

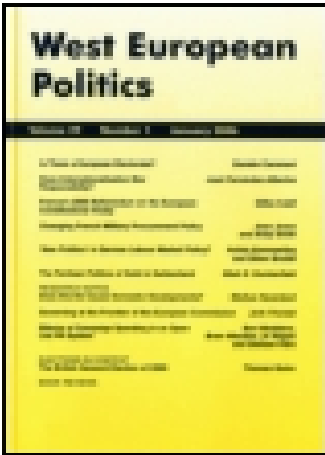
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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Democratic Drift: Majoritarian Modification and Democratic Anomie in the United Kingdom

By Matthew Flinders

Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009, 325 pp., £50.00, ISBN 978-0-19-927159-7 (hbk)

Vernon Bogdanor once noted that the British constitution has been described as being 'as nearly as perfect as any human institution could be'. Lord Dahrendorf, like many outside observers, admired its ability to secure democracy even in difficult times. If there was so much to be said in favour of the Westminster Model, what motivated constitutional change under New Labour and where did this lead to? Matthew Flinders' answer is: New Labour was driven by circumstances beyond its control. 'It was only rhetorically committed to reforms while still harbouring its traditional commitment to majoritarian politics at a less visible level' (p. 41). The result of this half-hearted approach has been *democratic drift*, i.e. a reform without a clear vision of a coherent set of values, principles or institutional architecture which would place the British constitution either firmly in the consensual or the majoritarian camp of democracies. Today's constitutional half-way house is a form of 'modified majoritarianism', i.e. 'a multi-level polity based upon a more consensual model of democracy *within* an increasingly frail conception of the Westminster Model' (p. 274, emphasis original). This kind of reform is inadequate for creating an environment of democratic renewal and for fighting the general cynicism about the trustworthiness of politicians.

For non-British scholars of the British constitution this is a very refreshing, convincing and self-confident analysis. It allows a comparative politics discourse, which in the past was made difficult by the argument that British pragmatism was superior to continental style rule-based constitutional engineering. The author uses 10 institutional variables developed by Arend Lijphart in his books *Democracies* and *Patterns of Democracy* to assess the quality of British democracy today. Flinders is very cautious and admirably precise when he works with these variables. He discusses at great length their advantages and disadvantages as well as the problems of qualitative and quantitative analysis. Some ideas could be added to his approach. For example, his assessment of the strength of the Lords vis-à-vis the Commons appears in a different light when we add the observation that the Lords are more efficient when they use their veto powers than the German *Bundesrat*, which by the letter of the constitution has a much stronger role vis-à-vis the German *Bundestag*. Another example is the author's conclusion that Britain still has a two-party system. He only briefly (pp. 104–5) mentions that in addition to the indicators he has chosen, one could also consider the vote share of the two main parties (2005: 67.6 per cent) and the fact that minor parties attract more voters. If we analyse the British party system on three levels: the level of government, the level of parliament and the level of the voters (2005: 5.5 candidates on average in the constituencies), only on the level of government can

the two-party system be confirmed. This finding modifies the author's conclusion that on the *national* level two-party politics still dominates somewhat (p. 98).

These are, however, only minor points. The book takes a persuasive holistic approach to constitutional reform in Britain on all levels of government. Though the book's style is at times a bit long-winded and some arguments are redundant, it very clearly makes the point that under New Labour there were red lines for its constitutional reform project. These were not only defined by a lack of vision, or 'meta-constitutional orientations' (Flinders), but also by Tony Blair's aversion to any kind of reform with the potential of limiting the powers of the central government (for example, wider reforms to the House of Lords reform and the electoral system).

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The European Public Sphere and the Media: Europe in Crisis

Edited by Anna Triandafyllidou, Ruth Wodak and Michal Krzyzanowski
Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2009, vii + 286 pp., £55.00, ISBN 978-0-230-21042-4 (hbk)

With the various so-called 'constitutional crises' that have plagued the European Union, culminating this year in the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, never has such salience been attributed to the idea of a European Public Sphere (EPS): whether such a sphere exists, to what extent Europeans feel collectively engaged with the idea of Europe, and how this is connected to their sense of involvement and communication with the EU in particular. As such, Triandafyllidou, Wodak and Krzyzanowski's contribution is an especially topical one for academics and policy-makers alike. The editors and contributors widen the scope of their study, though, preferring not to focus on a limited view of the EPS as being inherently connected to the EU. The editors argue that although this has been prominent in previous studies, it limits the discussion of an EPS. Equally they feel an historical perspective on the development and emergence of an EPS is missing from previous studies. The book therefore aims to rectify these deficiencies by presenting an empirical, longitudinal study of how, if at all, an EPS emerged in the national media of several European countries at various critical times in post-war European history.

Using a discourse-historical analysis approach, the contributors explore a series of 'crisis' events in European history which prompted differentiated representations and negotiations of the idea of 'Europe', and its associated values, in the domestic media of European countries. Crises are explored because the editors argue, 'in periods of experienced crisis with a European dimension ... various understandings and meanings of Europe are proposed, confronted and negotiated ... the value basis of Europe emerges and it is transformed through these processes' (p. 17). The case studies discussed are varied across time, nation and scope, ranging from the 1956 Hungarian revolution, to both the creation and destruction of the Berlin Wall, and more recent events like the Iraq war and the Mohammed cartoon scandal.

Interestingly, the study finds that, in contrast to the predicted emergence of a common 'European' vision, particularly in the pre-1989 case studies, a 'national filter of perception of Europe' (p. 262) dominated. Additionally, despite the fundamental geopolitical changes in Europe post-1989, the studies found that this national filter did not fundamentally alter in most of the post-1989 cases, and importantly until the last case, the EU did not play any real role in unifying the

European space; indeed, its very disunity was criticised by the various national media. The results of the last case study were of particular interest. The Mohammed cartoon scandal in 2007 transpired as the only crisis in which a truly 'European' public sphere and common understanding of Europe seemed to emerge. The focus of this case, though, was different to the others (with the exception of the Iraq war perhaps), as this was a crisis which truly was debated across borders. It might, therefore, be interesting to see in follow-up studies whether such 'cross-national' crises as the 2008–9 credit crash, the contentious debate on the Lisbon treaty, and the Copenhagen climate change summit might also present a similarly common construction of 'Europe'; was this finding evidence of a move towards a less nation-specific vision of 'Europe', for example, or was this case simply an anomaly?

The one area in which the volume felt lacking was in the conclusions, where little discussion was made about the hypothesised reasons for the differences in the results: did the Mohammed cartoon crisis connect with efforts made by the European institutions towards the top-down creation of an EPS, for example? Overall, though, this is a fascinating and comprehensive volume. The individual contributions present a highly detailed dataset and provide a truly unique and historical examination of the evolution of an EPS. The volume offers fruitful ground for further discussion.

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The Legitimacy of the European Union after Enlargement

Edited by Jacques Thomassen

Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009, 286 pp., £45.00, ISBN 978-0-19-954899-6 (hbk)

The 2004 elections to the European Parliament (EP) were the first held in the newly enlarged European Union. While previous enlargement rounds also changed the EP's composition and increased the number of its members (MEPs), never has the increase been as great. The contributors to the book edited by Jacques Thomassen take this opportunity to assess the legitimacy of the EU after the 2004 elections and how it has been affected by the 2004 enlargement round. The contributors address this overarching question in two different ways. Some deal with the issue of legitimacy purely in terms of whether the institutional rules and the way in which actors (i.e. voters and politicians) react to them allow for meaningful representation of voters and political accountability. Others assess the legitimacy of the EU from the perspective of the citizens. The insights from these contributions as summarised by Jacques Thomassen in his concluding chapter point to the tentative nature of legitimacy in the EU. While the way in which 'politics' is structured (even after enlargement) would make party government 'feasible', the legitimacy as assessed from the perspective of the citizen is less positive. Trust in both national and EU institutions appears to have declined after 2004 and with the addition of new member states the interpersonal trust among the people constituting the EU has declined as well.

This mixed assessment in this nicely produced volume relies on a common framework sketched out by Jacques Thomassen in his introductory chapter. Relying on (in part) recent work on democratic legitimacy, the author suggests that three dimensions are important (p. 3), namely 'identity', 'representation and accountability', and 'performance'. A key element according to the author is that representation and accountability require a model of party government. The latter

(p. 9) is predicated on five key components: (1) a choice by voters that is (2) based on policy preferences, so that (3) cohesive parties can implement policies, and (4) winning parties form the government, while both policy preferences of voters and policy programmes of parties (5) reflect a left–right dimension.

These elements are studied in detail in the first part of the book. The chapter by Hermann Schmitt and Jacques Thomassen assesses whether the positions of parties on the left–right dimension and regarding EU integration follow similar patterns in the old and new member countries. Wouter van der Brug, Mark Franklin, Marina Popescu and Gábor Tóka study whether left–right positions of voters are similarly affected by issue positions, and whether the former influence vote choices in a similar fashion. And Erik Voeten finds for MEPs that even with the addition of new members, party group membership explains much of the voting in roll call votes. He also finds that estimating ideological positions on the bases of these roll call votes is not affected by the enlargement, except that for instance Polish MEPs hardly follow the pattern of their MEP colleagues. These results seem to suggest that party government, according to the criteria presented by Jacques Thomassen, is ‘feasible’. Some doubts appear, however, first of all in the chapter by Claes de Vreese, Hajo Boomgaarden, Susan Banducci and Holli Semetko who present evidence that during the 2004 EP elections no European public sphere appeared in the media. Second, it might strike readers as odd that the feasibility of party government is only assessed in relation to the EP, ignoring the other representative body, namely the Council of Ministers. Obviously, a book on EP elections will focus on the EP, but some conclusions based on the empirical studies seem overdrawn in light of this (probably purposeful) omission.

The second part of the volume deals with the political support of the EU. Lieven de Winter, Marc Swyngedouw and Bart Goeminne assess how the preferred level of decision-making (i.e. regional, national or European) can be explained and find that some differences exist between the old and new member states. Slava Mikhaylov and Michael Marsh find that policy performance in terms of economic results affects the evaluation of the EU by citizens quite similarly across all member states, but that the socialisation (measured by the number of years of membership) affects this support differently. Bernhard Wessels presents evidence that 2004 has considerably affected trust in political institutions and that utilitarian factors explain differences at the individual level. Jacques Thomassen and Hanna Bäck assess how identification with the EU has changed over time and how interpersonal trust has overall become lower since enlargement. The final substantive chapter by Cees van der Eijk and Hermann Schmitt argues (and finds supporting empirical evidence) that the high abstention rates are not linked to a lack of legitimacy as perceived by the voters.

The chapters in this second part raise doubts both about the legitimacy of the EU as seen from the citizen’s perspective and about some of the empirical analyses presented. While Slava Mikhaylov and Michael Marsh discuss in detail inferential problems related to their study, the other chapters often gloss over some of these problems. Hence, *The Legitimacy of the European Union After Enlargement* makes an important contribution to our understanding of issues of representation and political support in the EU. Some conclusions drawn from the various studies might have been formulated with more prudence, especially in light of some methodological issues and the exclusive focus on only one representative body of the EU, namely the EP.

Simon Hug
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In Search of Social Democracy: Responses to Crisis and Modernisation

Edited by John Callaghan, Nina Fishman, Ben Jackson and Martin McIvor

Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2009, 304 pp., £60.00, ISBN 978-0-7190-7920-7 (hbk)

The nature and fate of social democracy is a topic of long-standing interest to the readers of *West European Politics*. Social democratic parties have been a basic feature of European political life since the late nineteenth century and Western Europe was rebuilt after 1945 with a distinctly social democratic tinge. Indeed, although not always electorally victorious, social democratic (or centre-left parties) were the ones most closely identified with the unprecedented economic and political success of the post-war era.

Beginning in the 1970s, however, things began to change. Western Europe's post-war order began to run into major difficulties: economies slowed down, party systems fragmented, new issues and social movements appeared, and the social democratic left began to lose steam. Indeed, by the beginning of the twenty-first century social democratic parties were but a shadow of their former selves in much of Europe – a trend that was surprisingly accelerated rather than reversed by the recent global economic crisis. How can we understand this trajectory? Why has social democracy seemingly lost steam? What has happened to individual social democratic parties over the last generation?

These are the types of questions *In Search of Social Democracy. Responses to Crisis and Modernisation* aims to answer. It is a collection of essays that examines the evolution of social democracy from a variety of angles and at a variety of levels. The book includes general essays on the broad, continent-wide problems facing social democracy, on the development of individual parties, and a section entitled 'resources for rethinking', that offers some alternative scenarios for the movement's future. *In Search of Social Democracy* should, therefore, be useful for anyone looking for a fairly comprehensive overview of where the centre-left has been over the last generation, and what experts view as its major contemporary challenges and achievements.

In general, the book paints a picture of a movement that has made significant progress in a number of areas over the past generation, although not necessarily in those areas traditionally associated with it. Indeed, many of social democracy's greatest successes have come from its championing of 'new' issues like women's and minority rights, the environment, and European integration rather than in the areas of economic or social policy where the authors note a general shift towards the adoption of neo-liberal policies and ideas.

The book was completed before the current economic crisis hit but even so the downsides of this trend are all too obvious in the chapters included here: the movement has, for the most part, not been able to come up with a viable socioeconomic agenda for the late twentieth and early twenty-first century and has lost ground electorally to competitors. The authors differ on precisely why this is the case, with some viewing structural constraints as determinative, while others believe the fault lies more in the movement (and its leaders) themselves rather than in the larger environment it faces. (It is worth noting that the authors vary in the structural constraints stressed. Many hew to a more or less traditional 'globalised capitalism is to blame' perspective; however, one interesting chapter by Gerassimos Moschonas lays out an argument for why the European Union itself might be at least partially to blame for social democracy's diminished agenda.)

Regardless of their particular perspectives, however, the book is ultimately fairly depressing. Although the authors do get across the important achievements made by social democratic parties over the past generation, one is nonetheless left with the sense of a movement whose most vigorous days are behind it. Without a revitalised agenda for dealing with the challenges of economic recession and growth, social

democracy will never be able to recapture political and social leadership. Perhaps the end of an era really is at hand.

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Religion, Politics and Law in the European Union

Edited by Lucian N. Leustean and John T.S. Madeley

Routledge, London, 2010, xx + 223 pp., £80.00, ISBN 978-0-415-46627-1 (hbk)

Religion, it is widely recognised, has become increasingly relevant to the European public space in the last two decades. The collapse of Communism in the east has been paralleled by something of a resurgence of the political role of the Catholic and Orthodox churches there. The issue of whether Turkey and EU enlargement poses fundamental issues of identity, of which religion is the core element. France has taken radical steps to limit the use of the *hijab* in public places and Denmark witnessed an explosive controversy following a cartoon depicting Mohammed. ‘Secularism’ may have been a European invention, but few would claim it has stable and clear foundations even today.

The relationship between religion and politics in Europe was and remains complex. It is particularly so when the focus of ‘politics’ seeks to incorporate both cross-national comparisons and the relevance of the EU. This book seeks to overcome this dilemma by embracing both dimensions, a difficult juxtaposition. It is the outcome of a workshop and replicates a journal special issue.

The editors have done a very good job in marshalling together the contrasting dimensions and the varied contributions. Overall, the volume has been given four major themes covering religion and identity; leadership; law; and lobbying. The first of these appears the most enticing. In a revealing contribution, Challand focuses on how European identity requires a counter-veiling ‘other’ – first Soviet Communism, now political Islam – to define itself. Interestingly, scrutiny of the EU’s archives shows that the EEC of the Six never linked relations with Turkey in the 1950s and 1960s with religion. Indeed, the preferential treatment of Greece was a matter of economics, not culture.

In a broad overview, Willaime argues that European states have followed *laïcité* – understood not in terms of the specific 1905 French law, but as variations of ‘secularity’ across Catholic, Lutheran, Muslim or Orthodox traditions. States have recognised some religions, granting them a special status, but guaranteeing freedoms for all. The Greek case is not considered: thus, the restrictions on proselytism and in establishing new places of worship are neglected. Why there is still no mosque in Athens surely challenges the notion of ‘the end of religion as a system of power and the repositioning of its role in a pluralistic society freed from domination by the clergy’ (p. 24). The sanguine tone is completed with the conclusion that Europe has witnessed the ‘laicisation of *laïcité*’ (p. 27). Quite.

The legal framework is taken further by Doe, who describes the neutrality of recent EU treaties and declarations with respect to any particular faith. This is broadly consistent with Willaime. Though the principle of subsidiarity is respected, Doe explains that there is such a corpus of laws and instruments that it is reasonable to refer to the EU’s law on religion and identifies eight principles on which it is based. The EU mixes a ‘cooperationist model’ of church–state relations with a language of separation (p. 151). The Lisbon Treaty (Art. 15b.3) states that the EU shall maintain a dialogue with churches and their organisations.

Indeed, several chapters offer empirical evidence of the lobbying undertaken by churches and their organisations. Steven considers the 'interest group behaviour' of the churches of England and of Scotland, as well as the Catholic Church in France. In a fascinating survey, Pastorelli examines the dialogue established between new religious movements (cults, sects) and EU institutions. The 'Bureau of European Policy Advisors' recognises the Church of Scientology and Soka Gakkai. The latter, a Buddhist movement, is an enthusiastic participant.

Overall, this is a valuable contribution that offers breadth of perspective and original empirical investigation. It has broad relevance – for specialist teaching and for informing future research – mapping out a diverse terrain.

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European Multi-level Governance: Contrasting Images in National Research

Edited by Beate Kohler-Koch and Fabrice Larat

Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2009, 222 pp., £65.00, ISBN 978-1-8472-0222-2 (hbk)

Since the pioneering writing of Helen Wallace in the 1970s, an ever-increasing number of scholars of European integration have been searching for concepts with which to analyse the 'interdependent' nature of the process of European integration. As this book notes, since the early 1990s the term 'governance' has become the most frequently adopted answer to this conceptual quest, in particular when allied to the expression 'multi-level'. Indeed, one of the stated objectives of this edited volume is to 'take stock' of all the research that has thus far been devoted to the governance of the EU. Its other overall objective is to reflect upon whether the governance under study is 'efficient' and 'democratic'.

The book's stock-taking dimension draws on two sources. The first is a quantitative database of the 1,600 funded research projects that were launched on the theme of EU governance before December 2006. From this source we learn, for example, that more than 30 per cent of the projects were conducted in only three parts of Europe (the UK, Germany and the EU), and that only 28 of the projects refer explicitly to the concept of 'democratic deficit' in their title or abstract. The second source of information about research on EU governance is provided by seven chapters on 'research traditions' in each member state and at the EU. Although of unequal length and depth, these chapters provide some explanation of why the concept of governance has taken hold more strongly in some geographical parts of Europe than in others. Although language differences are seen as one source of this diversity, much more emphasis is placed here on the role played by the national histories of each discipline interested in the EU and on the causal influence of public funding. In short, through taking stock of research that uses the concept of governance to study the EU, the book provides useful explanation of the common ground but also the divisions which structure what it calls a European 'research community'. One could and should question why research conducted by non-EU citizens does not feature in this survey. After all, American political science has heavily influenced other parts of European integration analysis for more than 50 years. Nevertheless, the effort made in this direction is sustained, solid and contains many helpful insights.

Despite the promises made in its introduction and first chapter, the book is unfortunately much less systematic in its treatment of the 'added analytical value' of the concept of EU governance for capturing the 'efficiency' and 'democraticness' of the EU. Indeed, this exercise in reflexivity is largely left to a conclusion by Johan Olsen that he himself describes as 'an epilogue'. This exercise Olsen carries off

particularly well. In particular he stresses that EU scholars need to get beyond framing research in terms of an old vs. new governance dichotomy that separates too rigidly phenomena such as 'the Community Method' and the 'Open Method of Co-ordination'. Instead, he suggests, they need to focus upon what has caused the institutionalisation of 'an increasingly complex, multi-layered and multi-centred European system of governance' (p. 205).

However, the book as a whole says little that is new about what the concept of governance actually 'brings to the party' of research on the EU and, more generally, on the changing face of politics in most of Europe. What, for example, is the relationship between 'governance' and classical, grounded social science concepts such as 'institutions', 'legitimation' and 'regulation'? Does the notion of 'levels' of governance really allow research to generate knowledge about the overlapping spaces within which politics in much of Europe has taken place over the past few decades? One might have thought that a research programme devoted to mapping both EU governance and how it has been studied would at least provide a more structured line of questioning on these crucial analytical issues. Instead, 'governance' appears here more as a flag of convenience around which researchers from many different backgrounds have rather fleetingly been brought together.

Andy Smith
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Voyage au cœur de l'Europe, 1953–2009: Histoire du Groupe Démocrate-Chrétien et du Parti Populaire Européen au Parlement européen

By Pascal Fontaine

Édition Racine, Brussels, 2009, 696 pp., €24.95, ISBN 978-2-87386-607-5 (hbk)

For all observers who still hold legitimate doubts about the relevance of the European political parties in the process of European integration, this book written by Pascal Fontaine is especially worth reading. The author, who has worked for the European People's Party (EPP) (Christian Democratic) Group since 1981, presents the history of the EPP Group since its foundation in the Common Assembly of the European Steel and Coal Community to the last parliamentary elections of June 2009. His lengthy monograph is a detailed historical narrative of the policy positions and the organisational developments of the EPP Group since its earliest days. Written with utmost attention to the smallest detail, *Voyage au cœur de l'Europe* – also available in English and in German – considers the EPP Group as an important actor in the history of European integration and, consequently, it treats the Group as a more than legitimate object of scientific enquiry.

Fontaine's endeavour relies on three main sources: written documents such as personal memoirs, reports of debates and votes in the European Parliament, and the unpublished minutes of the Group's various bodies; interviews with the Group's former Chairmen and Secretary Generals; and finally, his experience as a long-serving administrator in the EPP which allows him to 'describe the Group's culture, procedures, traditions, points of reference and even rituals' (p. 36). The selection of the above sources immediately casts some light on the (many) strengths and the (potential) problems of the book.

Attempts to study the internal organisation of the Groups have traditionally been troubled by the shortage of appropriate documentary information. Even when scholars seek to systematically collect the internal regulations or statutes of the Groups, they are forced to recognise that much of the organisational life of the Groups is not formally codified in written rules of procedure. The privileged position enjoyed by Fontaine has enabled him to depict the bureaucratic development of the

EPP Group and to describe the 'folk-ways' and practices regulating the functioning of the Secretariat. Among the more interesting (and lively) passages of the book, Secretary Generals describe the setting up of an international Secretariat and their feelings about it. Working in a poorly institutionalised environment and having witnessed the tragedy of the war, these 'pioneers' went native in Europe and felt like 'veritable monks, serving the institutions from morn till night' (p. 144). Their words can be usefully contrasted to the professional and fully bureaucratised body described in the last section of the book (p. 362).

Fontaine has personally assisted and closely worked with the chief characters in the history of the EPP. Throughout the pages of his book, the different leadership styles of the leaders of the Group forcefully emerge, as well as a significant variation in the political weight and impact of the different national delegations. The EPP Group – like the European Parliament in general – has been strongly influenced and shaped by its German delegations. Indeed, according to Fontaine, two of the three most important leaders in the recent history of the Group have been German (i.e. Kohl and Pöttering; p. 540). In the detailed presentations of the national delegations and their individual members, Fontaine emphasises two features that tend to distinguish the German delegation from its Italian and French counterparts. Besides its numerical primacy, the German delegation is made up, on average, of more experienced and long-serving MEPs, who have developed a robust network of relationships and an expertise in the parliamentary committees. Furthermore, while the Italians or French deputies have often focused on positions whose public visibility was not matched by comparable effective powers, the Germans have rather opted for influential posts in key committees, where they are appreciated by their colleagues for their methodical work and constant presence.

A further element that, thanks to Fontaine's book, can be better evaluated concerns the relationships between the EPP Group and the extra-parliamentary Party. The author describes the role of the Group in the establishment of the Party on the eve of the first direct elections and the 'intense collaboration' (p. 303) between the two organisations during both the preparation of the Maastricht summit and the landmark task of selecting sister parties in Central and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, when he sets out 'five conditions for the future success of the EPP', he emphasises the need to maintain 'close collaboration' between the Group and the Party (p. 545). The author underlines the need to strictly coordinate their strategic activities and – so it seems – to avoid unnecessary duplication of tasks. The defection of the English and Czech delegations from the EPP Group (the – ED component) will make – according to the author – the relationship between the Group and the party clearer. This judgement is especially noteworthy given that the other big European Party families have moved in a different direction (the PES Group has recently changed its name to S&D Group, while the ELDR Group was renamed ALDE in 2004).

Finally, Fontaine's volume could also be used as a data handbook. The annexes present a chronology of events, a full list of the members of the Group since 1952, together with the Presidents and the Secretary Generals, the number of seats obtained by the EPP(-ED) in the seven parliamentary terms, a list of all external meetings held by the Group and a list of the people employed by the Group. Quite clearly, without access to the archives of the Group (which are not public), the same amount of information could hardly have been assembled.

A potential source of scepticism with the book may lie in the fact that its author is also a special counsellor of the EPP Group. Nevertheless, Fontaine underlines in the acknowledgements that his book is not intended to be 'an official story' and, perhaps more importantly, that he 'was given the greatest possible freedom' by his superiors. Furthermore, the method used by Fontaine allows for further scrutiny of his work: all the documents consulted and the interviews made are duly referenced. If the other

big political Groups followed Fontaine's endeavour, their efforts would be much appreciated by the students of European parties and parliamentary politics.

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Resisting the Tide: Cultures of Opposition under Berlusconi (2001–06)

Edited by Daniele Albertazzi, Clodagh Brook, Charlotte Ross and Nina Rothenberg
Continuum, New York and London, 2009, xviii + 250 pp., £65.00, ISBN 978-0-8264-9291-3 (hbk)

This is a very interesting, informative and innovative volume, insofar as it addresses both the nature, policies and impact of the third Berlusconi government and oppositional social movements as well as cultural practitioners. Thus the volume is multi-disciplinary, drawing on political science, sociology, cultural and literary/film studies. The variety of scholarly perspectives adds to the volume's appeal, even though the different parts of the book are to an extent contradictory, as will be shown later.

The book is in four parts. Part One assesses the impact of the government upon Italian society, economy, politics and policy-making. Part Two examines the parliamentary opposition as well as the extra-parliamentary *girotondi* and *No Global* movements. Part Three shifts attention to the 'strategies of resistance' (p. 12) adopted by cultural and media practitioners, whereas Part Four examines the mobilisation of various social groups particularly affected by government policies.

The first part is political science-orientated, providing an 'impartial' assessment of government policies. Newell concludes that these policies were relatively modest in scope, so much so that the government's only distinctive trait consisted of 'its stance towards the EU' (p. 28). Nevertheless, Newell also points out that 'the Berlusconi years were above all ones in which Italian society became more unequal and more deeply divided' (p. 29). More drastic is the analysis of the media by Cepernich, who argues that its many anomalies, in relation to Berlusconi's conflict of interest and dominant market position, 'were aggravated rather than resolved' (p. 39), to which should be added attempts to control information and censor journalists (as analysed in a later chapter by Rothenberg).

The second part is also informed by political science, providing analyses of the UDC's (*Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e di Centro*) strategy to create a new political centre (chapter by Albertazzi) and the weaknesses of the left-wing parties, which explains the emergence of protest movements (chapter by Campus). A third chapter by Ceri argues that the Berlusconi years marked the rebirth of social movements in Italy but ultimately concludes, in view of their later decline, that it will take 'several years before entering another ascending phase of the social cycle' (p. 92). This chapter marks a change in approach, anticipating the next section of the volume. Unlike the previous 'impartial' analyses, in fact, the author takes the line that Berlusconi's government was 'despotic' and put democracy in danger, a position that the subsequent contributors appear fully to endorse.

In light of this, Part Three focuses largely on cultural practitioners putting up a (representational) resistance to Berlusconi precisely because he represents a serious threat to democracy, rather than in view of his government's specific policies. This is the case especially with Brook's chapter on Moretti's film *Il caimano*, where political satire (of the kind analysed by Boria in her chapter on humour on RAI-TV) is replaced by an apocalyptic cinematic style. Similarly, O'Connell's analysis of

Consolo's literary works highlights their 'severe critique' of both the erosion of democracy and society's passive acceptance of it (p. 158).

Part Four, by contrast, returns to a discussion of the impact of government policies, which, with reference to specific groups, is judged to be fairly dramatic. Thus the chapter on immigrant associations by Pojmann defines the Bossi-Fini Law as 'the most restrictive immigration law yet to take effect in Italy' (p. 179). Resistance actions, however, failed to modify the law or limit its effects. Similarly, women are judged by Galetto *et al.* to have suffered a serious backlash in terms of rights and securities as a result of government policies. This helps account for a revival of the feminist movement which, unlike others, has proved fairly resilient.

In conclusion, each chapter provides an excellent analysis but together they do not add up to more than their sum. The volume also presents some internal contradictions, given that the last section appears to view government policies as anything but modest in scope. Similarly, while some chapters consider the 'threat to democracy' as being at the core of what Berlusconi stands for, other chapters analyse his government with little or no reference to this seemingly crucial aspect. Hence the verdict on Berlusconi and his government remains to a large extent suspended, and the issue of whether the divergent interpretations of *Berlusconismo* actually account for the fragmentation of the opposition is not explicitly addressed.

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Re-inventing the Italian Right: Territorial Politics, Populism and 'Post-Fascism'

By Carlo Ruzza and Stefano Fella

Routledge, London, 2009, 272 pp., £70.00, ISBN 978-0-415-34461-6

The research question of *Re-inventing the Italian Right* is why in Italy the right was more able than the left to take advantage of the collapse of the old party system that occurred in the early 1990s. The book investigates the reasons of the superior electoral performance of the centre-right coalition. In order to do so, the authors engage in an accurate and detailed analysis of the three main parties of the Italian right – the regionalist *Northern League*, Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* and the post-fascist *National Alliance* – through an exploration of their origins, organisation, leadership and electoral constituencies. The most original part of such endeavour consists of the qualitative text analysis of party programmes employed to identify the set of values and issues that define the ideological profile of each party.

Although much has been written on the parties of the Italian right, there is certainly a lot of merit in a synoptic analysis that appears very useful especially to highlight the profound dissimilarities among the three political actors which nevertheless seem bound together in a very close and long-lasting alliance. In particular, the book's findings might raise provocative questions about the future of the new party of the right, *Popolo della Libertà*, that came out from the merging of *Forza Italia* with *National Alliance*. How long will this new political actor be able to offer a convincing synthesis of such deeply differentiated identities: the one a populist party centred on its leader; the other a rightist party torn between traditional nationalism and moral values and the desire to assume a more modern and secular image?

The authors' aim, however, is not just that of highlighting strengths and weaknesses of the Italian right-wing parties. Rather they intend to demonstrate

that those three parties are unified by their conformity to populist standards. To develop this argument, Ruzza and Fella first review the vast academic literature on populist right-wing parties in Europe. Then, building on Freedman's work on ideology and partly on Mudde's analysis of European populism, they argue that populism is a weak ideology with a loosely defined core and a set of changing peripheral elements depending on contextual contingencies and opportunities. Broadly speaking, such a core is composed of 'appeals to the people and themes of anti-politics as a recurrent discourse often channelled through a charismatic leadership' and the adoption of 'policies intended to symbolise and justify the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion' (p. 61). By applying such analytical framework to the Italian case, what emerges is that surely all three parties have built on anti-political sentiments that were especially widespread in Italy after the scandals which brought to the end the First Republic. Apart from this feature, however, they are quite different. While, to borrow the definition from the French sociologist Taguieff, Berlusconi can be regarded as a case of 'telepopulist leader', the Northern League is described by Ruzza and Fella as a socio-cultural ethnic movement. As for National Alliance, then, the authors argue that its original radical right populism has been gradually fading away.

It is certainly true that the language of anti-politics has helped the Italian centre-right to build a solid electoral block despite divergences and even some personal conflicts between its leaders. However, it cannot be neglected, a point which the book only mentions but does not openly address, that anti-politics has permeated the political discourse of the left as well. Therefore, in order to exhaustively explain the reasons of the success of the right, one may wonder if it is not a case of stressing more some other findings emerging from the authors' analysis, such as the fact that the right has taken ownership of a number of sensitive issues that the left has not been able to handle convincingly – namely immigration, law and order and taxation. In other terms, it might be argued that the strength of the Italian right has been also a product of the divisiveness and weakness of the left. This point, however, does not detract from the book's contribution to a better understanding of the Italian political system in the Second Republic.

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The Independence of Scotland: Self-government and the Shifting Politics of Union

By Michael Keating

Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009, 320 pp., £45.00, ISBN 978-0-19-954595-7 (hbk)

'The Anglo-Scottish Union [of 1707] is in serious difficulty.' Following such a statement the possibility of an independent Scotland is pondered by Michael Keating. He warns the reader about not confusing independence and secession as synonymous concepts. There is a growing strand of academics who contest the over-determining view that a nation is to equate *par force* a sovereign state. This debate is highly pertinent to stateless nations, such as Scotland, which are integrated in both a union-state (UK) and a union-continent (EU).

In recent decades, transnationalisation and globalisation processes have brought about the decline of the role of the nation-state as central actor in policy-making. In parallel, sub-state political communities have reinforced their claims for autonomy and self-government. The latter does not translate automatically into programmes of state formation, as happened with Norway in 1905. Certainly, with similar demographic characteristics (around five million inhabitants) and natural energy

resources, Scotland's economic viability would pose no major problem for itself and England.

The question remains as to whether a majority of Scots would opt for secession from the United Kingdom in order to establish Scotland as a new nation-state with full membership within the United Nations. To envisage such a scenario a majority of Scots ought to identify themselves exclusively with the Caledonian nation and, in so doing, would drop any degree of Britishness. This would break the mode of dual self-identification by a majority of Scots that allows both Westminster and Holyrood's political institutions to enjoy a degree of legitimacy. The political relevance of the so-called 'Moreno question' is that when citizens in a sub-state political community identify themselves in an exclusive manner, the institutional outcome of their antagonism with the state will also tend to be exclusive. Are we witnessing such a development as the basis for a future state formation of an independent Scotland?

In Chapter 1, Keating insists that the relationship between state and nation has rarely been a simple one, not only in the contest of the 'exceptional' case of Britain. Well before the consolidated nation-state there was political life in diversified polities. The following chapters examine the British specificities and the nature of the Anglo-Scottish Union. Keating underlines that (a) the Union is a complex set of institutions and practices that have to be understood through the lens of British informal and unwritten constitutions; and (b) its success was the implicit recognition of national diversity within 'less than a unitary state but more than a mere marriage of convenience'.

Chapter 4 reviews the institutional, legal and political implications that independence would pose to Scotland. Those repercussions related to the political economy of Scotland's independence are discussed in the following chapter. Chapters 6 and 7 sketch out what a post-sovereign, third way between independence and devolution might look like. The concluding chapter ponders the 'provocative' idea that secession in the UK may come from an England that 'is no longer prepared to pay the political or economic price of the union'.

The book is a highly valuable contribution to the debate of territorial politics not only in the case study of Scotland/Britain but also regarding other plural states. Keating clarifies how mistaken it is to look for parsimonious explanations that can work, *mutatis mutandis*, everywhere. This book should become indispensable not only for academic courses regarding the spatial dimension of power but for all of those readers interested in comparative studies of (supra- and sub-) state reform in the Western hemisphere.

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Crisis and Change in the British and Dutch Prison Services: Understanding Crisis-Reform Processes

By Sandra L. Resodihardjo

Ashgate, Farnham, 2009, 230 pp., £55.00, ISBN 978-0-7546-7549-5 (hbk)

'Reform is difficult to accomplish' – so starts Sandra Resodihardjo's book, in which she investigates the assumption that crises lead to reform by studying three examples of incidents in the British and Dutch prison services.

In the first two chapters, Resodihardjo lays the theoretical foundations for the 'crisis-reform theory' by assembling various authors. Although these authors (mainly Kingdon, Keeler, and Cortell and Peterson) do not share common concepts, they all postulate that in a period of crisis, during which actors are under great pressure to

find a solution, the usual constraints hampering policy reform diminish. Hence, reform is more likely to occur. Resodihardjo combines different bodies of literature and identifies individual, organisational and political constraints. She considers that in order for ‘macro-windows’ to open that challenge policy inheritance and existing paradigms within a policy sector, constraints at these various levels need to be diminished under crisis.

To investigate under which conditions crises actually lead to reform, Resodihardjo studies three series of incidents in the British and Dutch prison services. She investigates these incidents through interviews, newspapers articles, parliamentary and governmental documents. All these institutional crises led to reform, defined as ‘intended fundamental change of the policy and/or administration of a policy sector’. No real explanation is given as to why she chose these case studies, except the fact that the prison service is ‘a clear and distinct organization within [one] ministry’. This is, nonetheless, an interesting choice, as prison is a politically sensitive policy sector.

After a ‘pre-crisis’ introduction to the two prison services (Chapter 3), Resodihardjo describes the political context of the three incidents, and how policy-makers eventually opted for reform.

The Dutch case study (Chapter 4) takes place in 1992–93, a period characterised by cell shortages in the Prison Service, leading to a high number of remand prisoners sent home, and a period of spectacular escapes from Special Security Units. The first British case study (Chapter 5) regards a series of riots which occurred in 1990 in England. The last case study (Chapter 6) takes place in 1994–95 in the Prison Service of England and Wales, after two escapes from Whitemoor and Parkhurst, a riot and the suicide of a high-profile prisoner. All these incidents led to a loss of legitimacy for the prison services, the undermining of prison policy by the media and the MPs, and a decision to reform by policy-makers. Resodihardjo relates political debates concerning the paradigms of the Prison Service, such as the need for super-maximum prisons; the introduction of double-bunking in the Dutch Prison Service; or the sharing of responsibility once the British Prison Service became an agency.

In the last two chapters, Resodihardjo analyses the case studies in the light of the crisis-reform theory and identifies alternative conditions under which a situation of crisis can lead to reform. First, some inquiries can become a driving force for reform (Resodihardjo offers a perceptive discussion of the possible impacts of inquiries). Second, in certain conditions the media can have an influence on the policy-making process (and not only on the definition of the problem). Third, the political context (elections coming soon, or a government reshuffle) can act as a ‘funnel’ to a certain type of policy. These alternative conditions should therefore be taken into account by the crisis-reform theory after further research.

The genuine ‘dissection’ of these well-documented and clearly related case studies shows how policy decisions are made in a context of increased pressure on policy-makers. However, Resodihardjo’s attempt at theorising crisis-reform is somewhat less convincing. The lack of discussion of the theoretical background and of the methodology is regrettable. In the final chapters, the attempt at theorising alternative conditions makes this reviewer rather circumspect: some conclusions require further and broader consideration (the importance of the political context for the emergence of a crisis and for the final choice of reform, for example). The questions posed in this book are nonetheless original and thought-provoking, they constitute a basis for further research on crisis and reform.

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Innovation in Local Economies: Germany in Comparative Context

Edited by Colin Crouch and Helmut Voelzkow

Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009, 256 pp., £50.00, ISBN 978-0-19-955117-0 (hbk)

This volume addresses the role of local economies in the recomposition of national models of advanced political economies in Europe. The introduction mounts a very nice critique of contemporary theoretical orientations toward institutional change associated with various versions of Varieties of Capitalism (VOC) work. Crouch and Voelzkow argue that institutional realms within national systems are loosely coupled with one another, and, as a result a considerable amount of creative action in the interstices or ambiguities of the relations between functional realms is possible, particularly within local economies. They call this interstitial effect 'creative incoherences'. The VOC literature is very rigid and weak on how to account for change, so at least on the surface, this book presents an intriguing alternative perspective.

That said, the volume has several basic conceptual limitations. First, it presents national models in a contradictory way. On the one hand, the argument is decidedly deconstructive. The editors criticise the VOC perspective for underplaying the degree of complexity in national systems and coupling institutional realms too tightly. They appeal instead for a greater number of national types, more empirical complexity in the characterisation of types and looser coupling between functional realms. On the other hand, in making their case for 'local divergences', the deconstructive element is checked. All contributions assume a very strong unitary, not so complex national system as a backdrop and foil for their analysis of local economies. The claim is that loose coupling between clearly delineated and coherent national institutional realms and local institutional complexes generates creative incoherence. Thus, in one moment, national typologies are criticised, in the next moment they are utilised as a matter of fact. Indeed, coherent national models are designed into the research cases, all of which compare the same sector (furniture, automobiles, biotechnology, TV and film) in two different national contexts. If the view is that national systems are underspecified, loosely coupled and complex as a genus, why adopt over-specification, tight coupling and simplicity as part of your research design?

In any case, given the volume's goals, it is not clear what is gained from the same-sector/cross-national comparison that structures the case studies in every substantive chapter. If one wanted to make the case that national institutional systems were not uniformly (or even systematically) constraining the actions of firms within it, why not look for variation within the national economy (say within the same sector in different regions)? The deviation revealed by the same-sector/cross-national comparisons show that it is possible for national producers to do things that stylised conceptualisations of the national model say should not be possible. But it leaves the impression that such deviations are entirely random and idiosyncratic. As a result, the coherent 'national model' that was the animus for the generation of the deviant case stays intact, by default, because it has not actually been properly challenged by the case design.

Another weakness in the same-sector/cross-national comparison logic that structures the volume is that it tends toward technological (or sectoral) determinism. It is repeatedly claimed that sectoral governance pressures trump national governance strictures. Similar sectors are governed in similar ways, regardless of their location within a given national system. This logic excludes the possibility that the same sector can be governed according to similar imperatives, but through different institutional and relational arrangements.

Most of the case studies, in fact, simply confirm the Hall and Soskice comparative institutional advantage claim that particular kinds of innovation, and hence

particular kinds of sectors, thrive in specific institutional contexts and not in others. The Cambridge–Munich Therapeutic Biotech and the London–Cologne Film and TV Production cases, for example, involve producers who ‘locally’ abandon the national institutional system in order to embrace foreign practices. The Crouch–Voelzkow ‘creative incoherence’ message is that pockets of liberal market economies or coordinated market economies can be created (somehow and to un-theorised systemic effect) within antipodal national systems. In the Therapeutic Biotech case, German producers suspend, block off and ignore coordinated German institutions and introduce liberal market-oriented practices in their place. The possibility that coordinated (German) institutions could be modified and adapted in ways that make radical innovation possible is not considered, and ultimately is not possible to discover within the constraints of the research design.

Innovation in Local Economies is an interesting book with fine case studies that in spite of themselves confirm most of the central claims of the very literature on National Models they attempt to criticise.

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