

characteristics of the attitudes towards heterodox economic policy, tradition, international orientation and critique of liberal democracy. The comparison ends with an original explanatory framework to understand the emergence and strengthening of the new conservatives, which consists of four factors: the socioeconomic costs of transition, the increasing activity of civil society, the efforts of religious actors to establish their position in the public sphere after communism and transitional justice connected to the social perception of unfair treatment of the previous communist politicians.

In sum, despite the methodological shortcomings, the volume reveals the aspects of new conservatives that are worth exploring in future research because of their explanatory potential.

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Alarums and Excursions: Improvising Politics on the European Stage, by L. Van Middelaar, (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Agenda, 2019, ISBN 99781788211727); xviii +301pp., £25.00 hb.

This book deserves a review essay. It is one of the most thoughtful and uncompromising books to appear on the EU in recent years. It should be widely read by EU specialists and used as a core text for EU studies in advanced graduate seminars (noting that it would be daunting for all but very dedicated undergraduates). Whether it will be widely read is an intriguing question: while sophisticated, the book is an essay, not a tract written with a university audience in mind. Van Middelaar, a political philosopher who worked for Herman Van Rompuy during the latter's stint as head of the European Council, cites the academic literature rarely and actual politicians often; he is concerned with explaining the historical dilemma before the EU, not with scoring points on behalf of one explanatory model or another.

Briefly, Van Middelaar argues that in the last two decades the EU dived into the river of history and has had to learn how to swim. In part, the EU chose to make this dangerous leap into fast-flowing waters; it expanded its competences and its membership and ceased to be a regional economic club. In part, however, it faced new challenges: in 1992, when the Treaty of Maastricht was signed, Russia was part of an imploding empire, Donald Trump was a vulgarian who sold real estate and North Africa was a not too far-away place of which Europeans preferred to know little. Van Middelaar's point is that the EU was ill-prepared for its dive into history. It was a technocratic, rules-based organization with an overweening sense of its own importance ('bureaucratic hubris'). It suddenly found itself dealing with 'events-politics' and with the politics of improvisation. Unsurprisingly, it floundered at first.

Van Middelaar's accounts of the crises of the euro, the Ukraine and (especially) the EU's policy on refugees are at the heart of the book. During these crises the EU suddenly found itself doubting the progressive narrative that had sustained it to that point. It was compelled to grasp that it was not the future of history; not an institution that would, by dint of soft power alone, spread its values unchallenged across the globe, but one whose 'temporal finitude' depended upon the exercise of statesmanship and making tough choices. The decade since the euro crisis has been a 'Machiavellian moment'

(J. G. A. Pocock), one in which the EU has had to cope with unpredictable events that might have brought it to ruin. To survive, the EU has had to learn the dark arts of *virtù*.

By and large, after many uncertainties and public spats, the EU has shown itself to be adept at learning. When the EU had to do a deal with Putin or Erdoğan, it did. When the flow of refugees from war-torn Africa and Syria became overwhelming, it slammed shut the door rather than unravel in the face of internal division. When a rogue member wanted to leave, it stayed compact – to the dismay of ideologues in Britain who thought it would crumble.

In Van Middelaar's reading, the institution that made such learning possible was the European Council. For him, the European Council is like the Cabinet in Bagehot's *English Constitution*. It joins European institutions (the Commission and Parliament) that lack authority, to national governments, above all Germany, that possess it. It is the one EU institution that can *act* quickly and decisively. The summits in Brussels, moreover, with their attendant media circus, have also created a public space for democratic decision-making and made European opposition figures out of dissident national politicians: if Danes, Estonians and Portuguese recognize Viktor Orbán, that is not necessarily a bad thing. The EU's 'cherished rules-politics' is a thing of the past, Van Middelaar concludes. The EU's future will be noisy, contested and perennially doubtful. The reviewer would add that this fact means that new, less progressive, stories will emerge to recount its past.

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The Principle of Subsidiarity and its Enforcement in the EU Legal Order: The Role of National Parliaments in the Early Warning System, by K. Granat (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2018, ISBN 9781509908677); x+262pp., US\$135.00 hb.

This volume contains an updated version of Granat's PhD thesis submitted in 2014. The book assesses the national parliaments' application of the early warning system in order to ensure that the principle of subsidiarity enshrined in the European Union treaties is respected.

Granat's work has significant strengths. Primarily it boasts a remarkable empirical richness, providing the reader with ample footnotes and concrete examples of early warning system applications (that is, reasoned opinions from national parliaments). The volume also interestingly combines general chapters on the notion of subsidiarity, the design of the early warning system and its use at European and national levels as well as specific case study chapters focusing on national parliaments' concerns over (a) the principle of conferral, (b) delegations to adopt a delegated and implementing act, and (c) fundamental rights. Throughout the book, Granat's investigative reasoning is logical and easy to follow. Her comprehensive analysis on each different facet of the early warning system and subsidiarity is truly impressive. She thus delivers to the reader valuable descriptions and assessments of all the major facets of both the early warning system and subsidiarity, such as competence creep, democratic deficit, the Barroso Initiative, the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs, regional parliaments, interparliamentary cooperation, the panoply (yellow, orange, green and red) of different cards in the early warning system and the political debate within the EU. The reviewer especially enjoyed the section on the divisions between parliaments and governments,