labour movement were not involved in the secret negotiations for achieving a consensus on the programme. At this point, the rather ahistorical analysis could have benefited from a sounder understanding of government involvement in wage-setting and from reference to recent debates in the literature on the shift from demand- to supply-side corporatism and the emergence of social pacts in countries without a corporatist tradition. Furthermore, while reference to the fashionable Varieties of Capitalism debate is made in one footnote, little weight is given to the changing position and discourse of the employers and their organisations in explaining corporatist decision-making in its present form. In spite of these shortcomings and omissions, Jones' analysis, with its focus on the rise and fall of demand-side corporatism in the Low Countries, is quite remarkable and intellectually stimulating in a number of respects so that his book is indubitably a worthwhile read for any scholar or layperson wishing to understand the adjustment strategies of small countries.

*Kurt Vandaele*  
ETUI, Brussels

**Europäisierung der SPD? Analyse der Interaktion von SPD und SPE**

By Valérie Schneider

*VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, Saarbrücken, 2008, 99 pp., €49.00, ISBN 978-3-6390-0511-0 (pbk)*

*Europäisierung der SPD? (Europeanisation of the SPD?)* would deserve an English translation since its content is of great interest to many scholars. While literature on both Europeanisation and political parties is flourishing, in-depth empirical studies dealing with the Europeanisation of political parties remain scarce. Drawing on the party's organisational rules, existing literature and a dozen interviews, Schneider assesses systematically the degree of Europeanisation of the SPD in three respects: its organisational structures, its programmatic profile and its European awareness. She offers a comprehensive and consistent picture of formal as well as less formal aspects of Europeanisation within the German Social Democratic party. In spite of European integration being traditionally regarded as a core element of the party's identity, the conclusions of the book point to a rather weak degree of Europeanisation.

In the first part of the book, the author draws on variants of the Europeanisation concept in order to elaborate her own framework, namely Europeanisation conceived as an interactive process between the national and the European party level. In that perspective, Europeanisation is therefore constituted of two dimensions: the adaptation of national parties to the development of a European political and parliamentary system; and the use and impulses by national parties of new opportunities at European level in order to shape European integration more actively.

As far as the organisational structures are concerned, the book shows that the current situation reflects an incremental and somewhat unorganised adaptation to European integration. In spite of the growing importance of the Party of European Socialists (PES), no consistent interaction pattern with the European party level has been developed. New structures have also not emerged: instead, already existing bodies, for example the unit for Western Europe/EU within the International Department and the Europe committee, have gained more competences. Most interactions actually take place between the SPD and the German delegation within the PES group in the European Parliament. These rarely involve high-rank SPD politicians.

When looking at the programmatic developments, there is again significant evidence for limited Europeanisation. While European integration has been increasingly referred to in the various programmatic documents, in particular from 1994 on, there is little evidence for concrete policy output of SPD–PES interactions. When the EU is mentioned as a level for policy-making, it is rather from an intergovernmental perspective. The final section dealing with the Europeanised awareness within the party is the weakest link of the book. Here, the conclusion that the SPD displays willingness to 'transfer sovereignty' to the European party level seems to be in contradiction with evidence gathered. In spite of statements in favour of strengthening the PES, the SPD communicates little about the PES and European offices are occupied by second rank party members. More significantly, the SPD's leadership is opposed to the involvement of its members in activities at the European level, for example by putting a veto on individual membership to the PES. While the notion of European awareness has not been satisfactorily dealt with from an analytical point of view, it is probably a very fruitful issue with respect to further comparative research.

The book eventually concludes that the SPD mainly displays a rather passive but fair level of Europeanisation. However, it cannot be seen as an impulse provider for further integration of European socialist and social democratic parties.

With empirical research covering the developments until 2004, the book constitutes a stimulating basis for assessing more recent developments in the run up to the 2009 European elections.

Amandine Crespy  
Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB)

**Losing Labour's Soul? New Labour and the Blair Government 1997–2007**

By Eric Shaw

Routledge, London, 2007, 248 pp., £75.00, ISBN 978-0-415-35499-8 (hbk), £22.99, ISBN 978-0-415-35500-1 (pbk)

This book's front cover reprints the first of four paintings by William Hogarth, depicting various stages of corruption in the fictional seat of *Guzzledown* during the 1754 election campaign. Hogarth's series satirised the fraud and bribery surrounding the Tory victory in the Oxfordshire seat during that election. The conclusions one may draw from this choice of front cover is that the author wishes to make a parallel between New Labour and the Conservative Party, or associate New Labour with corruption, or indeed both! Yet, some ambivalence surrounding the core theme of the book is offered when one sees the question mark in its title *Losing Labour's Soul?* What follows is not a crude hatchet job on the ideological (or lack of) journey embarked on by New Labour since the late 1980s, but a reflective and illuminating account of the party's revisionist path within a broader debate on the context of Britain's social democratic tradition.

The initial two chapters provide the book's analytical framework – defining the contingency of Labour's social democracy on narratives of redistribution and ethical socialism, coupled to a useful discussion of New Labour's interpretation of social justice. In so doing, Shaw should be applauded for providing a valuable summary of the existing academic literature in this area. There then follows four case-study chapters exploring, in turn, secondary education, the private finance initiative, NHS reform and employment relations. Each is well researched, drawing on a wide array of primary material including official documents and minutes, alongside press reports and over 40 interviews conducted by the author with politicians, special advisers and other key actors. While the list of interviewees is impressive, including the likes of Charles Clarke, Andrew Adonis, Alan Milburn and Fiona Miller, unfortunately absent are those right at the heart of the New Labour project. The real stand-out chapters, though, are the next three which offer an engaged discussion shaped around the themes of the dynamics of New Labour, what it stands for and whom it stands for. In the conclusion, the author returns to the question posed in the book's title – has Labour lost its soul? – but, as with any good thriller, it would be improper to spoil the reader's pleasure by giving the answer away.

This is Eric Shaw's fourth and last (so he claims) book on the Labour Party. The fundamental argument underpinning his narrative here, as before, is that ideas and ideology matter in how they shape the way in which the political world is interpreted. The literature on New Labour is now substantial, but the value of this final contribution is that it offers a revealing insight into the belief system of the New Labour project and its impact on the policy choices made since 1997.

David Richards  
University of Sheffield