

Improvising, Acting and Taking Back Control: Towards a Political Europe?

Wiebe Hommes*

Luuk VAN MIDDELAAR, *De Nieuwe politiek van Europa* (Historische Uitgeverij 2017) 371 pp. French: *Quand l'Europe improvise: dix ans de changements politiques* (Gallimard 2018). To appear in English in 2019 (Agenda Publishing).

The *polis* was more than just a city-state, externally protected by walls, internally organised by laws. It was also a community: a community of narratives, engaged in a never-ending debate. Politics formed the very life of the community, ensuring a free and open future. Or so it seemed to Hannah Arendt. The most important part of the 'vita activa' of the *polis* was the shared life of debate and action.

Arendt, and her ideal of the *polis*, serves as the explicit inspiration for the new book of Luuk van Middelaar, professor in Leiden, author of the widely acclaimed *The Passage to Europe* (Yale 2013) and formerly speechwriter and adviser of then President of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy. The cry for politics, debate and pragmatism resonates on every page. In *De Nieuwe Politiek van Europa* (The New Politics of Europe), Van Middelaar, in Arendt's best tradition, does not search for a Platonic utopia. Do not expect revolutionary proposals or a defence of loud-ringing ideals. 'This book is no manifesto', Van Middelaar states at one point.¹ What is offered is an intriguing inside look into the nature of a changing European Union. Combining the authorities of an insider and of a sharp academic, it opens a new perspective on the Union. Van Middelaar seeks to avoid the easy, radical solutions, but instead focuses on the limits and possibilities of the Union's new stage of political evolution.

The timing of this work is opportune: after a hectic period of non-stop crisis management, the Union is orienting itself towards the future again, yet which route will be taken is, particularly after Brexit, still highly uncertain. In this time of confusion, Van Middelaar has written a welcome new addition to this tireless

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¹L. Van Middelaar, *De Nieuwe Politiek van Europa* (Historische Uitgeverij 2017) p. 343.

debate on the position and direction of the Union. In many ways, *De Nieuwe Politiek* is also a personal book: after completion of his *Passage* (Dutch version, 2009) on the history of European integration, Van Middelaar became a speechwriter to the first European Council President Herman Van Rompuy in 2010. Embedded in this European crisis centre, Van Middelaar was able to observe, phrase and ponder the decisions being taken before his eyes, notably in the euro-crisis. Thus armed with first-hand experience gathered during the enduring 'storm' which battered Europe during these five years, Van Middelaar seeks to sketch and explain the dynamics of a proper European 'Verwandlung', in which a new kind of politics has emerged, a 'politics of events'.

One anecdote is telling for the time and for the book. In late 2015, Van Middelaar met with a group of Commission civil servants. In the midst of the unprecedented influx of refugees, he urged them to think about solutions. Despite doubts of Van Middelaar whether one could apply templates for fish quota to sensitive concerns such as migration, the Commission staff stuck to its familiar solutions: technical, non-political and objective. It foreshadowed the approach taken by the Commission somewhat later. This asylum plan, with quotas and central distribution, Van Middelaar notices, became a disaster.²

This, in short, is the central message that *De Nieuwe Politiek van Europa* tries to convey. When faced with crises or tough political choices, the classical European way of decision-making falls short: the familiar toolbox is insufficient. Refugees, Van Middelaar urges, are a different subject from cod. However, simply doing nothing proved impossible as well. As a consequence, the Union has transformed itself from a body focused on the 'politics of regulation' into a Union which finds itself able to engage in a 'politics of events' as well. This new situation requires more than the classical doctrine of mediating and depoliticising, so central to the 'politics of regulation'. This particular type of politics, usually deployed by the Commission, is perfect for predictable, technical situations. Crises, however, demand the Union to act, to improvise and indeed, to be political in nature. In crisis management, political authority rather than the technical expertise of the Commission is required. This leads to an institutional shift. The European Council asserts itself as the main executive power of the Union. But the turn to politics is also problematic in its way: it requires a Europe with a democratic opposition. And room should indeed be opened for visible politics.

Van Middelaar sets himself the goal of providing the reader with an insight in this transformation, and notes explicitly that the book is not an 'academic polemic'.³ At the same time, however, there is a strong – even somewhat polemical – underlying institutional message: in this new 'politics of events', one must be

² Van Middelaar, *supra* n. 1, p. 17-18.

³ Van Middelaar, *supra* n. 1, p. 6.

sceptical of the ‘administrative hubris’ of the Commission, as Van Middelaar labels it. Europe’s new politics *cannot* adequately be conducted using the old legal and technical toolbox. The Commission, in other words, *should* not act in these events, maybe even much to its own dismay.

AN EMBRACE OF THE POLITICAL: THE WORLDVIEW OF LUUK VAN MIDDELAAR

To understand this main message of the book, it is informative to take a step back and briefly revisit Van Middelaar’s earlier work. In many ways, this cry for politics does not come as a surprise.

Even in his first book, *Politicide: De Moord op de politiek in de Franse filosofie*, in which Van Middelaar described the ‘murder’ of politics in the French philosophical tradition, politics takes centre stage. His harsh criticism of Sartre, Deleuze and Foucault takes the form of a passionate plea for politics and a defence of giving voice to diverging opinions.⁴ The deterministic historical path of Marxist thinkers is firmly rejected. Against the absolutism and uniformity of Sartre’s worldview, Van Middelaar places the diversity and freedom of Arendt: the distrust of the political by Foucault is contrasted with the openness of Claude Lefort. In Van Middelaar’s world view, eternal truths are suspicious. Instead, expect pleas for historicity and agency. It is telling that the book ends with an appraisal of Machiavelli. ‘The good is not always and everywhere the same’, Van Middelaar notes approvingly. Here we find the two political thinkers who have since continued to shape the views of Van Middelaar. With Arendt and Machiavelli as his intellectual inspirations, Luuk van Middelaar embraces the freedom to act, and the contingency of history. Politics then, as the possibility to act freely in time, ensures the future is open.

Van Middelaar subsequently transferred these notions of the political and the past onto the European sphere, most notably in *The Passage to Europe: How a Continent became a Union*.⁵ In many ways *De Nieuwe Politiek van Europa* is a follow-up to *The Passage to Europe*. In this erudite and highly readable work, Van Middelaar shed light on the emergence and specific character of the EU via a political-historical approach. The strength of *The Passage to Europe* lies in providing a new lens through which to understand Europe: by introducing novel concepts of distinct ‘spheres’ in the EU and the notion of moments of ‘passage’, it became possible to see the development of the Union in a distinct light. The introduction

⁴L. Van Middelaar, *Politicide: De Moord op de politiek in de Franse filosofie* (Historische Uitgeverij 2011), originally published by Van Gennep in 1999.

⁵L. Van Middelaar, *The Passage to Europe: How a Continent Became a Union* (Yale University Press 2013).

of the ‘intermediate sphere’ in particular was a refreshing take on European integration, enabling Van Middelaar to bridge the discourses which had shaped the thinking on European integration for so long. Instead of focusing on the ‘internal sphere’, regulated and depoliticised by Treaty, Commission, Court and functionalist thinking, or the intergovernmental ‘outer sphere’, where sovereign states reign supreme and unbound, the engine of European integration could be found in the intermediate sphere – in which the states take action collectively as *member* states, neither fully independent, nor straightjacketed by the Treaty.⁶

In this light, the emergence of the European Council can best be seen not as a dilution of an otherwise ‘pure’ European project, but rather as a confirmation of this vital intermediate sphere. As a consequence, Van Middelaar placed the European Council firmly at the centre. As prime instigators of European integration, the states collectively are the first point of reference. Combined with the notion of ‘passages’, transformative moments in time where Europe moved into different stages, this offered a new reading of the European project, not just on the history of its integration but also on the functioning of its institutions, their strengths and weaknesses. Published in English in 2013, the work remains a seminal piece of writing for everyone interested in the dynamics of the Union.

The importance of the community of member states and, subsequently, the central position of the visible politics between them, is a red line in the works of Van Middelaar on the European project. It is in this sense also worthwhile to shortly revisit his collaboration with Philippe van Parijs, *After the Storm: How to Save Democracy in Europe*.⁷ This work, a collection of essays of leading thinkers on the theme ‘democracy in Europe’, engaged with roughly the same questions which also form the core of *De Nieuwe Politiek*: who should act in unforeseen events, what is the source of authority in the EU, where do we find the proper democratic forum? Ranging from submissions from Larry Siedentop to Dieter Grimm, it offered a concise, but rather complete overview of the different strands of thinking on democracy and the EU. In his contribution, Van Middelaar set out his analysis of the ‘return of politics’. Mostly dealing with the Euro crisis and the role of Greece in that development, Van Middelaar noted that the limits of depoliticisation had been reached, and called for a more political – and democratic – Union. As Van Middelaar noted in 2015: this political Europe is taking shape before our eyes.⁸ Decisions which were taken were openly politically loaded, be it on Greece or on migration, and therefore required a democratic justification.

⁶Van Middelaar, *supra* n. 5, p. 11-25.

⁷L. Van Middelaar and P. van Parijs (eds.), *After the Storm: How to Save Democracy in Europe* (Lannoo 2015).

⁸L. Van Middelaar, ‘Europe and the Return of Politics’, in Van Middelaar and Van Parijs, *supra* n. 7, p. 229 at p. 242.

THE UNION'S MACHIAVELLIAN MOMENT: A DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

Yet, if *The Passage to Europe* succeeded in explaining how we got from continent to Union, and the short article in *After the Storm* was a concise version of ideas which matured in between books, *De Nieuwe Politiek* moves to expand upon more recent moments of 'passage'. Confronted with different crises, the Union has learned to engage in a politics of events. This is one part of the new lens Van Middelaar offers this time: in order to properly 'read' the present-day Union, notice has to be taken of a new potential of the Union to *act*, next to mostly *regulating*. In doing so, an old acquaintance of Van Middelaar steps in: the Union has experienced, according to Van Middelaar, a 'Machiavellian Moment'.⁹

This terminology, taken from historian J.G.A. Pocock, relates to the emergence of modern politics. The 'Machiavellian Moment' was a break with a longstanding tradition of theological eternity, in which the Italian city-states became aware of their precarious finite nature and realised that it required more than simply 'being' to steer through the waves of a chaotic present. Active politics were needed.¹⁰ Van Middelaar finds such a shift in the present-day Union as well. Particularly after Brexit, the EU has realised its very essence was threatened: to survive, it has become necessary to stop relying on eternal vistas and start acting. Here, the firm belief of Van Middelaar in politics as a liberating notion surfaces again. No one captures this line of political thinking better than Shakespeare: If we fail in our efforts to attain greatness, the fault must lie 'not in our stars but in ourselves', Cassius assures Brutus in *Julius Caesar*.¹¹

The realisation of the Union's own mortality, and the emergence of European politics, came in the form of four distinct crises that are each discussed by Van Middelaar in 'The New Politics of Europe'. First came the Euro crisis. It caught the Union unaware and forced it to improvise: bound by the no bail-out clause in the Treaty and faced with a reluctance of the member states, the Union stumbled from one crisis summit to another before finally sufficient firewalls were established to prevent the collapse of the Euro.

In 2014, the war in Ukraine followed. Here, Van Middelaar does not shy away from using big terms: 'the geopolitical emancipation of the EU' brought about the realisation that actions of the Union, in this case an association agreement, can have political consequences.¹² Ukraine has brought back the realisation that the Union is situated between two great powers: negotiating peace became a primary

⁹Van Middelaar, *supra* n. 1, p. 156-158.

¹⁰J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment. Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Tradition* (Princeton 1975).

¹¹Quoted in Q. Skinner, *Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press 2000) p. 31.

¹²Van Middelaar, *supra* n. 1, p. 98.

concern mainly for Angela Merkel, acting not only in a German role but strengthened by European economic sanctions as well.

Thirdly, the refugee crisis placed the issue of borders firmly on the agenda. Not only the external one, but also those within the EU. With the management of this unprecedented challenge came the tension between conviction and responsibility when acting: how to strike a balance between those two ultimately turns into a question of politics.

Finally the votes for Trump and Brexit showed that both participation in the Union and American protection are not self-evident. Politically speaking, and rather new, this has led to the notion that a sovereign Europe should shape its own fate. Most prominent here is obviously French president Macron: in the French tradition, Europe has always been a vehicle to make France great again. What is new, however, is the participation of Germany in this claim. With Merkel stating that Europe should take its destiny in its own hands, the Machiavellian Moment seems complete. In this sense, 'take back control' seems to work both ways.

What then, can one learn from this change in character? Overall, Van Middelaar tells us, this drama in four acts has taught three main lessons: vital not only to understand what has happened, but also what will happen in the future.

The first one is that in times of crisis, political motives are decisive, as opposed to economical ones. The Euro crisis has shown, among other things, that the Euro is just as much a political project as it is an economic one. In the words of Angela Merkel: 'If the Euro fails, Europe fails'. Faced with the possible exit of Greece from the Eurozone, European unity trumped economic spreadsheets, even when the economic experts agreed that Greece had no place in the common currency. Greece remained part of the Euro. The same goes for Brexit: an economic loss, but mostly a political attack on European unity. As a result, the ranks of the EU27 have remained remarkably closed.

Secondly, history is back in Europe. Harsh reality has come knocking on the European borders, and interest has to be measured against values again. This requires the Union to reflect on its own position: it has, whether it likes it or not, become a geopolitical player. Strategic choices were subsequently necessary in both the war in Ukraine and the refugee deal with Turkey. Saving peace trumped the importance of the technical correctness of international law, restoring control over the influx of people trumped humanitarian standards. Sometimes, taking action creates dirty hands.¹³

Finally, the legal toolbox of the Union is not enough to deal with unforeseen events. The Treaties are not meant to provide room for unexpected developments. The 'politics of regulation' are perfectly fit for predictable, long-term situations. Here, one requires compromise, not action. However, when the common

¹³ Van Middelaar, *supra* n. 1, p. 15-16.

currency fails, or a member leaves, the law does not offer sufficient guidance on how to proceed. In the Euro crisis, the law posed a barrier to politics: the no bail-out prompted the European Stability Mechanism to be set up outside the Treaties. This relates to a larger point of Van Middelaar. If something is illegal, Van Middelaar states, lawyers tend to claim it is impossible.¹⁴

This seems an important overstatement and a simplification of reality. Far from being the mere regulators of an apolitical inner sphere, lawyers are a lot less passive and static in their relation to politics than Van Middelaar presents them in his work. Indeed, in the Euro crisis, the no bail-out clause posed a legal and political problem, yet very few lawyers would therefore choose the option of simply doing nothing at all. Law is not a merely passive concept: in its versatility, it sometimes even opens up new political venues. Greek claims for relief on the basis of European solidarity, or the appeal of France in the aftermaths of terrorist attacks on the same principle were not merely political statements to call for European aid, but expressively reflected articles of the Treaties. In the case of Brexit, for example, law explicitly provides the framework for politics: Article 50 TEU is, if anything, a case of how the law *facilitates* politics and embeds them in a broader cadre. Instead of the clear demarcation Van Middelaar seems to uphold, with a 'political' acting intermediate sphere of the European Council and an 'apolitical' inner sphere of Commission and lawyers, the relation is far more intimate and interactive.

Contrary to the position of Van Middelaar therefore, law often opens the door for politics to step in. It is in these moments that the potential to act is being addressed. Who takes up the gauntlet in these times?

ACTING, AND THE EMANCIPATION OF THE EXECUTIVE

This leads to the most interesting part Van Middelaar's argument. The question *who* acts is one of the more salient ones in the Union. Is it the Commission, the Council, the Parliament or the European Council? Based on his previous work and experience, it comes as no surprise Van Middelaar finds his answers in the intermediate sphere: the European Council holds the power to engage with these unforeseen events. As such, this insight is not per se new. The Commission cannot act outside the space the Treaties grant it: if those occasions arise, it is almost by definition the European Council which should act.

However, and this is of more importance, even if there are situations where the Commission has a legal basis to act, such as the Euro and refugee crises, it is the European Council which takes the initiative.¹⁵ This trend, labelled the 'emancipation of the executive' is in the eyes of Van Middelaar also the

¹⁴ Van Middelaar, *supra* n. 1, p. 42.

¹⁵ Van Middelaar, *supra* n. 1, p. 247.

beginning of a proper visible governing authority: the European Council as prime mover in the Union. But more than an analysis, this is also a value judgement: although the ambition of Van Middelaar is 'simply to make the institutional field better readable', he also firmly believes it is *right* for the European Council to act in politically salient questions.

This has to do with a particular characteristic of the European Council, of which Van Middelaar offers a sharp and valuable analysis. He turns our attention to the notion of 'authority': more than legitimacy, which focuses on terms of input, effectivity and transparency, authority also entails notions of trust and symbolism. Within the Union, this particular lens provides insights into the best-suited executive authority. The European Council embodies the highest *political* authority: here Van Middelaar repeats the claims he has made in his earlier work: the European Council has, with its composition of political heavyweights, a unique position in the European framework. Here is where the tough decisions are taken and broad directions are laid down. Moreover, there is a genuine *political moment*: the arrival of the French President, a Greek prime minister fighting for his survival, the traditional 'family photo' afterwards. The audience knows the participants and is able to see a distinct situation which shows: here are the decisions taken.

In stark contrast to this political 'tour de force' stands the position of the Commission, usually labelled the European executive power. The Commission has an authority of its own, yet this is a distinctly legal authority: based on the treaties, endowed with vast regulatory powers. Fulfilling a role as arbiter is best suited to the Commission in this respect: imposing fines on companies, removing national barriers. Yet, when, faced with unforeseen events, it attempts to lead, things go wrong. Here we find the limits of the authority of the Commission: political authority does not just derive from legal authority.¹⁶ Labelling oneself a 'political commission' does not alter this fundamental problem. The one source of its political authority, the European Parliament, remains weak. Despite innovations like the 'Spitzenkandidaten', the Parliament lacks proper political weight, or the connection with the electorate that national parliamentarians can evoke. A possible solution which emerged in the context of Brexit, the transnational lists, has been shelved again, so it does not look like this situation will change anytime soon.

Van Middelaar finds the key to the weakness of the Commission in the fact that it cannot escape its legal authority: its toolbox is that of the legal regulator. Depoliticising, technicalities, the removal of differences: they work in the internal market, not on burning political issues. This fundamental limit to the power of the Commission can to an extent be circumvented by the power of the Court of

¹⁶Van Middelaar, *supra* n. 1, p. 232.

Justice. This fits neatly with the technical, apolitical approach. A state cuts down a historic forest? The Court is the answer. Yet, if the question turns more political, the situation changes. Is it then still for the Court to decide? What if a state does not comply with an asylum quota? A judgment of the Court might be a solution, yet also entails a dangerous vulnerability. What if the state consequently denies a ruling of the European Court of Justice? Ultimately, the entire idea of the supremacy of EU law might thus come under pressure, something which would arguably not happen if a unanimous course of action had been set out by the European Council.¹⁷ This is not to say the Commission should become – as the French position has been over the years – some form of administration for the European Council. Within the internal market, its toolbox and independence work extremely well, Van Middelaar is swift to assure us. However, when the questions turn into higher politics and laws do not seem enough, the Commission lacks the political authority to take these tough decisions. In the end, the Commission has no voters to which it is accountable if things go wrong.

Additionally, this has implications for the activities the Commission employs in these fields, in particular for the position of European agencies. Thought to be mainly technical and advisory in nature, these bodies actually participate in highly political decisions: from engaging in economic policies of a Member State to the rescuing and housing of refugees. At the same time these kinds of activity far transcend the regulatory habits connected to the internal market. Van Middelaar is highly critical of these solutions: the shadow of administrative hubris hangs over them. Without the proper political backing, or sufficient link to the visible politics of the European Council, these agencies are susceptible to harsh criticism. This is one of the most acute claims of the book: the sentiment voiced by the phrase ‘we are tired of experts’ is not without merit. As acting by the Union in these sensitive issues becomes ever more normal, it is time to face the new reality and provide sufficient political backing and debate.

The limited authority of the Commission is indeed an aspect to take into account, also with an eye on the future: in the light of the ongoing struggle with the adherence to the rule of law, the proposals of the Commission that link EU funding to the safeguarding of rule of law and fundamental values by the member states, are noticeable.¹⁸ Here, the Commission grants itself a central place in deciding whether or not a state is in compliance with these values, and to subsequently take action should it find otherwise. Understandable, but risky nonetheless. A battle between Commission and state is, in such sensitive issues, soon framed as a defiant nation versus unelected bureaucrats. There is no easy solution when it comes to these questions: states are not too keen on addressing

¹⁷ Van Middelaar, *supra* n. 1, p. 233.

¹⁸ European Commission, *Proposal for a regulation* COM(2018)324.

the rule of law of other member states either. Nonetheless, it is wise to take the notion of authority into account: ideally, one would hope the European Council would take a standpoint in this affair, yet this seems, based on the position of both Poland and Hungary, a fruitless option. Until then, the way to address the problems will arguably remain the technical legal route of the Commission, even in this arguably very political context.

IN SEARCH OF OPPOSITION, BUT HOW?

This leaves us with the final point of Van Middelaar. Politics in Europe have led to a new necessity: the Union finds itself in dire need of opposition. Political choices demand alternatives and convincing: opposition in this sense functions as the 'oxygen' of a proper political Union. This aspect has, in the view of Van Middelaar, long been neglected in the institutional fabric of the Union: in the absence of a proper 'government', opposition was rather impossible, unless framed in an all-out rejection of the Union.

This urge for opposition and debate is by no means a new argument,¹⁹ and here Van Middelaar somewhat struggles to convince, or indeed to bring up something new. Moreover, the focus on the European Council, convincing throughout the book, leads to a problem here. First of all, a lot of discontent with the Union lies in precisely the field of the 'politics of regulation'. Technical internal market provisions, free movement, the gap between the immobile and mobile citizen, they all have come under scrutiny the last couple of years, yet are not matters of 'Chefsache'. Secondly, and in a paradoxical way, although the primary democratic legitimacy might reside in this forum, its role in crisis management fundamentally limits proper opposition. Crises demand a degree of overruling: is this 'politics of events' not simply an embellishment of a permanent state of emergency? Additionally, only certain events ultimately become labelled as 'crisis', demanding political attention: unexpected events happen all the time, yet not all of them become crises. In a way, the question of which events turn into crises worthy of the political limelight of the European Council is dependent on the willingness of that very same European Council in the first place. This leaves us with the question whether the 'emancipation of the executive' of Van Middelaar truly leads to a more visible political Europe.

Indeed, one is left with a more fundamental question on whether this most important forum of the EU in political matters, the European Council (or even the Council) can in fact properly accommodate opposition. Consensus is the key

¹⁹ See for example A. Vauchez, *Democratiser l'Europe* (Seuil 2014) or even J. Habermas, *Zur Verfassung Europas. Ein Essay* (Suhrkamp 2011).

in these institutions, as Van Middelaar acknowledges.²⁰ The sketched solutions for opposition, ranging from involvement of domestic parliaments to principled opposition to the consensus-culture (the adventures of Varoufakis) all suffer from a similar problem: they failed in their 'opposition'. Van Middelaar notices all these situations and acknowledges their problems. Answers, however, are not given. Rather, Van Middelaar opts for a bird's-eye view of possibilities: in short engagements with some propositions, ranging from the work of Antoine Vauchez, who urges the installation of a Parliament for the Eurozone to the potential of the European Parliament, Van Middelaar sketches the main ideas, but refrains from taking a stance.²¹

Apart from one point that is. Unrestrained federalism is a route the Union should definitely *not* take. Entirely consistent with his earlier work, Van Middelaar urges Europe to see that the states remain the prime forum on which Europe is and should be founded: national differences are no annoyances, but the essence of the European project. It is time, Van Middelaar states, to be very explicit about this. The appeal of a nationalistic flat-out rejection of the Union rests in place upon the federalists who wish nothing more than to dismantle the European Council. A reasonable claim, yet one might have expected a bit more: merely stating the need for opposition without truly engaging with possible solutions feels somewhat rushed.

However, despite some flaws, such as an overtly static conception of how lawyers treat the possibilities of politics and a tendency to sometimes overstate certain claims (a true geopolitical emancipation of the EU seems still rather far away), Van Middelaar succeeds in providing a refreshing perspective on the development of the European Union. Some of the central claims of the book might not come as a surprise for readers of his earlier work, but the main message is one of preeminent importance and entails an assignment for the future. In a world where history is open once more, the Union will be called upon to act again and again. Yet who acts, and what solutions are taken, will be a matter of politics: in doing so, it will have to give a place to encounter praise, contempt and tough choices, instead of hiding behind technicalities and consensus: only by acting, can the *polis* be truly free. Machiavellianism is often seen as pejorative: Van Middelaar teaches us, with eloquence, that it is liberating as well.



²⁰ And has even defended this situation as beneficial: Van Middelaar, *supra* n. 5, p. 41.

²¹ Van Middelaar, *supra* n. 1, p. 315-343.