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Boekbespreking van: Dure Vrouwen, Dwarse Staten. Een Institutioneel-Realistische Visie op de Totstandkoming en Implementatie van Europees Beleid

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In the conclusion, Pierson, arrives at a comprehensive framework for the study of welfare state reform. Based upon the assumption that pressures for austerity meet an enduring popularity of the welfare state, he proposes a distinction between three dimensions of welfare reform and outlines three worlds of welfare state reform. The latter is based on Esping-Andersen's typology of welfare regimes and findings of earlier chapters.

All chapters of the book are informed by recent theoretical developments and are methodologically sophisticated, as they either use advanced statistical tools to analyse many countries or carefully designed comparative case studies to analyse a few countries or sectors. The various contributions powerfully demonstrate that welfare state adaptation does not follow the simple logic claimed by globalization theorists. It is puzzling, however, that so much disagreement still exists despite this level of sophistication. This does not only hold for the relative importance of different challenges to mature welfare states, but also for the explanation of variation in welfare state reforms. Take the impact of political institutions. While the important role of institutional structures seems to be confirmed by quantitative (Swank) and qualitative evidence (Bonoli), Kitschelt argues that institutions "contribute relatively little to the explanation of different pathways of social policy reform" (p. 302). Or, how should one reconcile Swank's finding that institutional fragmentation facilitates the downward pressures of international capital market on welfare states (p. 226) with Bonoli's claim that fragmented political institutions favour restructuring rather than retrenchment (p. 241-242)? There are more of these inconsistencies, and one would have hoped that the editor would have addressed them more explicitly.

The lack of a commonly agreed dependent variable and different operationalizations of the independent variable constitute important sources of theoretical disagreement. Schwarz, for instance, employs a broad definition of the welfare state, which includes not only social transfers and services, as most other authors do, but also the protection of economic sectors from market pressures. Or, to give another example: Bonoli's concept of institutions is confined to formal political institutions, whereas Swank's concept also includes systems of interest intermediation (corporatism vs. pluralism) and welfare state regimes. It is one of the merits of Pierson's concluding chapter that he addresses the issue of the proper dependent variable, though he does not elaborate on what should be regarded as the scope of the welfare state. He develops, however, a three-dimensional scheme of welfare state reforms. Reforms are either directed at cost containment, recalibration (i.e., the adjustment to new social needs), or re-commodification. This is certainly an important step forward. Still, confusion is likely to persist, as the three dimensions are not mutually exclusive. It is difficult, for instance, to unambiguously subsume the partial shift from pay-as-you-go pensions to funded pensions under one of the dimensions.

Another critical point concerns Pierson's claim that we are witnessing a new politics of the welfare state. In his earlier writings, Pierson has very forcefully argued that theories explaining welfare state expansions cannot just be turned upside-down to explain welfare state retrenchment, because the goals and the contexts have been

changed. This notion is to some extent treated by Pierson and occasionally pops up in the other contributions, yet it would have pushed the scholarly debate much further if the issue had been discussed in a more systematic way throughout the book.

A final remark concerns the issue of European integration. Though the chapters occasionally refer to the European Union, it seems to me that its effects, in particular of the EMU and the single European market, needed a more systematic treatment. It certainly should be taken into account in the future research agendas, as European integration in this area has intensified in the last couple of years.

Markus Haverland

Anna van der Vleuten, *Dure Vrouwen, Dwarse Staten. Een Institutioneel-Realistische Visie op de Totstandkoming en Implementatie van Europees Beleid (Expensive Women, Unwilling States. An Institutional-Realist View on the Making and Implementation of European Policy)*, Nijmegen: Nijmegen University Press, 2001. ISBN 90 373 0598 9, Euro 15.00.

It is a daunting task to analyse empirically why states behave differently from what neo-realism and neo-liberal institutionalism expect and subsequently to deduce from this a theoretical reply. Anna van der Vleuten has done both in her dissertation for which she received the 2001 Dissertation Award of the Dutch Political Science Association (sharing it with Renske Doorenspleet whose dissertation is also reviewed in this issue). *Dure Vrouwen, Dwarse Staten* is a successful and convincing attempt to analyse profoundly the conditions under which nation-states accept 'expensive policies', that is, policies that entail a distribution of expected political, economic and ideological costs and benefits that do not seem to serve the state's interest. In her analysis, Van der Vleuten focuses on the equal rights policies of the European Union. More specifically, she investigates the conditions under which four member states – the Netherlands, Germany, France and the United Kingdom – have approved, rejected and implemented these policies. In doing so, she pays thorough attention to the European Union's institutional environment, to the domestic context of each of these states, as well as to the interaction between these two factors. She does so on the basis of a slightly revised version of Lieshout's institutional realism.

Van der Vleuten follows Lieshout in his attention for both the domestic and the international structure, but she adds a distinction between the international structure and the international environment. The latter refers to Buzan's interaction capacity (and the related institutional density) of the international system. That capacity affects the extent to which the structural characteristics of the international system impact on the behaviour of the nation-states. The international system's interaction capacity can alleviate this impact and therefore the effect of the power distribution in the international system on states' behaviour. How states will behave depends, however, on domestic factors as well. Ranging among these are the extent to which governments

intervene in society, and the extent to which they can act independently from organized interests. In a situation of high domestic polarization, they will be able to do so. In cases of low polarization, they will not. In the former case, the domestic structure will be executive-dominated; in the latter, society-dominated.

Van der Vleuten formulates eleven hypotheses that deal with the effects of the interaction between, on the one hand, the domestic structure and, on the other hand, the international structure and environment on the decisions of governments to accept and implement expensive policies. Two hypotheses deal with state preference formation on such policies, four regard a state's negotiating behaviour with such policies, and four relate to its approach towards implementation. These hypotheses are tested with a thorough and extremely well-documented empirical analysis of the equal rights policies of the European Union in three consecutive periods: 1955-1968 (including the negotiations on article 119 EC), 1969-1978, and 1979-1992 (including the protocol, attached to the Maastricht Treaty, on article 119 EC). Van der Vleuten first provides a clear picture of the preferences and their backgrounds in each of the four states (three in the case of the first period). She then focuses on the negotiations at the European level as well as on the role played by the EU institutions (especially the European Commission and to a lesser extent the Council Presidencies). In finally considering the question of implementation she points at the role of the European Commission, national courts (through prejudicial cases), and the EC Court of Justice. From the case studies in each of the three periods – case studies that provide a lot of information on equal rights policies and the related area of social policy – Van der Vleuten draws some conclusions regarding her eleven hypotheses. In doing so, it becomes clear that neo-realism and neo-liberal institutionalism fail to provide answers to several important questions, whereas Van der Vleuten's revised institutional realism can.

She shows first that in taking positions on EU policies – or, for that matter, international policies in general – member states' governments look at their national interests. The higher the domestic costs of such policies, the more salient their positions on these policies are. Second, her research results indicate that despite international instability, or major changes in the international structure, states decide to develop new joint policies in successful existing international organizations. Such organizations can develop such new policies as long as a minimal contributing set of large states exists that support them. Third, the results suggest that less powerful member states will acquiesce with new policies even if they are expensive, because they are unable to build alternative coalitions or too weak to take a unilateral course. Fourth, states with a society-dominated domestic structure will approve expensive international policies if they prefer such policies, knowing, however, that domestically such policies are being opposed. Fifth, states also use the 'tying hands' strategy, by using a weak domestic position combined with domestic opposition to the proposed international policies, to force their counterparts to make concessions in the negotiations on the policies concerned. Sixth, the combination of a need to change the status quo with a lack of vision on exactly what such a change should look like, provides opportunities for

international institutions – in this case the European Commission – to play an important role as agenda setter. In other words, the agenda-setting role of the Commission is conditional. The Commission benefits, however, from support from the EU presidency and time pressure. Seventh, credibility matters. States will implement policies enacted if non-implementation affects their credibility negatively. But they only do this under certain conditions. Two factors play a role. On the one hand, the role of domestic actors such as organized interests and individual citizens. The latter can indeed go to national courts to increase pressure on their government to respect the rights that stem from policy decisions taken in the European Union. On the other hand, cooperation between the national courts and the European Court of Justice is essential too. Infringement procedures with the Court put pressure on the member states to implement decisions. In addition, the lower the polarization of the domestic structure, the greater the opportunity for organized interests to pressure the government, either not to implement policies they reject, or to implement policies they prefer. In the latter case, the role of the Commission and its ability to start an infringement procedure is essential. Or rather, the combination of this role and domestic pressure is essential (the so-called pincers effect). Eighth, a backlash may occur in cases where member states become aware of the high costs of previous decisions. Afterwards, they will be hesitant to approve new policies as they suspect that implementing these could be more expensive than seemed to be the case at the time when they adopted them. Van der Vleuten refers to this as the boomerang effect, a concept that questions the automatic character of spillover effects and the irreversibility of path dependencies.

To sum up, Van der Vleuten's work is a major attempt to criticize neo-realism and neo-institutionalism, and to test empirically a revised version of institutional realism. She has largely succeeded in doing so. Equally for readers who are interested in the equal rights policies of the European Union, this book provides a detailed insight into what has happened since the creation of the European Community. However, one problem pervades her entire analysis. Van der Vleuten's assessment of a policy as expensive is largely based on the direct economic, political and ideological costs of the equal rights policies themselves. In many cases, however, decisions on such policies cannot be disconnected from decisions on other policies certainly not in the case of negotiations on treaties – like the EEC Treaty. Decisions are quite often part of larger package deals. For that reason, even if a decision looks expensive when it is assessed in isolation from other parts of the package deal, it may be cheap, even very cheap, when the costs and benefits of the whole package are being considered. So, the Dutch acceptance of article 119 may look expensive, but taking into account the Netherlands' interest, as a small and open economy, in having an EEC Treaty, it was a very cheap commitment indeed. Insulating the direct costs and benefits of equal rights decisions of the European Union from those directly affected by it may be artificial and inaccurate in a European Union where package deals are the rule rather than the exception. This does not diminish the theoretical value of this book, however. Because

of its theoretical soundness combined with its empirically profound research this work is a worthwhile read for any scholar interested in international relations theory in general and theorizing on European integration in particular.

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