



## The Italian parliament in the European Union

edited by Nicola Lupo and Giovanni Piccirilli, Portland, Hart Publishing, 2017, 206 pp., €79.71 (hardback), ISBN: 9781782258735

Michelangelo Vercesi

To cite this article: Michelangelo Vercesi (2021) The Italian parliament in the European Union, Contemporary Italian Politics, 13:1, 121-122, DOI: [10.1080/23248823.2020.1863648](https://doi.org/10.1080/23248823.2020.1863648)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23248823.2020.1863648>



Published online: 14 Dec 2020.



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**The Italian parliament in the European Union**, edited by Nicola Lupo and Giovanni Piccirilli, Portland, Hart Publishing, 2017, 206 pp., €79.71 (hardback), ISBN: 9781782258735

Elected parliaments are the core and one of the fundamental institutional pillars of modern representative democracies. Parliaments fulfil crucial functions, such as overseeing the executive, legislating, and – of course – representing citizens' political preferences. In the context of the European Union (EU), national parliaments share their legislative and representative functions with the supranational European Parliament (EP). Moreover, member states' national parliaments contribute to the definition of EU policy and screen the reception of EU decisions within the national polity. It seems thus worth investigating how national parliaments shape (and are shaped by) their relationship with EU institutions, so that one can get a better and comprehensive understanding of the political role of representative assemblies in multi-level Europe. Despite the existing mutual influence between national and supranational institutions, scholars have too often focused on either the former or the latter. This is not however the case with the praiseworthy Lupo and Piccirilli's edited volume *The Italian Parliament in the European Union*, which unpacks and assesses the way in which the Italian parliament participates in the EU delegation-accountability process. The two editors chose Italy as 'a paradigmatic case of a progressive adaptation to the EU's institutional innovations'; nevertheless, an added value of the volume is the 'outline that may be replicated [...] for national parliaments of other Member States' (11).

As part of the Hart Series on 'Parliamentary Democracy in Europe', the book seeks to shed light on the part played by national parliaments within European constitutional law. With regard to authorships, the editors Nicola Lupo and Giovanni Piccirilli are both law scholars (full and assistant professor, respectively) at LUISS in Rome, with a recognized expertise in law studies and EU. Based on a framework for analysis developed at the LUISS CESP-Centre for Parliamentary Studies, the volume gathers in addition law scholars, practitioners, and political scientists. In this regard, it should be stressed that the juridical perspective of most of the work does not undermine its usefulness for those political scientists interested in legislative studies, EU, and representation. On the contrary, one clear merit of this collective undertaking is that it makes law and political science talk each other, hence overcoming the unfortunate separation that sometimes exists between these two closed disciplines.

The volume's underlying assumption is that EU member states' national parliaments should be no longer understood as national institutions only, but rather as parts of a broader 'Euro-national parliamentary system' (14). This premise informs both the introduction and conclusion (adding to 'foreword' and 'afterword' chapters), which provide the framework of the other 17 chapters. These 17 chapters, on their turn, are organized in four parts.

The first part is made up of four chapters, dealing with Europeanization in the Italian parliament and the profiles of the Italian Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). All chapters adopt a law perspective, with the exception of the fourth, which is political science-oriented. Here, Alessandro Chiamonte (University of Florence), Lorenzo De Sio and Vincenzo Emanuele (both LUISS) find that even the minor changes that the EP electoral system went through in Italy over the years have substantially affected the party system (lower party fragmentation) and MEPs' profiles (a more gender balanced European parliamentary class).

The second part (four chapters) is written by Italian parliament's counsellors, except for chapter 8, which deals with coordination processes between parliament and regional councils (authored by the law scholar Cristina Fasone, LUISS). Overall, this part is devoted to the investigation of the instruments that can be used by the Italian chambers when it comes to defining Italy's position in the EU.

The third part takes a more encompassing viewpoint and looks at the relationships of the Italian parliament with single EU institutions. Five chapters written by law scholars (in order of appearance: Lupo, Piccirilli, Vandenbruwaene, Nardini, and Guastafarro) focus on the EU level proper, while a chapter written by the Senate counsellor Elena Griglio proposes an interesting picture of the interparliamentary cooperation between member states' assemblies.

The fifteenth chapter opens the final part. This is the second book's chapter (authored by Amie Kreppel, University of Florida) that adopts a political science approach. Kreppel argues that the extent to which the Italian parliament exercises its prerogatives in EU affairs *vis-à-vis* the government depends on contingent political phases. In particular, it is observed that the government became especially dominant after the breakdown of the former party system in the 1990s. Maria Romaniello's (PhD in Political Systems and Institutional Change at the IMT in Lucca, Italy) chapter follows with an assessment of the Italian co-equal bicameralism, as an exceptional case in the context of European parliamentarisms. The Senate counsellor Luigi Gianniti closes the fourth part with a discussion of the missed effects of the Renzi-Boschi constitutional reform of the Italian bicameralism, which was rejected by voters through a popular referendum on 4 December 2016.

After reading the whole book, the feeling is that Lupo and Piccirilli's volume has the potential to become a pioneer work for both future studies of national parliaments in the EU and cross-country investigations of European parliaments. Overall, the book is well-structured and builds on clear aims. Political scientists and law scholars can find theoretical argumentations, analyses of formal powers, empirical data and other information, which can prove to be very important pieces to boost a fruitful interdisciplinary research agenda on representative assemblies and the EU.

Michelangelo Vercesi

Leuphana University Lüneburg

 [michelangelo.vercesi@leuphana.de](mailto:michelangelo.vercesi@leuphana.de)  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5723-5076>

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/23248823.2020.1863648>



**L'eterno crepuscolo della politica**, edited by Marco Valbruzzi, in *Paradoxa*, Roma, Fondazione Nova Spes, 2020, vol. 14, n. 1, 146 pp., €25 (paperback), ISBN 977-1-97163-100-5

As a matter of fact this interesting issue of the quarterly journal, *Paradoxa* does not contain anything explicitly concerning Italian politics. Nevertheless, much of what the authors write can be used to illuminate and analyse politics in Italy. Apparently taking for granted that there is such a thing as the twilight of politics, the editor's introduction is devoted to a search for all those elements that have been said to produce the much decried crisis of politics. Thus, Valbruzzi provides a long list of entities that are undergoing the alleged crisis: the state, ideologies, political power, the parties, the nation, modernity, the West, and, of course, democracy. In a way, he claims that all those crises are responsible for the twilight of politics. Curiously, he does not make any precise reference to the European Union. In fact, in Italian political discourse, the word 'crisis' is all too often applied indiscriminately to the entities chosen by Valbruzzi with a strong preference for democracy, the political parties and the European Union that itself calls into question nations and their viability. In the end, the editor