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Review of EU Foreign Policy and the Europeanization of Neutral States: Comparing Irish and Austrian Foreign Policy.

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Nicole Alecu de Flers, *EU Foreign Policy and the Europeanization of Neutral States: Comparing Irish and Austrian Foreign Policy*. London: Routledge, 2012. 167 pp.

Reviewed by Günter Bischof, University of New Orleans

The convergence of national foreign policies with the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the European Union (EU) is a crucial challenge all EU member-states face. If EU-Europe ever wants its voice to be heard as a powerful actor in the international arena, such a common foreign policy is needed. How do you hold on to national traditions in the face of unrelenting pressure from Brussels to align your foreign policy (bilateral and multilateral) with the demands of the EU's central agenda? Large EU member-states such as Germany, France, and Great Britain, all of which are also members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), naturally have more weight in the EU's common councils than do small states. Once the CFSP became a European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) after 1999, setting up a European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF), small states such as Austria and Ireland, which are not NATO members, had a problem on their hands. Participating in EU military interventionism and being forced to include defense matters in their foreign policy agenda does not square with their neutral status. Alecu de Flers's tight case study pursues the growing convergence of these two small EU member-states with the ever-constricting common European foreign and security policy in spite of the recent militarization of EU foreign policy. In Robert Kagan's controversial language, maybe the EU is heading toward being from Mars rather than Venus.

Alecu de Flers briefly summarizes the evolution of EFSP from the European Political Cooperation established in 1970 to the Maastricht (1993) and Amsterdam (1999) Treaties and the evolution of controversial defense tasks being incorporated into the tightening EU foreign and security agendas. She explains how the breakup of Yugoslavia and the crisis in the Balkans demonstrated the powerlessness of the EU to respond to crisis scenarios on the European continent and the need for "robust" interventionism (p. 20). She is a sure guide through the baroque tergiversations of EU foreign and security policy and the irritating salad of acronyms that goes with it to describe Brussels's arcane politics. Her study stays on the surface level, however, and does not go into any depth analyzing crises such as Kosovo or Iraq.

The meat and bones of this book comes in the two case studies on Ireland and Austria. Alecu de Flers analyzes how the foreign policy of these two neutrals was "Europeanized" as a result of their admission into the European Economic Community/European Union in 1973 (Ireland) and 1995 (Austria). In three chapters each, she investigates how Ireland's and Austria's institutional framework in their foreign

offices and the substance of their foreign policy were “Europeanized” and how this “distancing” (p. 50) from their traditions affected their neutral status. Ireland’s Department of Foreign Affairs needed to move away from its almost exclusive focus on relations with the United Kingdom and expand its missions to meet the demands of the CFSP, whereas Austria’s Foreign Ministry was better prepared to meet the demands of participation. Although Washington and Moscow were the most important foreign capitals in the Cold War era, the central focus of Dublin’s and Vienna’s foreign policy became Brussels after they joined the EU (including appointment to new posts such as “European Correspondent”). Now three-quarters of Dublin’s time in foreign policy is dedicated to CFSP matters (p. 100). CFSP has led to a “broadening of the foreign policy agenda” (p. 36) and to both a “Europeanization” and a “globalization” of Irish and Austrian foreign affairs (p. 103). Most notably, Irish and Austrian voting behavior in the United Nations became closely aligned (“Europeanized”) with the voting behavior of EU members after their joining the EU. The bulk of Alecu de Flers’s empirical evidence is dedicated to explaining this shift in EU voting behavior and gets bogged down in pedestrian vote counting.

How much room to maneuver, then, do small states have in the common EFSP? Although Ireland developed some specific expertise (Falklands crisis, South African apartheid, human rights abuses in East Timor), Austria’s expertise in the Western Balkans was tapped by Brussels after the break-up of Yugoslavia. Dublin and Vienna leave it to the EU “greats” to define the CFSP. Do small states have leverage? Alecu de Flers ignores a vast body of literature on the “leverage of the weak” during the Cold War. Tony Smith with his “pericentric” approach and Hope Harrison have shown what might be called “the power of the impotent.” Even Austria displayed some leverage during the Austrian State Treaty negotiations. Alecu de Flers’s study seems to suggest that after the Cold War the EU took on a stronger role in directing its members’ foreign policy than NATO and the Warsaw Pact did in aligning their members during the East-West conflict. Such substantive change over time, important to the historian, seems to fall by the wayside in the theory-driven approach of the political scientist.

Alecu de Flers operates with a similarly static concept of neutrality. She notes how the “Petersberg tasks” of the ESPD required neutral members to join the bandwagon in sensitive new fields of peacekeeping and crisis management (p. 21). She rallies clear empirical evidence of how public opinion in both countries insisted on the maintenance of neutrality (e.g., p. 119). The EU generally ignored the concerns of neutral member-states. The political elites in Ireland and Austria were fully aware of the EU’s consistent demands to water down their neutrality. Although Ireland held referenda that saw the public vote in favor of neutrality, Austrian governments largely ignored the public because of fears that the CFSP security agenda might be rejected. The EU’s ESPD thus has been consistently undermining the neutrality status of its member-states—this may be the (unacknowledged) major finding of Alecu de Flers’s study.

