<https://helda.helsinki.fi>

Book Review: Uwe Puetter: The European Council and the Council: New Intergovernmentalism and Institutional Change. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Losada Fraga, Fernando

2016

Losada Fraga , F 2016 , ' Book Review: Uwe Puetter: The European Council and the Council: New Intergovernmentalism and Institutional Change. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. ' , Political Studies Review , vol. 14 , no. 1 , pp. 126 . <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929915609472j>

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/232203>

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929915609472j>

acceptedVersion

Downloaded from Helda, University of Helsinki institutional repository.

This is an electronic reprint of the original article.

This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Please cite the original version.

The European Council and the Council: New Intergovernmentalism and Institutional Change, Uwe Puetter. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. 265pp., £55.00 (h/b), ISBN 9780198716242

This book focuses on the role the European Council and the Council of Ministers actually play in European integration. The main argument is that since Maastricht, a new mode of integration based on closer coordination of domestic policies has prevailed over the classical 'community method', according to which legislative powers are delegated to the European Union. This new intergovernmentalism results from an integration paradox: Member States consider stronger EU-level action as a precondition for dealing with fundamental policy challenges, but they still insist on ultimate national sovereignty (p. 30). Consensus generation between Member States' representatives is thus the aim of all the new decision-making procedures (pp. 34, 59). The claim of the book is that this new intergovernmental activity at the European Council and Council, which is increasing hierarchical relations between both institutions and led by event-driven meetings and agendas (p. 63), nowadays constitutes the actual centre of political gravity of European integration.

To carry out this research, Uwe Puetter not only relies on but also refines a framework of analysis he designed in previous works ('deliberative intergovernmentalism', pp. 55–65) and applies it to three different fields of post-Maastricht integration: employment and social policy coordination, Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP). Interestingly, Puetter deals with them in a transversal way instead of devoting a chapter to each one, which proves to work particularly well and strengthens the virtues of his theory. It is important to note as well that this framework allows connecting for the first time the new governance literature with research on EMU or CFSP (p. 47), which is a major contribution of the book.

Methodologically, the research is solid. On the one hand, the general framework builds up and distinguishes itself from well-established theories of European integration and the main contributions to its study. On the other hand, the analysis of what happens inside the two institutions is combined with interviews with key actors involved in the decision-making process. However, despite this sound and accurate political science approach, some technical legal details are not addressed correctly. This is the case when describing the role assigned to the Court of Justice by the Fiscal Compact, which is not to decide whether a Member State complies with corrective measures under an excessive deficit procedure (pp. 22, 26), but only whether it has correctly implemented in national law some legal changes. But this does not devalue the extremely interesting contribution of a book which helps to understand new patterns in European integration.