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different capital choices across countries, to compare different approaches to SWFs and to explain why some countries with large reserves, notably Switzerland, have not created such funds. Furthermore, the book aims to answer why countries make very different choices in terms of the type of fund they set up. An interesting fact highlighted by the author is that countries with similar macroeconomic characteristics, such as small open economies in the Gulf or Asia, make different choices regarding SWFs. Conversely, states with dissimilar macro characteristics, such as Malaysia and Kazakhstan, or Ireland and Senegal, have set up similar funds. This book's broader aim is to link the study of financial institutional choices with that of comparative politics.

Braunstein's main argument is that choices about state finance institutions, such as SWFs, are neither the direct outcomes of a set of macro-characteristics nor the product of cross-national learning or emulation. Rather, they reflect the distribution of power among societal groups in a state. As soon as the domestic political context is taken into account, the creation of different SWFs, even among countries with similar economic characteristics and located in similar geopolitical regions, is no longer surprising. Although much has been written about SWFs, this book makes a unique contribution by offering a rich empirical and analytical picture of the domestic politics which govern SWF policies. On the one hand, the case-study chapters offer an insightful and balanced analysis of the various responses adopted by small open economies to common pressures. On the other, cross-country and sectoral comparisons show how sectoral politics affect capital choices and who benefits from them.

Lack of transparency and the political sensitivity surrounding them make the study of sovereign wealth funds challenging. By using a combination of newly released archival documents as well as oral history and elite interviews and based on his extensive fieldwork in Asia and the Gulf, Braunstein is able to study conflicts within policy processes. These have not been looked at in detail in the context of sovereign wealth funds before. By bringing to the fore the domestic dimension of an international financial phenomenon, *Capital choices* makes an important contribution to the study of financial institutional choices across the globe.

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Europe

Alarums & excursions: improvising politics on the European stage. By Luuk van Middelaar. Newcastle upon Tyne: Agenda Publishing. 2019. 301pp. £25.00. ISBN 978 1 788 21172 7. Available as e-book.

The European Union is undergoing a metamorphosis. The founding member states consciously designed the predecessor of the EU as a technocratic body. After the calamities of the Second World War, postwar leaders were convinced that the only way to forge compromise and dovetail their economies was to do so out of the sight of national politics. Following a strategy of depoliticization, an impartial bureaucracy and a tight net of legal rules, rather than parochial and conflict-prone politicians and electorates, were to govern Europe. But this EU is no longer, argues Luuk van Middelaar, Dutch political theorist and former adviser to the then President of the European Council Herman van Rompuy (2010–15), in this new incisive book.

Rather than *rules-politics*, the EU has been forced to engage in what the author calls *events-politics* over the past decade. Events, or crises, imply the occurrence of the unprecedented and unforeseeable. But when an event extends beyond what was previously

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conceivable, the established rules no longer work. That is what the EU experienced during the crises of the euro, over Ukraine, of Schengen and with Britain and Trump—and the EU treaties provided no remedy. Improvised decision-making, rather than relying on rules and procedures, became the new *modus operandi*. The author mostly praises EU leaders' ability to muddle through the consecutive crises. At times, however, he appears somewhat too generous, by neglecting that the crises could have been anticipated, at least in part, had the EU adopted a more strategic outlook.

After van Middelaar empirically demonstrates that *events-politics* and improvisation have become the new normal over the past decade, he moves on to analyse the institutional consequences of this transformation. For long, the EU had operated without a clear executive power centre with the authority and capacity to act in emergencies—it did not need one in the world of *rules-politics*. But faced with the collapse of the Greek economy, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the arrival of more than a million asylum seekers on its shores, the EU needed to take decisions. In his analysis, the author weighs in on the wider debate about who runs the EU: the European Commission, supported by the European Parliament, as hoped by proponents of the federal vision? Or the European Council composed of national leaders, as proponents of a more confederal EU preferred? Given the deeply political nature of the challenges the EU faced, van Middelaar argues that only the European Council could have stepped to the fore. Indeed, it was the European Council which took the crucial decisions on the creation of the European Stability Mechanism and the Banking Union, agreed the EU–Turkey deal to stop the movement of asylum seekers across the Aegean and granted the Brexit extensions. Hard questions around redistribution, citizenship and borders cannot be resolved by technocrats.

With the rise of the European Council, a new mode of governance has also emerged. Before, under the community method (or the 'pure doctrine' as the author calls it), member states transferred competences to EU institutions and subjugated themselves to legally binding rules. In contrast, the union method involves member states acting in concert, appealing to the electorate and thus mobilizing political authority that EU institutions cannot claim. This recalibration of political authority, van Middelaar contends, is also a reflection of the enduring appeal of the nation-state for the majority of Europeans and the author explicitly argues that federalist aspirations have been disappointed. However, he later concedes that the European Council is guilty of undermining its democratic legitimacy by choking opposition. While depoliticization—removing issues from the realm of political choice—was intrinsic to *rules-politics*, the European Council also depoliticized its actions during recent crises. Rather than trying to bring publics on board, European leaders repeatedly presented *faits accomplis* after late-night negotiation marathons in Brussels and defended their decisions by recourse to the 'there is no alternative' mantra. Van Middelaar astutely observes that 'if opposition proves impossible to organize within the Union, then it will undoubtedly mobilize against it' (p. 219)—of this Brexit is the prime example. For the future of the EU, the crucial question, then, is how to create space for meaningful opposition within or towards the European Council. Van Middelaar surveys several ways this could be achieved, including through opposition from the European Parliament, for instance, which the author however dismisses as too weak and consensual. This is where a contribution to the debate about reforming the EU would have been particularly welcome. Curiously, he shies away from making any prescriptions, leaving readers at the end of his book with open questions.

Overall, many of van Middelaar's individual insights are not new. But his talent lies in arranging the pieces to form a bigger picture. His conceptualizations, like *rules-politics* and

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events-politics, add clarity and distil the emerging patterns of European politics. He writes succinctly and elegantly, moving seamlessly between Machiavelli and the nitty-gritty of daily EU politics. And although those readers sympathetic to federalist arguments will find van Middelaar's thesis ultimately unpersuasive, his book should be required reading for scholars, practitioners and interested members of the public alike.

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The struggle for modern Turkey: justice, activism and a revolutionary female journalist. By Sabiha Sertel. Edited by Tia O'Brien and Nur Deris. Translated by David Selim Sayers and Evrim Emir-Sayers. London: I.B. Tauris. 2019. 272pp. £62.50. ISBN 978 1 78831 357 5. Available as e-book.

Journalism has always been a high-risk occupation in Turkey: Sabiha Sertel was not only the first female journalist in the country, but also the first female journalist to be imprisoned. Translated into English for the first time, her memoir *Roman gibi* [Like a novel], written shortly before her death in 1968 and first published the following year, is interesting mostly as an exercise in self-restraint and omission.

Sertel wrote her memoir while in exile in the Soviet Union, covering events that had occurred decades before and with minimal access to sources. In addition, she was reportedly hoping to return to Turkey at the time of writing. The text reflects this, as the author tries to walk a fine line between offending the powers-that-be in Turkey—a NATO ally with a nationalist regime—and Soviet authorities, who had taken away her passport. Tellingly, she chose not to write about her years in exile at all.

Only briefly touching on Sertel's childhood and early adulthood, the memoir focuses on the years from 1919 to 1950: from the beginning of her studies in the United States and her first exposure to Marxist philosophy, until her departure from Turkey. Sertel was among the intellectuals who helped shape the new republic's media space. Together with her husband Zekeriya Sertel, she was at the helm of a major publishing house in the interwar period. Their publications had provided a platform for the up-and-coming literary generation and—mainly left-leaning—political opposition to the Republican Party government. In 1946 their offices were destroyed by a mob incited by the pro-government press. The Sertels' subsequent trial, imprisonment and eventual release grabbed domestic and international media attention. As finding work after their release proved impossible, they left Turkey in 1950 and Sabiha was never able to return.

Roman gibi is a political memoir and the narrative hardly touches on Sertel's personal life; uninitiated readers could be forgiven for thinking that her husband Zekeriya was merely one of her colleagues. Also, despite being an advocate of women's rights throughout her career, Sertel does not dwell on the challenges she herself faced as a female professional, beyond a few comments along the lines of: 'It wasn't easy getting a college degree in a language I didn't know, with a small child in tow and no help around the house' (p. 19).

It is difficult to disentangle Sertel's own politics from the restrictions she faced when writing the memoir. For example, the Armenian genocide and the 1937 massacres of Kurds in Dersim are omitted entirely, which can be attributed both to the author's support for the Kemalist government's approach to nationbuilding and to the sensitivity of the topic inside Turkey at the time of the memoir's publication (and up until today). Similarly, the author's attack on western imperialism was at least partly informed by her experience of the Allied occupation of Turkey after the First World War and her personal politics, but was likely enhanced by the fact that she was virtually imprisoned in the Soviet Union.