

# Book Review

Georg Menz (2010)

## *The Political Economy of Managed Migration: Nonstate Actors, Europeanization, and the Politics of Designing Migration Policies*

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In *The Political Economy of Managed Migration*, Georg Menz provides a comprehensive, nuanced, and compelling account of the complex relationship between political economy and migration policy in the European Union (EU). He argues that the political economy of each Member State affects the migration policy preferences of domestic interest groups such as employer organisations and trade unions. Menz contends that many interest groups have leveraged the neoliberal and neocorporatist paradigms that permeate European politics to lobby for more responsive national labour migration policies to fill labour market gaps in the secondary and tertiary sectors. Finally, he postulates that Member States seek to exploit the multiple arenas of asylum and migration policymaking in order to minimise the adjustment costs of top-down Europeanisation or achieve policy gains at home.

To support these assertions, Menz draws on more than three dozen detailed elite interviews that he conducted among policymakers and interest groups and references the work of other prominent scholars including George Borjas, Gary Freeman, Virginie Guiraudon, and Ole Waever, among many others. Menz treats these issues in a detailed and rigorous manner, but he expands his analysis to include an examination of how the renewed interest in labour migration among Member States has affected the regulation of other streams such as asylum and family reunification. In doing so, he shows how the competition state rhetoric has prompted Member States to privilege the migration of highly skilled workers above asylum seekers and dependents, who are frequently characterised as “unwanted, unsolicited, and undesirable (Menz 2011: 2)”.

Menz structures his book thematically into six chapters. In chapter one, he considers how national production sectors, strategies, and labour market regulations compel domestic interest groups to advocate for a “quality and quantity of labour migration” that complements their respective national economies (Menz 2011: 8). Interest groups based in coordinated market economies like Germany generally favour the recruitment of foreign professionals to enhance innovation and research and development, while interest groups that operate in liberal market economies such as Ireland and the United Kingdom normally support labour migration policies that enable them to fill gaps in growth industries and in sectors where retention is difficult. Employer organisations and trade unions are more

effective in moulding national labour migration policies because they tend to be centralised, cohesive, organised, and representative. Conversely, humanitarian organisations are less successful because they are typically fragmented and lack the coherent policy strategy and resources necessary to effectively sway policymakers.

For their part, Member States have assumed a more active role in managing migration in response to public concerns about the impact of migration on security and socio-economic stability. They endeavour to manage these pressures and to minimise the adjustment costs of top-down Europeanisation through agenda setting and venue shopping. Member States are now in a period of punctured equilibrium fuelled by “the tertiarization of European economies and the transnationalization of production processes and strategies (Menz 2011: 28)”. Thus, more responsive and supranational labour migration policies are needed for the EU to achieve its Lisbon Strategy objectives.

In chapter two, Menz examines how national institutional legacies and regulatory frameworks have shaped current asylum and migration policy. On the one hand, Member States have faced pressure from the public related to impact of migration on security and socio-economic stability. At the same time, rapid changes have forced Member States to look outside their borders in order to fill vacancies in key growth sectors. France, Germany, and the UK share similar histories and patterns of migration linked to their colonial histories and guest worker programmes. However, following decolonisation, there is a distinct trend among these established countries towards more restrictive conditions for entry and citizenship. Among new immigrant receiving states, neither Italy nor Ireland have developed much of a distinct legacy when it comes to asylum and migration policy, though there are signs that on a national level other Member States may be interested in adopting a model similar to Italy’s pursuit of temporary migration agreements with third countries in exchange for cooperation in deportations and interceptions. In Poland, the impact of top-down Europeanisation has been so pronounced that it is unlikely to play a major role in shaping EU asylum and migration policy at the current time. Nevertheless, while recent developments in EU asylum and migration policy indicate that Member States find themselves in a period of punctured equilibrium, “past regulatory legacies, concepts, ideas, norms, and values continue to shape contemporary regulatory efforts both at the EU and at the national level (Menz 2011: 73)”.

In chapter three, Menz explores three notable directives on asylum and migration policy to demonstrate how interest groups and Member States attempt to shape the “messy” and “interactive” nature of EU policymaking, using multiple venues to achieve their objectives (Menz 2011: 83). For example, he shows how Germany, supported by Austria and the Netherlands, advocated for a more conservative EU approach to family reunification only to scapegoat Brussels and pursue more permissive legislation at home. Similarly, Germany endeavoured to limit labour market access rights for individuals granted subsidiary protection during discussions on the qualifications for asylum, and eventually obtained an abrogation. However, Germany later pre-empted the eventual directive by amending its national legislation to recognise persecution by nonstate actors, thus minimising adjustment costs. This followed a coherent, cohesive, and unified campaign by a number of humanitarian organisations, led by Amnesty International. Moreover, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom (UK), supported by national interest groups, have successfully narrowed the scope of EU efforts to develop a common labour migration policy in order to protect their “national room for manoeuvre” (Menz 2011: 114 quoting the German Employer Association). This reflects a broader pattern in which interest groups and Member States may support the Europeanisation of asylum and migration policy when it serves their objectives, but they will not hesitate to leverage support from interest groups and their executive authority in the Council to amend more ambitious Commission proposals.

In chapters four and five, Menz further investigates the pressures that three established countries of immigration (France, Germany, and the UK) and three new immigrant receiving states (Italy, Ireland, and Poland) face in developing and directing asylum and migration policy. He analyses the system of political economy in each Member State, the “structure of interest mediation”, the evolution of their asylum and migration policies, and the effects of Europeanisation on their respective migration policy preferences (Menz 2011: 139). In France and Germany, interest groups have gradually rediscovered labour migration and support such policies provided that foreign workers are integrated into the primary labour market. In the UK, employer organisations have used the competition state rhetoric to campaign for policies which facilitate the recruitment of foreign professionals in sectors such as engineering, finance, and information technology. In some sectors, employers use low-skilled foreign labourers to keep remuneration low. Their approaches vary from country to country; in Germany, traditional lobbying methods have proven effective whereas in France, mass public demonstrations have generated greater impact. Conversely, the UK government has not actively engaged trade unions and humanitarian organisations in policymaking – perhaps a holdover from the anti-unionist policies popular under Margaret Thatcher. Ireland and Italy have also been receptive to representations from interest groups advocating for labour migration in order to fill recent gaps in the service, technology, and tourism industries, among others. However, consultations with humanitarian organisations have been limited and have had no discernible or meaningful impact on the migration policy preferences of these Member States. In Poland, the situation is particularly complex as it has faced considerable top-down pressure towards Europeanisation and has struggled to develop labour migration policies to address the brain drain of highly skilled workers. These competing pressures have prompted new and old countries of immigration alike to adopt more responsive labour migration policies. However, to enhance public support for these changes, Member States have also sought to deter “unsolicited and undesired forms of migration, principally aimed at asylum seekers and refugees [...]” through enhanced border controls (Menz 2011: 188).

Menz concludes by reflecting on two themes found in EU asylum and migration policy today: pragmatism and populism. Member States rationally attempt to retain control over the form and level of inward migration they receive and to minimise the top-down adjustment costs of Europeanisation through agenda setting and venue shopping. However, Member States remain open to representations from interest groups, which generally support recruiting the highly skilled migrants that advanced economies require to remain competitive. This is particularly true in neocorporatist states like Italy. Though Member States have accepted the Europeanisation of labour migration policy in limited areas, they remain far more reserved towards the Europeanisation of asylum and family reunification. The Far Right has capitalised on public concerns related to the socio-economic and security impacts of migration and contributed to the characterisation of asylum seekers and dependents as “a burden, a potential drain on social benefit transfer systems [...]” (Menz 2011: 257). Humanitarian organisations play an important role in advocating for these migrants, but their potential for success is often impeded by a lack of resources and internal divisions. The conflict between these paradigms may explain why the Europeanisation of asylum and migration policy has proceeded more slowly than anticipated during this period of punctured equilibrium. Employer organisations and trade unions are likely to continue to enjoy privileged access to policymakers as long as neoliberal policies and neocorporatist structures continue to dominate the political economies of EU Member States.

Overall, Menz provides ample evidence that political economy can provide a useful lens through which to study and understand EU asylum and migration policy and the current trend towards securitisation, and his appeal for greater scholarly attention towards interest

groups and bottom-up Europeanisation will surely generate discussion among students and academics alike.

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