
Western Europe

Andrew Moravcsik

Greater: Britain After the Storm

BY PENNY MORDAUNT AND CHRIS LEWIS. Biteback Publishing, 2021, 352 pp.

A former public relations professional, Mordaunt is now a rising cabinet minister in the United Kingdom's Conservative government. She and her co-author call on British politicians to set forth a "clear well-executed national plan" that they promise will quell public polarization and dissatisfaction. Yet the plan they promote is internally contradictory and ducks tough tradeoffs. The government should do more, they say, but since it is hopelessly inefficient, tasks should be offloaded to private charities. Powerful business and financial firms are hollowing out the state, but economic growth requires low taxes and light regulation. Brexit is a triumph for traditional British democracy, and tighter alliances with English-speaking peoples (mostly the Americans) would solve many problems, yet relations with the United Kingdom's largest trading partner, the EU, receive not a word. Such inconsistencies are papered over with enthusiastic praise of what Mordaunt believes to be the eternally courageous, generous, resourceful, and self-effacing virtues of the British people. Despite the book's chipper optimism, a deeper cultural conflict simmers below the surface. When Mordaunt extols the success of

former U.S. President Donald Trump's electoral appeal to middle America, hints at crafting a version of his agenda for the United Kingdom, and speaks of "empowering the silent majority," she offers a glimpse of an ominous possible future for the Conservative Party.

The Newspaper Axis: Six Press Barons Who Enabled Hitler

BY KATHRYN S. OLMSTED. Yale University Press, 2022, 328 pp.

Western democracies ignored the threat from Adolf Hitler and appeased him in the 1930s for many reasons. In this timely book, Olmsted focuses on the role played by the six most powerful media moguls in the United Kingdom and the United States, whose newspapers together reached a majority of their countries' readers every day. All dismissed the fascist threat and called for appeasement, and some unashamedly embraced fascism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia. Moreover, they spread a polemic, sensationalistic, and personalist style of news writing that often crossed the line into outright untruth—a power in which they reveled. In the United Kingdom, Lord Beaverbrook, who boasted that he ran newspapers "purely for the purpose of making propaganda," called for isolation and appeasement. Lord Rothermere, who founded several British tabloids, praised Nazi Germany and fascist Italy as the "best run" countries in Europe, while secretly writing Hitler to encourage him to invade more countries. In the United States, William Randolph Hearst whitewashed Hitler's actions, except when he criticized Nazi Germany for allying "with the yellow peril,"

a racist way of describing Japan. Other leading U.S. publishers accused President Franklin Roosevelt of imperiling the U.S. Constitution and his Jewish advisers of running a foreign-directed conspiracy. This book reminds readers that nationalist press outlets that disseminate fake news, praise foreign autocrats, and practice dog-whistle politics are nothing new.

Nazi Billionaires: The Dark History of Germany's Wealthiest Dynasties

BY DAVID DE JONG. Mariner Books, 2022, 400 pp.

Many German businesspeople supported the rise of Hitler, exploited forced labor during World War II, thrived in a Cold War West Germany that needed their skills and wealth, and passed on that wealth to new generations that prosper in Germany today. These include the owners of firms such as BMW, Daimler (then Daimler-Benz), IG Farben, Siemens, and ThyssenKrupp (formerly Krupp). De Jong, a journalist who specializes in such topics, provides a readable overview of this trajectory. Importantly, he underlines the decisive facilitating role that business interests often play in bringing populist authoritarians to power. Yet he seems unconcerned with this. Instead, he frames the book as a sensational and original investigation that shows that the Germans have not fully reckoned with their past. Nothing could be further from the truth. For three-quarters of a century, Germans have been debating the abiding prominence of private businesses that thrived under the Nazis and persisted in postwar Germany. These very compa-

nies have sponsored independent academic histories of their past. German high schools and universities teach this history routinely. Older generations of owners have been replaced by younger generations whose members support modern Germany's relatively moderate, even pacific, foreign policy. If only the elites of other countries had so fully internalized the grim lessons of their history.

The Normans: Power, Conquest, and Culture in 11th-Century Europe

BY JUDITH A. GREEN. Yale University Press, 2022, 368 pp.

One thousand years ago, the Normans enjoyed a brief moment of ascendancy. In that time, they emerged from their duchy in northern France to lead a remarkably successful crusade to the Holy Land, establish a kingdom in Sicily and southern Italy that left some of the great religious monuments of the era, and, of course, conquer the British Isles. Legends abound of their exploits, which has given rise to a historical reputation of them as a master race of uniquely skilled warriors descended from the Vikings and favored by God. This book argues that they were, instead, lucky opportunists who took advantage of transient geopolitical power vacuums. The Roman Catholic Church was on the rise, military technology was changing, monarchs and bureaucrats were forging modern state administrations, and nobles were reviving large-scale architectural projects. It was a moment when a small and ruthless band of well-commanded fighters with siege technology and powerful ecclesiastical connections

could make a mark—and the Normans were at the right place at the right time to benefit. Yet their triumph would be short-lived: within a century, larger European states and empires would copy their innovations and reconquer most of their lands.

Trading With the Enemy: Britain, France, and the 18th-Century Quest for a Peaceful World Order

BY JOHN SHOVLIN. Yale University Press, 2021, 416 pp.

For generations, scholars have portrayed seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe as dominated by protectionism and warfare driven by the mercantilist policies of avaricious monarchs competing for global hegemony. Shovlin, a historian, seeks to turn this conventional wisdom on its head—at least as regards France and Great Britain. He acknowledges the carnage of the War of the Spanish Succession, the War of the Polish Succession, the Seven Years' War, the American Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, and other conflicts. Yet he sees this period as also giving rise to global capitalism and the first flush of an alternative school of thought about global economic competition. He looks to figures such as the Scottish philosopher David Hume, the French philosophes and physiocrats, officials working for the British and French East India Companies, political economists such as Adam Smith, and some farsighted merchants and diplomats. Underlying their thinking lay trends that would eventually become irresistible, including the reform of domestic public finance, the growth of global capital markets, and the Industrial Revolution. The British

and French states began to adopt free trade and capital movements for self-interested reasons—setting the stage for the well-known transformations of the nineteenth century.

Western Hemisphere

Richard Feinberg

"Our Hemisphere"? The United States in Latin America, From 1776 to the Twenty-first Century

BY BRITTA H. CRANDALL AND RUSSELL C. CRANDALL. Yale University Press, 2021, 504 pp.

Crandall and Crandall briskly sketch 42 episodes of U.S. policy toward Latin America, ranging from the diverse reactions to the Haitian Revolution and the uprisings in South America led by Simón Bolívar in the early nineteenth century to contemporary efforts to bolster the region's democratic reformers. The authors assiduously refuse to impose a formal theoretical framework or to accept simple explanations for U.S. actions. Rather, they find that a complex mixture of altruism, realpolitik, and the spillover of domestic politics lay behind Washington's conduct, which was also shaped by the differing agendas and ambitions of individual presidents and diplomats. Far from being an all-powerful hegemon, the United States repeatedly fell well short of its goals. Some apparently successful U.S. interventions (such as in Guatemala in 1954) backfired over time, but the authors do find enduring success