

Western Europe

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Europe's Promise: Why the European Way Is the Best Hope in an Insecure Age. BY STEVEN HILL. University of California Press, 2010, 456 pp. \$60.00 (paper, \$24.95).

In this timely and provocative book, Hill, primarily known as an analyst of U.S. state and local reform, argues that the policies of European countries represent best practices with regard to most of the challenges modern democracies face today. By contrast, the United States is dysfunctional. When indirect fees, private costs, and taxes are all included, Americans pay as much as Europeans for public services but end up with much less. Europe's health care, social welfare, environmental policies, labor rights, power projection, and parliamentary governments are consistently more efficient, more just, and less fractious than the United States' more libertarian, militaristic, separation-of-powers alternatives. Hill can be breathlessly wordy, and, like some other Europhiles, he relies excessively on armchair social psychology—but the overall argument rests on solid data. It explains why in most areas, it is Europe's constitutional forms, economic regulations, and social values, not those of the United States, that are the most popular models for new democracies. The oldest one should take note.

Why the Dreyfus Affair Matters. BY LOUIS BEGLEY. Yale University Press, 2009, 272 pp. \$24.00.

L'Affaire Dreyfus was the most widely debated European political event of the

generation before World War I. Alfred Dreyfus, a French artillery captain and a Jew, was falsely accused of spying for Germany, for which he spent over four years in solitary confinement on the remote and tropical Devil's Island. To this end, top French military officers forged documents, suppressed information, perverted the military tribunal system, and abused their subordinates. They were backed by right-wing and clerical anti-Dreyfusards, who mobilized anti-Semitic riots, nationalist propaganda, and conservative obstruction—and even carried out political assassinations. Liberal and socialist Dreyfusards, sparked by Émile Zola's heroic polemic "J'Accuse," supported the innocent man with an ultimately successful press campaign to pressure government officials and civilian courts to intervene. Begley, a lawyer, novelist, and historian, struggles to make it all relevant today. He dwells on anti-Semitism, which is less relevant to Western politics now than then. He invokes the Iraq war and the George W. Bush administration's policies toward human rights, but in an oddly disconnected manner. All this misses the deeper point: the Dreyfus Affair cast the "red-versus-blue" mold of much modern politics, pitting conservative nationalists, soldiers, farmers, and religious interests in a partisan ideological battle against liberal journalists, academics, civilian professionals, urbanites, and cosmopolitans. In thousands of political battles—including those over the Iraq war—Western publics have relived the Dreyfus Affair ever since.

The Narcissism of Minor Differences: How America and Europe Are Alike. BY

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PETER BALDWIN. Oxford University Press, 2009, 336 pp. \$24.95.

Whether considering health care, human rights, the death penalty, or government regulation, Americans often look to the “European social model” as a point of comparison. Depending on one’s partisan predilections, Europe is held up as an example either of just and generous state intervention or of un-American socialism. In this provocative polemic, Baldwin, an economist, claims that the European social model does not exist. In most things, he says, the United States resembles, at least in statistical terms, an average European state. Yet a surprising amount of Baldwin’s evidence actually supports the stereotype: the United States has a free-market system with little labor protection, an adversarial legal system, high murder rates and plenty of guns, an enormous prison population, inequitable and expensive health care, and widespread poverty. The book is a must-read nonetheless—and not just because it is filled with intriguing facts that add nuance to what can often be a black-and-white debate. One overarching conclusion, stressed by Baldwin, is that although the distance between the European left and the American right is extreme, the difference between the average positions of Europe and the United States is minor. [AU: OK?] Another, which he all but ignores, is that the U.S. government is far less equitable than its European counterparts. It is often surprisingly active in social matters, yet its policies benefit primarily the middle and upper classes. In the end, the old question remains: Why is there no socialism in the United States?

Europe as the Would-Be World Power: The EU at Fifty. BY GIANDOMENICO MAJONE. Cambridge University Press, 2009, 266 pp. \$99.00 (paper, \$37.99). The EU has been a remarkable success in recent years, enlarging to 27 members, establishing a single currency, removing border controls, moving toward a unified foreign policy, and now, finally, moving to ratify the Treaty of Lisbon. Majone, among the most knowledgeable and insightful analysts of EU regulatory policy, remains unimpressed. The EU, he believes, has become a self-perpetuating Brussels-centered system of elitist governance that privileges further integration over sound policy and democratic representation. The evidence of inadequacy lies in referendum defeats, slower economic growth, tensions within the Eurozone, and the failure to further liberalize regulation. Majone’s solution is to renounce the rhetoric of “ever-closer union” and encourage issue-specific “coalitions of the willing” among EU members—which might even spark greater regulatory competition. Some will disagree with the diagnosis; others will counter that the EU has already, in practice, renounced ambitious plans in favor of a constitutional settlement akin to what Majone prescribes. No matter what one’s view, however, this provocative, sophisticated, and informed book must be confronted.

The European Court’s Political Power: Selected Essays. BY KAREN ALTER. Oxford University Press, 2009, 280 pp. \$75.00.

Over the last half century, with little or no black-letter mandate, the European Court of Justice has single-handedly as-

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serted the supremacy of European Community law over national law, the right of individuals to invoke European Community law in court, and its own ultimate responsibility to adjudicate that law's meaning. What is surprising is not that the ECJ handed down these decisions but that national courts—and with them the nation-states of Europe—assented to them, even though they were often seen as undermining domestic governments and constitutional courts. Alter is a hard-headed political scientist who recognizes the centrality of traditional factors such as economically self-interested litigants and politicians who support integration, yet she is also a keen legal analyst who acknowledges the ways in which lawyers and judges have forged a limited autonomy for the law. No social scientist has done more to probe the reasons why this evolution has occurred as it has.