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Book Reviews

The Price of Gender Equality: Member States and Governance in the European Union. By Anna van der Vleuten. Aldershot and Hampshire: Ashgate. 2007. 232 pp. $99.95.

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If there is a definitive history of gender equality policies in the European Union today, Anna van der Vleuten's *The Price of Gender Equality* may be it. This gem of a book offers historical depth and detail, gleaned from extensive archival and other primary sources, and combines empirical thoroughness with sophisticated theoretical insight. The result is a captivating story of multilevel politics involving state, nonstate, and supranational actors pushing forward and retarding the establishment and implementation of European gender equality policies.

Van der Vleuten asks: Why have states agreed to gender equality policies at the European level when they clashed with domestic rules and produced domestic political resistance and economic costs? And how can we explain the varying successes of these policies? Her answers start from the suggestion that states are still the central actors in European governance and that they act rationally, evaluating EU policies according to the ideological and economic costs they entail. During negotiations, states make calculations based on their preferences (in turn a result of domestic interests and the state's internal power) and on the basis of their power position. States implement policies when they face pressure from supranational and domestic forces and find themselves in a pincer. While feminists have often been weary of rational choice approaches because of their masculinist conception of agency, van der Vleuten offers a convincing application of rationalist analysis to an understanding of European gender equality policies.

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The book looks closely at politics in four EU member states: France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Britain. It identifies four historical phases: From 1955 to 1968, politics focused on writing equal pay into the European Economic Community's founding treaty, the Treaty of Rome, and on the struggles to implement this treaty commitment. Gender equality policies surged from 1969 to 1978 with the resurgence of the women's movement and witnessed the formulation of three far-reaching equality directives, that is, the equal pay directive, the equal treatment directive, and the social security directive. This period of success was followed by stagnation from 1979 to 1991, when governments saw themselves forced to implement costly directives they had agreed to in the 1970s, and when conservative European governments increasingly saw gender equality policies as antithetical to neoliberal policies. Finally, the period from 1992 to 2005 yielded several weak initiatives on gender equality as the EU faced a legitimacy crisis and sought to broaden its support by extending its social policies. However, new decision-making procedures (including the broader involvement of employers and unions) yielded weak outcomes.

Within the contours of this outline, van der Vleuten offers a complex story brimming with facts and insights. I am not aware of any other book that details as thoroughly the interests of states involved in negotiations around the equal pay article in the Rome treaty and the length to which governments went in the 1960s to avoid implementing the article. We learn about the leading role of France in negotiations (but not in implementation), the extent of pay inequities in the different countries, the unhelpful positions of unions and parties, the lack of supranational pressure, and the agreement to defer "the harmonization of social costs" required by the treaty in the context of the Suez crisis. We learn about the successes of the directives of the 1970s and the "pincer movement" that pushed states to implement them, that is, enforcement procedures that the commission initiated toward the member states and rulings of the European Court of Justice, on the one hand, and cases brought in national courts and with national pressure from civil society groups, on the other. We also learn about the "boomerang effect" that implementation produced as governments became weary of the costs of gender equality policies.

While the outlines of the early history of the EU's gender equality policies are well known, the more recent history has received much less coherent treatment. Van der Vleuten fills this gap. She provides a comprehensive overview of EU initiatives since the early 1990s,

including the passage of the parental leave directive, the directive on part-time work, the burden of proof directive, the updated equal treatment directive, the directive against racial and ethnic discrimination, the general framework directive against discrimination based on religion, disability, age, or sexual orientation, and the directive on equal treatment in the areas of goods and services. These directives, for the most part, are much weaker than those of the 1970s. The empowerment of the European Parliament brought to the stage a supportive new actor, but overall, institutional innovation has not produced strong, costly gender equality policies.

It is interesting to note that in this second part of the book, van der Vleuten's rationalist framework seems to lose its power. As the soft mechanisms of social dialogue and gender mainstreaming have been added to legal strategies, and as supranational and nonstate actors (the parliament, employers, and unions) have gained an institutional role in EU policymaking, the complexity of resulting politics may be captured more easily through a discursive analysis than an analysis of rational choice.

But the strength of this book lies in its brilliant recounting of a lively history, combined with thorough documentation and evidence. It is a wonderful addition to Ashgate Publishing Group's series on "Gender in a Local/Global World," which is rapidly becoming a publication venue of choice for feminist work in international relations.

Gender and Democracy in Cuba. By Ilja A. Luciak. Gainesville: University Press of Florida. 2007. 143 pp. $59.95 cloth, $29.95 paper.

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This is an exemplary book that all scholars of Latin American women and politics should read. Ilja Luciak's central research question is "How does a revolutionary process affect women's role in society?" (p. xv). He is interested in the interplay between revolutionary politics and substantive gender equality. The word *substantive* is particularly key in the Cuban context given the plethora of laws and statistics one can marshal to declare that gender equality exists on the island. The author