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# Parliamentary Cooperation and Diplomacy in EU External Relations. An Essential Companion

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**Parliamentary Cooperation and Diplomacy in EU External Relations. An Essential Companion, edited by Kolja Raube, Meltem Müftüler-Baç and Jan Wouters. (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019)**

This collective work, directed by Kolja Raube, Meltem Müftüler-Baç and Jan Wouters, is in and of itself good news. It testifies to the vitality of the institutional approach in political science in the field of European studies. This institutional approach, sometimes considered old-fashioned, shows us here that it is capable of understanding the world, or at least of making it understandable.

The study of parliamentary diplomacy and cooperation took off in a big way just over ten years ago and has been growing steadily since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. Indeed, international parliamentary cooperation is very multifaceted today. It may, for example, take the form of an international interparliamentary institution (IPI) such as Euronest or the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (Glahn). The IPI to which the European Parliament is a party may comprise exclusively members of the European Parliament or also parliamentarians from the member states of the Union, as in the case of the Inter-Interparliamentary Conference on CFSP/CSDP (Peters). Finally, it may also be more simply a question of interparliamentary cooperation between MEPs and national parliamentarians in the bilateral framework of an association agreement (Wódka & Cianciara).

The parliamentarisation of external relations is not, however, a new subject of study. One can recall works from the inter-war period where idealistic jurists, such as Boris Mirkine-Guetzévitch, conceiving of preventing war through parliamentary and/or popular control. Today, these analyses have, of course, been expanded and integrated in the context of globalisation. Globalisation had the rather unexpected consequence of reinforcing the demand for parliamentary action and control of public action. As the political agenda, political solutions and even public power become transnational, it is necessary to go beyond classical intergovernmentalism and reflect on what tomorrow's parliamentarianism could be, starting, in this book, with the specific field of external relations.

What form could this renewed parliamentarism take? This question is quite thorny, as much as we know that the field of external relations is reluctant to the democratic ideal. Beyond the theoretical aspects of the issues described in the first part of the book, the place given to the practice is essential. It deals with inter-parliamentary cooperation and diplomacy in EU external relations (Part II), inter-parliamentary cooperation and diplomacy in the EU's neighbourhood (Part III), multilateral parliamentary cooperation and diplomacy in EU external relations (Part IV) and finally, it deals with specific subjects: trade, environment and international conflict (Part V). The authors used a large array of methods and offer the reader the best in political science, maybe leaving aside other fields of social science such as history, law or sociology. The ambition was great, the result is convincing.

## **Parlementarisation, Europe and Globalisation**

The demand for an effective parliamentarisation of European political action has become more insistent since the sovereign debt crisis (Christiansen & Groen). There have been calls for giving a transnational dimension to European decisions and the European Parliament has sought to use its nominal powers in order to consolidate its political influence on the system as a whole and on external relations in particular. The European Parliament's action thus often complements - rather than competes with - that of the other institutions (Fonck). The variety of roles that the European Parliament has been able to play is striking, and we can see how this institution is capable of adapting, even to the point of exercising the functions of mediator (Redei).

This book shows how enriching the European experience of cooperation and parliamentary diplomacy has been. The European Parliament could only promote the parliamentarisation of international relations, being itself born from it. In accordance with its usual *modus operandi*, it has seized the context of globalisation and the fluidity of institutional contacts and exchanges in order to disseminate its standards and norms (Lenz).

The study of parliamentary cooperation and diplomacy reveals the cross-fertilisation between the phenomenon of parliamentarisation of European political action and that of globalisation and transnationalisation of law and international relations. The added value of parliamentary action, in this context and beyond this question of legitimacy, deserves to be questioned, particularly in the context of external relations (Lord).

## **External Relations: A New Horizon for Parliamentary Cooperation and Diplomacy**

The obvious interest in studying mechanisms for parliamentary cooperation and diplomacy in the field of external relations lies in the fact that this is an area in which the parliamentary institution has historically been neglected. External relations are, therefore, a test case: can foreign policy-making, which is necessarily a complex operation, pass the test of the openness, transparency, debate and controversy that are consubstantial with parliamentary action? The book proposes a deliberately broad approach. It is partly thematic and deals, in particular, with climate change (Biedenkopf), CETA (Jančić) or security issues through parliamentary diplomacy (Fromage). The approach is also geographical and focuses on China (Yan), Russia (Petrova), ACP countries (Delputte & Williams), Mercosur (Moure), Eurolat (Müller) or ECOWAS (Kofi Belley).

This very impressive diversity, however, can leave one feeling overwhelmed. At times authors compare institutions, conferences or practices that have little in common. One may sometimes get the impression that in some contributions, which are quite stimulating in themselves, the core subjects of this book - the EU's external relations - becomes marginal. This sense of atopy could perhaps have been compensated for by a narrower spectrum that would not have affected the richness of contributions. Finally, we cannot help thinking that this book could have left a little more room for legal analysis. Admittedly, it is first and foremost a

political science work. However, political science, especially in the context of an institutional approach, is not precluded from taking an interest in law. The interinstitutional struggles in the field of external relations and the litigation before the Court of Justice that they have generated since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon have, in fact, almost systematically involved the European Parliament.

These suggestions are there only to open up other perspectives for further research that would complete what already turns out to be a sum on the topic. Finally, we would like to commend the reflexive virtue of this book: it questions us on what role a 21st century parliament should perform in a transnational context. It also questions the perception the European Parliament has of itself, in the institutional context of the EU, and vis-à-vis third countries. Starting from external relations to conclude with introspection - is it not the best of results for such a research work?

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