

have a moral basis, but there is no explicit analysis. Heteronomy as a way of achieving accommodation among diverse polities has been relevant in the past, and is likely to be an important issue in the future evolution of 'post-Westphalian' global politics.

Although the issue is not directly relevant to the theme of the book, from the perspective of Australian history it would be of interest to analyse the impact of the heteronomous approach on British involvement in Australia from the late 18th century (Western Australia is mentioned on p. 196). One wonders whether there is scope for a revisionist interpretation of British assessments of 'complex space' in the Australian context, perhaps influenced by the Indian Ocean experience as presented in this book.

Given the Commonwealth focus of *The Round Table*, it is of interest that 23 of the 53 current Commonwealth members are from the Indian Ocean region; this includes important Commonwealth members such as India, South Africa, Australia, Tanzania, Kenya, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore. Small island countries are represented by Mauritius, the Seychelles and the Maldives. Although not part of the contemporary Commonwealth, Britain also ruled Burma (Myanmar) and Aden (now part of Yemen), as well as having 'protector' status in relation to various Persian Gulf entities such as the Trucial States (now the United Arab Emirates), Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and Muscat and Oman. The international context from which these various countries emerged is well elucidated by this book. It is not quite the Commonwealth Ocean, but it is a fascinating history.

The book is written primarily for students of international order, but is valuable also as a well-informed overview of the history of international politics in the Indian Ocean region during a key period. It is highly recommended.

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## **The Europeanization of Interest Groups in Malta and Ireland: A Small State Perspective**

Mario Thomas Vassallo

*Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 281, ISBN 978-1-137-54169 (hardback)*

Here is an interesting snippet from Vassallo's book: when Malta acceded to the European Union on 1 May 2004, Jean Claude Juncker, prime minister of Luxembourg, made a toast to his counterpart, Lawrence Gonzi, 'to celebrate the fact that, from then onward, his country would no longer be the smallest member state' (p. 19).

Yet, while Malta was preparing itself for EU accession, it was not to 'next in size' Luxembourg that it mainly turned for advice and guidance, but to Ireland. While much larger in size and population than Malta, Ireland constituted then—as it still does—the closest role model to Malta. Both countries are island states on the periphery of the EU, small states by EU standards, former British colonies where English is an official language, where the political and institutional apparatus is modelled closely on the Whitehall-Westminster norm, and where a traditionally hegemonic Catholic Church has

seen its influence dented by secularisation and scandal. A flurry of exchanges between Dublin and Valletta made preparations for accession that much easier, and ensured a smoother transition for the inevitable Europeanisation that was to follow.

Hence, Vassallo's choice of scrutinising the Europeanisation of interest groups in Malta and Ireland has a rational genesis. His text takes this comparative disposition, framework and history further, to explore the hitherto uncharted waters of how interest group structure, strategy, involvement at EU level and respective member behaviour have been affected by their common EU experience: Ireland since 1973; Malta since 2004. The focus, rather than on state policies and practices, is on trade unions and employer associations (reminding ourselves that Brussels has a major say in labour policy and conditions of work) as well as on social, human rights and environmental groups (where the reach of the EU is not as significant).

The author is right to propose a more complex and nuanced understanding of the term 'Europeanisation', which he boldly seeks to transform from 'attention directing device' to 'operationalisable concept' (p. 225). The much bandied-about term is thus re-presented as not merely an outcome of various political, social and economic measures, but an epistemology and methodology in its own right: a (different) way of thinking about and doing things that significantly influences governance practices at local and national (not just at European/regional) level. Indeed, Vassallo puts his money where his mouth is by a very rigorous attempt at an empirical rendering of Europeanisation. The quantitative approach is attractive for its potential for transferability to other EU member states.

Vassallo concludes that, from the various civil society actors studied, only trade unions and employer associations in Malta registered a significant positive shift in their European dimension between 2004 and 2012. Part of this can be explained by the much longer EU experience of the Irish actants, which by now may be seen as having plateaued; while it was nothing short of a steep learning curve for Malta immediately following EU accession in 2004, and the considerable involvement—in terms of an onerous burden of meetings in Brussels as much as symbolically and conceptually—of the social partners in the social dialogue of the EU. But Vassallo is also correct in suggesting that civil society is, by definition, largely a creature of the local and (at best) national: admittedly, the EU can be, and has been, brought in to 'arm twist', 'up the ante' and improve bargaining and negotiating positions by local actors in their dealings with other local actors, including the state. But these remain essentially a 'bonus' rather than an 'alternative' mechanism (p. 229), marginal pursuits in a Europe where—with a dramatic result of the 'Brexit' referendum—the drive and vision to an 'ever closer union' has definitely stalled and nation states maintain their overarching prerogatives in most policy matters. Even for such small and island states as Malta and Ireland, where so much of what goes on domestically is affected by extra-territorial affairs, the evidence of rampant Europeanisation, and in spite of the considerable rhetoric, is thin.

*The Europeanization of Interest Groups in Malta and Ireland* is a most welcome study that coolly assesses and 'measures' the significance of the European project on the ground. I look forward to its adoption as the impressive benchmark for similar studies in other European countries.

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