

BOOK REVIEWS SECTION

Sia Spiliopoulou Akermark, Saira Heinikoski and Pirjo Kleemola-Juntunen (2018). *Demilitarisation and international law in context: The Åland Islands*. London: Routledge, 128 pp, ISBN: 978-1-138-09330-0. Price: £45.

A 19th century treaty on the demilitarisation of a small group of islands in the Baltic Sea may not appear, at face value, as a very promising *incipit* for an exciting academic text. *Demilitarisation and international law in context: The Åland Islands*, is a salutary reminder that *prima facie* judgments are often inaccurate. This brief study offers an examination of how demilitarisation has contributed to a peaceful resolution to a case of disputed sovereignty and reflects on the current legal and political challenges to this settlement. The overall objective of the book is: “to look at the demilitarisation and neutralisation of Åland as a long-standing regime intended to limit war” (p. 1). It is therefore relevant to numerous academic disciplines, including the international legal framework (of demilitarisation and neutrality); the international relations and political science framework of conflict resolution (intended to limit war); and the historical perspective which is adopted as a general progressive process through which the case-study is analysed.

The central thrust of the argument is that demilitarisation in the Åland Islands has served as a confidence building measure within a region with competing interests in the form of Sweden, Finland, Russia and other Baltic states. This argument is explored first by introducing the key terms which inform the theoretical framework within which the study is presented: militarisation, demilitarisation and securitisation. This is followed by a historical narrative of the legal status of the islands, from the 1856 Convention on the demilitarisation of the Åland Islands to the 1921 Convention on the Non-Fortification and Neutralisation of the Åland Islands and on to other developments after the end of the Second World War. The international legal dimension is dexterously woven with the political analysis relating to collective security. It is refreshing to see the authors perceptively analyse international legal norms in a political context while avoiding arid legalistic analysis.

The international legal dimension is investigated further in Chapter 3 in the context of international maritime law. Given the islands’ strategic position in the Baltic Sea, this is an important consideration with potentially competing interests in terms of the delineation of maritime jurisdiction and navigational rights. The relationship between the 1982 UN Law of the Sea Convention (a treaty with universal application) and the maritime law provisions of the 1921 Convention (a treaty with a very limited focus) is of special interest as a context in which to explore the effects of pre-existing treaty obligations contained in a localised treaty on newer provisions contained in treaties with a global reach.

Chapter 4 departs from the legal perspective and adopts a more explicit political analysis. The Åland Islands’ special status is examined from the perspective of regional and sub-regional security architecture, in the context of Finland’s neutrality and the evolving regional scenario from Cold War to post-Cold War contexts. Significant attention is paid to Finland’s EU membership and the consequent engagement with the EU’s evolving security and defence policy. While this chapter is interesting in its description of Finland’s approach to security at regional and sub-regional levels, it does not always succeed in maintaining the focus on the Åland Islands’ role in such an approach. Thus, the reader may, at times, struggle to identify the relevance of some of the lengthy considerations of regional and sub-regional security cooperation. This is indirectly acknowledged by the authors when they state that “the Åland

Islands play a minor role in security arrangements” (p. 75) since, as a subnational jurisdiction, they are only represented in the Nordic Council where the Islands are proactive. This chapter does however provide a thought-provoking argument that the very active interest in the Nordic Council by the Åland representatives is an indication of how autonomous participation in regional cooperation can serve to emphasise subnational and supranational perspectives as a counterbalance to national and statist ones.

The final chapter of the book provides concluding thoughts on the future of demilitarisation in international law. It highlights particularly the threats and challenges which technological advances present in this context, as well as the increasing tendency to blur civilian and military approaches.

All told, the study constitutes a very valuable addition to the literature on demilitarisation and on the Åland Islands themselves. It illustrates how international law provides several tools that, in the appropriate context, may serve to build confidence in divided communities, create the preconditions for peaceful resolution of conflict, and sustain peaceful coexistence and cooperation. However, an appreciation of the contextual elements (historical, ethnic, geopolitical, etc.) in any given situation is fundamental to the fulfilment of the promise which international law offers. After all, we do not need to be reminded that the Åland Islands have a very special status in legal terms; and possesses quite special characteristics. This specificity lies at the heart of the interest, but also the limitation, of this study. The appeal of this study to the practitioner of conflict resolution is perhaps more limited in the sense that the geopolitical circumstances and the legal and political status of the islands are probably unique. Having Sweden and Finland as the two major actors on the islands, yet being very much small states on their own terms, is an essential context. Both states share – and have shared for decades – an ambition to promote the rule of international law as a normative framework in international relations. They also share similar perspectives on such issues as good governance, human rights and respect for minorities. This confluence of interests and approaches provides a context which other disputed territories mostly lack. In any case, the rigorous analysis of this case study provides the academic community with a solid understanding of the mechanics of demilitarisation and of the ‘nuts and bolts’ of the legal framework which has ensured the Åland Islands’ continued peaceful existence.

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Joanne Wallis (2017). *Pacific power? Australia's strategy in the Pacific Islands*. Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press. xvii + 400pp, ISBN: 978-0-522-87224-8 (hbk, A\$69.99); ISBN: 978-0-522-86822-7 (pbk, A\$49.99).

Pacific power? provides an engaging and comprehensive account of Australia's strategic engagement with Pacific island nations. The strength of the book lies in its rich and detailed historical analysis: Wallis traces key events that mark this engagement, from the nineteenth century to the present day.

The book attempts to explain why Australia's preponderant power has not always translated into strategic influence in the Pacific Islands. Specifically, the author asks: why have the Pacific Islands been able to resist or limit Australia's influence, despite their power disparities?

In tackling this question, the book is structured across three main sections. Part 1 offers a detailed historical account of the changes and continuities in Australia's strategic policy towards the Pacific Islands. The reader is introduced to a number of key terms, such as 'benign neglect', 'constructive commitment' and 'partnership and engagement'. This concise overview of terms is useful in two main ways: they are useful insights into the strategic use of language in policymaking; and they enable such terms to be contextualised against actual policy practices and the political and strategic interests facing both Australia and the Pacific Island states at a given time.

In Part 2, the author takes the reader through the main 'levers' of Australian influence. These levers are identified as: military intervention; defence assistance; state-building assistance; economic tools; and diplomacy. The application and choice of these levers are shown to vary with the ebb and flow of Australia's strategic interests in the region.

Critical engagement with the limited effectiveness of these tools, especially state-building assistance and economic aid, remains both commendable and inadequate. For instance, the effectiveness of state-building assistance is often checked in relation to local socio-political practices, and gaps between Australia's goals, the reality on the ground and the desires of the recipient states. The problematic moral dimension of such aid and assistance is also briefly acknowledged by the author: aid packages often imply transmission of "superior Australian values to save Pacific souls from corruption, inefficiency, instability and poverty" (p. 172). The book would have benefitted from a more substantial engagement on this issue.

The author identifies the limits of using economic aid as a lever of influence to get Pacific Island states to accept neoliberal and 'good governance' reform. The reason for this, however, is identified as the gap between what Australia thinks are 'issues', versus the main security concerns of recipient states; these are generally better met by local socio-political institutions and communities than "distant state institutions" (p. 195). The main critique against this assertion is that the deliberate use of development aid and trade agreements to primarily fulfil the strategic and political agendas of *donor* states is well documented. It raises the question of whether the limits of effectiveness of this lever are due to a genuine misapprehension of the local context or a sustained hierarchy of strategic priorities of donor states that downgrades the interests of recipient state development, maintaining patterns of dependency.

In the last chapter of this section, the author takes us through Australia's missed diplomatic opportunities, particularly in relation to two key issues: climate change, and asylum seeker processing and resettlement. Their strategic and normative implications for Australia's image and influence on Pacific Island states is a highly topical issue of certain interest to most readers.

Part 3 guides the reader through the limits of Australia's levers of influence in the Pacific Islands. Specifically, this relates to how geopolitical developments – such as the involvement of other external powers in the region as aid donors and diplomatic partners – limit the monopoly of influence that Australia has traditionally exerted. Most importantly, the increasing diplomatic activism of Pacific Island states on the international stage is shown to temper Australia's clout. This includes the creation or strengthening of alternative regional and subregional institutions that exclude not just Australia, but other traditional external players as well, and allows the Pacific Island states to operate within these 'larger' powers' spheres of influence. While it is likely beyond the scope of the book, it must be said that a more localised account of everyday resistance, beyond the black box of the state, is lacking. This inevitably takes away from a more thorough account of how small jurisdictions are able to resist the influence of states with greater material power.

In the final chapter, the author commendably acknowledges that the book's advocacy of viewing the Pacific Islands region as an "arc of opportunity" (p. 332) is problematic for two main reasons: it implies that Australia has the right and the responsibility to exercise strategic influence in these regions; and carries the danger of perpetuating existing structures of power and the self-image of these 'smaller' states being amenable to 'influence' by larger powers like Australia. The author responds to this in a rather limited way, by suggesting that the opportunities available to the island states should also enter Australian political discourse, thereby shifting the discourse towards a 'de-securitised' view of the region. Again, how this can be done (despite the clear power disparities) is not sufficiently articulated, especially with reference to the fact that the Australian state is not a monolithic, homogeneous actor. The author does acknowledge the complexity also within the Pacific Island states – in spite of their small size – but, here too, it is not so clear how this complexity will impact the ability of these states to charter their own national and local interests.

The main value of this book lies in its historical account of Australia's strategic engagement with its Pacific island nations. It provides valuable insights, obtained through archival research and interviews with key decision makers, of the limits of preponderant power capabilities in exerting influence on smaller states. It provides a valuable addition to the scholarship on resistance and autonomy by small states in the international system, and will be valuable to scholars researching this topic.

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Godfrey Baldacchino (2017). *Solution protocols to festering island disputes: 'Win-Win' solutions for the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands*. London: Routledge. ISBN: 978-1-4724-7518-1 (hbk, £88.00); ISBN: 978-0-3672-1877-5 (pbk, £29.59).

Why would China and Japan risk large scale military conflict over a few insignificant and uninhabited rocks? These little 'islands' should, as Baldacchino's argues, mean *nothing* to these two great powers. But even the most superficial Google search quickly reveals that disagreement about who owns the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, and the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and fishing grounds that extend from their coastlines, could mean *everything*. Explaining this, and considering what might be done about it, is the central aim of this book.

The practical importance of answering these questions is clear: a war between these two nations would likely have catastrophic consequences for the entire globe, and this alone justifies scholarly interest and intervention. But Baldacchino's theoretical aims are perhaps more important to the way the book is written and structured. In essence, he sets the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands as a test case for the nascent field of island studies, an interdisciplinary endeavour that he has dedicated his career to pioneering. By bringing an 'island lens' to historical, political, legal and economic questions, Baldacchino seeks to "throw some fresh and badly needed light and inspiration on the tense goings on in the East China Sea" (p. xi).

Solution protocols to festering island disputes succeeds remarkably in this endeavour. Its approach is avowedly interdisciplinary. The first three substantive chapters set the context from multiple angles by explaining - in full, rich, historical detail - the origins of the dispute and its contemporary meaning. The effect is to circle in on the islands themselves: starting wide and then narrowing in until these rocks - that are, collectively, a little over 10km² of land - assume a pivotal place in the narrative. In essence, the islands themselves become unwitting characters in a high stakes political dispute that has the potential to be a flashpoint for the region and the globe. Typically seen as a two-sided dispute (China and Japan), in this account we are treated to a more complex story that includes nearby Okinawa and Taiwan.

The next two chapters outline the island lens that Baldacchino seeks to employ. In Chapter Five, we are treated to a synthesis of his decades-long argument about the importance of studying islands and islandness. The key point in relation to this book is that islands regularly serve as pretexts, bargaining chips and proxies in the games that great powers play. Chapter Six then shows how this zero-sum, 'winner takes all' outcome, while common, is not predetermined: islands are also sites of 'creative governance' in which alternatives to the straightjacket of mainstream sovereignty are trialled and tested. Baldacchino sees these creative alternatives as potential solutions to the dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands.

Taking inspiration from Ostrom and Dator, the rest of the book is structured around seven concrete examples of these 'win-win solution protocols' in practice. The options include: 1) Splitting, by partitioning the islands into separate jurisdictions; 2) Sharing, by implementing forms of condominium government; 3) Suppressing (or suspending) sovereignty by turning the area into a 'commons'; 4) Single sovereignty but shared jurisdiction, by one state (in this case, Japan) choosing not to exercise complete or full jurisdiction; 5) Shelving (or setting aside) a dispute while developing, by allowing development of the islands to proceed despite disagreement about which state the territory belongs to; 6) Swapping and selling, by allowing the islands to be sold or bartered; or 7) the Status Quo (or stalemate or standstill), by essentially allowing the dispute to rumble on without being resolved, but never quite triggering outright conflict either.

The strength of this structure is that it allows Baldacchino to range widely and draw on numerous examples from across the world to illustrate the sheer variety of jurisdictional forms. This breadth is complemented by discrete contributions by 11 specialists: Fleury and Johnson (The Minquiers and Écréhous, Channel Islands), Grydehøj (Svalbard), Gupta ('The World', Dubai), Hillebrink (St Martin), Iwashita (Bolshoi Ussuriiskii), Lindström and Nauclér (Åland), McIntyre (Tuvalu and Vanuatu), van Aert (Picton, Lennox and Nueva, South America), and van Dijk (UNESCO World Heritage Waddensea area, shared between three countries) – in the cases that Baldacchino covers. The book also contains three substantive commentaries – Katayanagi, Liu Jiangyong and Iwashita – on the case at hand.

This unique stylistic feature highlights the strength and virtue of island studies as a genuine interdisciplinary alternative: it provides scope for comparative insights, while maintaining a commitment to contextually rich and nuanced case-specific knowledge. It also makes the book fun and interesting to read as the narrative is interspersed with different voices and perspectives. In this sense, the book succeeds remarkably well in its aim to both explain the dispute itself but also outline plausible ways forward that are illustrated with real world empirical examples.

Despite the thoughtful and empirically rich smorgasbord that demonstrates the value of an island lens, the book nevertheless raises important questions about the potential limits of such an approach. Specifically, while a shared islandness allows for creative and eclectic parallels to be drawn across historical and cultural contexts, the book does not offer anything by way of a theoretical explanation for why solutions prevail over others. The answer, as with the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, is always to default to context as the explanation for why things turned out the way they did. This has the appeal of being empirically precise. By adding Okinawa and Taiwan to the mix we gain a much more nuanced and clear-eyed understanding of the dynamics at play. And, given the practical aim of the book – to provide evidence of alternatives – this is not a major shortcoming. But it does raise important questions for island studies scholars. If by studying islands on their own terms we start to treat uninhabited rocks as central characters in historically significant events, what type of character are they? Baldacchino is essentially silent on this question. But, academically at least, the stakes are high as, without this conceptual underpinning, contextually rich accounts, even those as broad-ranging as this one, run the risk of being dismissed as 'mere' description and the island lens as simply metaphor by mainstream disciplines. This state of affairs is lamentable, given the uniquely creative scholarship on offer here.

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Jean Micallef Grimaud (2018). *Small states and EU governance: Malta in EU decision-making processes*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics. ISBN: 978-3-319-57321-2 (e-book, €83.29c); 978-3-319-57320-5 (hbk, €106.99c); 978-3-319-86133-3 (pbk, €106.99c).

As the smallest of the member states of the European Union (EU), Malta conforms to many of the structural, economic and political limitations endemic to small states. Amongst these characteristics, one finds a small domestic market and limited room for competition, limited human capital, poor natural resources, labour market bottlenecks, and the costs associated with remoteness and insularity. However, like a number of other particularly successful small states – such as Qatar, Singapore and Bahrain – Malta has managed to achieve high levels of income per capita by leveraging its geostrategic location, its educated and specialised workforce, its robust legal and parliamentary systems, and its integrated financial sectors. As such, this is evidence of the policy-nurtured decisions that have enabled the building of resilience to overcome intrinsic small state weaknesses.

Such building of resilience and strategic policymaking is not limited to the domestic context. In *Small states and EU governance*, Jean Micallef Grimaud sets out to answer a key question: “Are EU small member state governments able to exercise influence in EU legislative decision-making processes? In other words, from the evidence of the Maltese cases presented in the book’s empirical chapters, do small states exercise influence in these processes? And, if so, *how* and at *which stage* do they do this?” (p. 1). By pursuing a response to these research questions, the book focuses on EU ‘legislative’ decision-making, meaning Malta’s exercise (or non-exercise) of influence in the formation and approval of EU legislation in the Council of the European Union. In particular, the book examines three case studies: two contending with EU legislation on pyrotechnic articles (fireworks), and one contending with legal migration.

The book makes several valuable contributions: it offers insights into an understudied case (Malta); presents transferable lessons which may be taken from the Maltese context and applied to the experience of other small states in the EU; offers a theoretically sound methodological framework for empirical analysis; and strives to fill a knowledge gap that has not yet been addressed. The work commences with a literature review that charts the development of small state studies and grounds the subject in international relations theory; most notably, it emphasises that there has been a shift from materialist understanding of power to the recognition that there are other ways of achieving desired outcomes. Hence, Micallef Grimaud argues that a “small state” does not mean a “weak state” in the EU context (p. 4) and that “certain vulnerabilities related to size could be overturned with the right doses in the capacities held and strategies employed during EU decision-making” (p.15).

By bringing together a number of aspects that are normally treated separately in the literature on decision-making and governmental influence in the EU, Micallef Grimaud is able to build the case that small state governments may be able to manifest influence through timely interventions in EU legislative decision-making processes. To demonstrate this, he tests six independent variables to determine their effect on small state governmental influence in the EU. These are divided between governmental *capacities* and *strategies* (behaviour during EU decision-making processes) in order to espy some explanatory factors.

The evaluating criteria for capacities include: the capacity to enter early in EU processes, expert and administrative capacity, and the capacity to prioritise. Regarding strategies for influence, the book identifies ‘pace setting’, ‘foot dragging’ and ‘fence sitting’ (p. 43). Micallef Grimaud hypothesizes that, the higher the levels and scores for each of the independent variables, the higher the probability the government may exercise influence and be successful in EU decision-

making processes (p. 266). He tests this by providing a quantitative comparative analysis of the three empirical cases. He then concludes that the adoption of appropriate strategies early in the decision-making process enables states to wield influence; conversely, the absence of appropriate capacities and strategic choices will stymie government's attempts at uploading a legislative process.

Micallef Grimaud's analysis is critical and insightful, and this carefully crafted book demonstrates advanced, original and compelling ideas. Although the subject matter is complex and multi-faceted, constant signposting throughout makes the book coherent, straightforward to follow, and readable for non-specialist audiences. The final product is a comprehensive work that has much to offer, both to the reader with a qualitative interest in the study of small states, power asymmetries, international negotiation and resilience, as well as to those quantitative minds looking for empirical corroboration of proposed theories.

The case study chapters are well structured, and the analysis is authoritative. The background of the EU legislative process is provided, and the decision-making process is shown to consist of two stages: decision-shaping and taking. Through his first two case studies (pyrotechnics), Micallef Grimaud demonstrates how the Maltese government successfully achieved positive outcomes by brandishing positive capacities and adopting a 'winning', pace-setting strategy. He points to the clauses in the pyrotechnic directives of 2007 and 2013 explicitly known as 'Malta clauses', which stand testament to the Maltese government's influence during the EU legislative decision-making processes. The third case study (migration) produced a negative result for the Maltese government owing to a lack of governmental capacities, together with the adoption of an inappropriate fence-sitting strategy. These approaches are explained at length to demonstrate how the ability to influence the EU decision-making process depends less on a state's size, and more on the importance of harnessing the right capacities and deploying the appropriate strategies.

At the heart of the book, therefore, is the understanding that there is a fine line between recognising the inherent characteristics of small states and conflating these with the outcomes of policy choices.

Small state leaders need to prioritise and be selective, contending with scarce human and material resources whilst seeking to fulfil core security functions. Shorter chains of decision-making and heightened personalism can make coordination fast and flexible. Thus, small state *nature* seems characteristically predisposed to flexible and adaptable strategic thinking. Whether small states are able to accomplish this in practice then depends on small state *nurture*: the human-made, policy choices. This book therefore builds on the burgeoning literature that seeks to distinguish between the constraints of small state nature (vulnerabilities), and the strategic options that can be nurtured through policy choice (resilience).

Crucially, small does not have to beget complacency or helplessness. In international relations, the cards one is dealt are only part of the process: it is just as essential to know how to play the game. By discussing the challenges and opportunities in the Council of the EU, Micallef Grimaud highlights transferrable strategic lessons from the smallest EU member state and offers hope: if Malta can successfully wield influence, perhaps other small states can too.

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Mark Harwood, Stefano Moncada and Roderick Pace (Eds.) (2018). *Malta's EU Presidency: A study in a small state Presidency of the Council of the EU*. Msida, Malta: Malta University Publishing. Available at: <https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar//handle/123456789/35431>

Malta took the helm of the European Union (EU) at a time when Europe was buckling under the weight of a refugee crisis, experiencing a slow economic recovery in the face of austerity, facing rising populism, witnessing a weakening of the transatlantic alliance, and nervously attesting political fragmentation. These combined factors have placed significant pressure on the structures of the EU; and policymakers in the West may be finding themselves unable to cope with unfolding events. Yet, the overarching message of the book is that, despite the intrinsic limitations of being a small state, Malta “managed the Presidency with robustness, meeting many of its targets, brokering compromise amongst the member states and in negotiations with the European Parliament, as well as utilising its limited human and financial resources to their maximum capacity” (p. 6).

Malta's EU Presidency is edited by three stalwarts of the Institute of European Studies at the University of Malta: Mark Harwood, Stefano Moncada and Roderick Pace. It is a timely and succinct overview of the priorities set and actions taken during the Maltese EU Presidency over the course of the first half of 2017. The chapters are very short, and if readers are seeking a blow by blow account of every decision and action taken by the Presidency, then this is not the book to consult. What this book offers, however, is a thoughtfully curated selection of brief, yet insightful, analytic essays contending with the major priorities of the Maltese Presidency. The selection of these specific issues highlights the cultural and historical factors integral to determining national security priorities. At the same time, the book consistently places these in the context of wider geopolitical concerns.

Despite having limited human capital and financial resources in comparison with larger counterparts in the EU, Malta's successful navigation of the Presidency was (at least in part) attributable to the high competence, energy and dedication of the ‘human factor’ of the Maltese Presidency (p. 101). Shorter chains of decision-making and heightened personalism are small state qualities which make coordination fast and flexible. Policymakers and political leadership took on the challenge with a clear understanding of how the EU operates and were able to identify key objectives and allocate the necessary resources; multi-functionalism was demonstrated as an asset of Malta's diplomatic corps, as opposed to the situation in many large states where the right hand may not know what the left hand is doing.

Each book chapter tackles one of Malta's priorities for the Presidency and assesses actions taken, processes of deliberation, consultation and negotiation, and overall performance in each area. The breadth of subjects and issues outlined demonstrates the magnitude of the task that lay ahead when Malta assumed the Presidency; yet, in its annual Presidential assessment, *Politico* concluded in its June 2017 issue that “the EU's smallest country has won praise for its diplomatic prowess”.

This is good news and a testament to the efforts of the Maltese diplomatic corps. It flies in the face of the misconception that materially weaker nations cannot provide leadership in the pursuit of political objectives. Indeed, the study of international security has long been rooted in individualist and materialist understandings of the world: actors hold fixed interests, and structure constrains their behaviour, as determined by geography, technology and instruments of power. Yet, the proliferation of multilateral institutions may have inhibited the traditional,

neorealist comparative advantage enjoyed by big powers, and altered our understanding of the international order. There are normative and psychological constraints on the use of military power as an instrument of national power; instead, a different power currency – status and reputation – allows states to exert greater influence than their population or resource capacity would suggest. This book positions Malta as a prime case study of this notion in practice.

Status does not exist in isolation, however: it is relational and dependent on the recognition of external players. Unlike material capability, it is not fixed and able to be enhanced or lost by engagement with the international society. Although changes to the Lisbon Treaty have reduced its political influence, leaving international responsibilities largely in the hands of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Council, the EU Presidency is not just a ‘technical’ exercise with low stakes, Harwood argues that failure to deliver may “undermine the country’s reputation amongst its peers” (p. 2).

Malta’s diplomatic success, however, has been overshadowed by domestic tragedy that has cast a dark shadow on Malta’s priorities further afield. The book mentions “a surprise national election on 3 June 2017” (p. 3) during the last month of the Presidency, but refrains from any mention of the circumstances that led to this chain of events: allegations of systemic corruption that plagued the Maltese government, largely stemming from the pen of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia. All eyes were on Malta when, four months after the Presidency drew to a close, Mrs Caruana Galizia was assassinated by a car bomb. This has led to an international outcry across the European Union, in favour of free speech, justice and the rule of law.

On 21 October, 2017, the *New York Times* claimed that the “[b]rutal killing of journalist [Caruana Galizia] exposes ‘something darker’ in Malta”. By 11 September, 2018, the headlines of *Bloomberg Businessweek* read “Why the EU is furious with Malta”. And, on 23 April, 2018, *The Guardian* had lamented of Prime Minister Joseph Muscat – touted as a potential successor to Donald Tusk – that his “hopes of securing high office in Europe appear to be in tatters”, despite an inquiry ruling that his family had no links to an alleged company in Panama.

If status is a power currency for small states in the international system, Malta must take serious steps to shore up its reputational assets. As argued by various authors in this book, Malta is pursuing a ‘smart state’ strategy of serving as an honest broker in the Mediterranean. Therefore, it must strive to restore credibility to this foreign policy. A strategy founded on trust and honesty abroad will falter if, locally, there is a lack of faith in the justice system whilst the masterminds behind the assassination remain at large. Malta must leverage its booming economy and demonstrate its renewed commitment to upholding the values of good governance enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights; otherwise, it could find that its diplomatic and negotiating success during the EU Presidency will continue to be undermined and overshadowed by the darker events of 2017.

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Rowena Cullen & Graham Hassall (Eds.) (2017). *Achieving sustainable e-government in Pacific island states*. Public administration and information technology series. Cham, Switzerland: Springer. 421pp. ISBN: 978-0-3-319-50970-9. €142.

From tribal lore to the printing press, to the present era of fast and cheap electronic communication, the ability of both rulers and ruled to access information has had profound governance ramifications. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are the latest in the evolution of mass communication, and offer vast potential to transform governance and the dialogue between citizens and governments. Rowena Cullen and Graham Hassall's book *Achieving sustainable e-government in Pacific island states* provides a timely examination of the advent of e-government in Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs).

The scope of the book encompasses 22 PICTs, which differ vastly in their political, cultural, socio-economic and geographic terms. The first section examines these conditions. Chapter One by Cullen and Hassall introduces the phenomena of ICT in PICTs. The authors provide an overview of the realities that PICTs face in the context of governance and communication structures, as well as the opportunities and challenges that PICTs face in the implementation of e-government.

Attaining e-government through greater connectivity in PICTs is a task involving multiple stakeholders at the international, regional and national level. The next few chapters (Chapters 2-4) probe into how such stakeholders seek to improve connectivity through international and regional frameworks, as well as regulation at the national level.

In Chapter 2, Purcell and Hassall delve into initiatives by international and regional organisations to foster greater connectivity within the Pacific region through improved ICT capability; and the ramifications of such initiatives on PICTs. The chapter also examines the potential contributions that ICTs can make towards development in the region. Chapter 3 by Hassall then reviews how regional and national bodies in PICTs have worked towards realising the potential of e-government through regional and national policy frameworks. The chapter then delves into e-government initiatives that have been financed by international agencies. In Chapter 4, Louey-Gung provides an overview of the preconditions necessary to facilitate e-government in the context of regulatory frameworks and institutions, as well as ICT connectivity and access in PICTs. The chapter positions itself in the context of how regulatory frameworks and institutions need to work towards a reliable and affordable telecommunications market.

The second section of the book provides a trove of fascinating case studies about the specific use of ICTs in government sectors. In Chapter 5, Watson and her co-authors review the use of mobile phones in the island Pacific for effective government service delivery. In Chapter 6, Cullen makes a strong case for the benefits that ICTs offer for good governance, effective financial management and overall national development. Cullen highlights the importance of negotiating power relations in a developmental context. This is particularly relevant in the case of PICTs, where the often critiqued, 'one size fits all' approach of international developmental agencies can clash with the individual realities and needs of PICTs, some of which may be driven by the idiosyncratic consequences of small size and islandness or archipelagicity.

Strengthening democratic institutions is crucial for attaining e-government. To many Pacific Islanders, the nuances and machinations of Western democracy can be quite abstract notions. For most PICTs, the national governance mechanisms in place were imposed upon them by their colonisers, and lingered on post independence. In Chapter 7, Cullen explores how ICTs can act to support the institutions of democracy in PICTs. Such support can take many forms: from increasing transparency by having information available on parliamentary websites, to

improving accountability by enhancing government record keeping. Cullen concludes by admitting that, while ICTs offer vast potential in bolstering democratic institutions, the Pacific is still far short of achieving ICT-enabled democracy.

In planning and realising developmental goals, PICTs require a robust system for collecting, managing and disseminating official statistics. In Chapter 8, Cook and Cullen argue that ICTs have the potential to increase the quantity and quality of data gathered. For instance, in areas with 3G/4G coverage, the uses of mobile and tablet devices enable a wider variety of data to be collected, within shorter timeframes.

For many PICTs, farming and fishing remain the mainstay of national economies and individual livelihoods. Chapter 9, by Aqorau, Cullen, Mangal and Walton, provides an insight into e-government initiatives in such primary industries. The Chapter examines the potential of ICT to improve the quality of primary industry data and statistics.

Climate change and its impacts will have far-reaching ramifications on PICTs at a socio-cultural, economic and environmental level. The terms of climate adaptation and disaster risk management have thus become common parlance in the developmental discourse of PICTs. The role of e-government in implementing the above terms is discussed in Chapter 10 by Pelesikoti and Suwamaru. Here, they reflect on lessons learnt from multiple PICTs with regard to government initiatives on integrated water management, food security, coastal development, renewable energy, mobile weather reporting and seasonal climate prediction software.

A key aspect of human development is the health of a country's citizens. For PICTs, the health sector is often challenged by a sparsity of funding, personnel, infrastructure and equipment. Cullen provides an outline of the health challenges PICTs face, and a description of current uses of ICT in Chapter 11. Cullen examines the role that ICT-based Health Information Systems play in improving medical services, and the challenges that PICTs face in implementing such systems. Cullen further delves into other potential ICT uses, such as telehealth initiatives and the use of mobile services. Cullen concludes by noting that, given the scarce resources in PICTs, any technological 'intervention' must add considerable value in order to justify the allocation of limited resources.

Attaining higher education standards has been an ongoing global developmental agenda. For PICTs, this agenda remains an important regional priority. In Chapter 12, Mow, Kruse Vaai, Thomson and Taloka make a case for how e-government can be facilitated in PICTs by the use of ICTs in education. The chapter examines regional and national initiatives aimed at improving the use of ICT in education; including a case study of the diverse means by which ICTs are being used in education at the University of the South Pacific. The chapter argues that Open Education Resources, ICT-enabled distance and flexi learning and the rapid decrease in device costs show great promise for Pacific education.

As PICTs work towards attaining 'good governance', civil society plays a crucial role in acting as an intermediate between citizens and institutions. Chapter 13 by Hassall explores how the growth of ICT platforms in the Pacific has led to increased attempts by governments and civil society to harness ICT platforms for enhanced engagement between governments and citizens.

The first section of the book commendably outlines the realities faced in PICTs as well as the current international, regional and national frameworks in place that impact connectivity and thus e-government. The section also provides pithy recommendations on the way forward for PICTs in creating a more enabling environment for e-government. The second section of the book provides a fascinating insight into the workings of different government sectors in PICTs, and how they are striving to implement ICTs. Overall, the collection provides a timely, useful

and comprehensive insight into the advent of e-government in PICTs. It is a useful tool for students and academics who may also be unfamiliar with the Pacific context.

With these commendations in mind, there are a few caveats to be made. Firstly, while the book recognises the existence of a digital divide in the Pacific, there is inadequate unpacking of the full extent and ramifications that this divide has for e-government. For PICTs, the digital divide has several aspects. Firstly, is the level of internet penetration. Countries such as Fiji and Tonga have internet penetration rates exceeding 50 percent, while other PICTs such as Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Solomon Islands have penetration rates of 8 percent and 11 percent respectively. In addition, there is still a large disparity across PICTs in terms of the costs of broadband and mobile internet packages. For instance, on the Digicel network in PNG, 1 gigabyte of data costs 30 Kina (€7.80c); while in Fiji, Digicel offers packages of 7 gigabytes for 7 FJ\$ (€2.90c).

Secondly, while there are references to gender in various chapters, there could have been a more nuanced discussion on how governments are attempting to use ICTs to address gender issues and gaps. The mobile helplines by the Fiji Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation outline the potential that ICTs have in helping governments address such issues.

A third aspect is the use of ICT platforms by individual politicians or citizens to highlight government ineptitudes. In PNG, politicians such as Bryan Kramer and Gary Juffa have resorted to social media to disseminate information to citizens on the machinations of government, in an attempt to make fellow government officials pay more than lip service to good practice.

All in all, the book deserves much praise. Given the constantly evolving nature of the digital sphere, and the rise of social media- fuelled populism around the world, this book is welcomed and one looks forward to a subsequent edition.

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