
Founders' Son: A Life of Abraham Lincoln
BY RICHARD BROOKHISER. Basic
Books, 2014, 376 pp. \$27.99.

When Abraham Lincoln was born, in 1809, Thomas Jefferson was still president and the revolutionary generation of 1776 was still firmly in command of the country. As Lincoln reached maturity, the founding generation slowly died off, and American political culture had to adjust to its absence. As Lincoln built his career and developed his political philosophy, the nature of the founders' legacy remained a contentious issue. In this elegantly written book, Brookhiser reveals Lincoln's role in that debate and offers new insights into Lincoln's inner life and political thinking. *Founders' Son* reminds readers that the Civil War was a struggle over the meaning of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution; Southern secessionists based their positions on a particular interpretation of what the founders meant to say in those documents. It fell to Lincoln, more than to anyone else, to combat those ideas. Brookhiser's argument that Lincoln's reading of the Declaration of Independence serves as the foundation of contemporary American political ideology is hardly original, but the biographical and cultural context in which Brookhiser sets the observation makes it feel fresh.

The American Vice Presidency: From Irrelevance to Power
BY JULES WITCOVER. Smithsonian
Books, 2014, 592 pp. \$34.95.

The transformation of the vice-presidency in the last generation represents the most striking contemporary innovation in

U.S. governance. The vice president of the United States has become a kind of assistant president, often enjoying greater influence than any member of the executive branch save the president. Readers hoping that this book (by one of the country's most distinguished journalists and political commentators) will explain this transformation will be disappointed. Instead, Witcover has produced a series of capsule biographies of each person who has held the office, from John Adams to Joe Biden. The short biographies lack the depth of reflection and intensity of analysis that might have turned the book into something more than a superficial chronicle. One hopes that another writer will step forward to show how the rise of the modern vice-presidency—which began, as Witcover rightly notes, with Walter Mondale—illustrates the changing nature of executive power in the contemporary United States.

Western Europe

Andrew Moravcsik

*Unhappy Union: How the Euro Crisis—
and Europe—Can Be Fixed*
BY JOHN PEET AND ANTON
LA GUARDIA. PublicAffairs, 2014,
240 pp. \$23.99.

This book represents one of the best overviews of the euro's current travails and future prospects. It reflects the virtues of *The Economist*, where both authors work: the analysis is well informed, concise, sober, and backed by pertinent data. It also

shares the vices of magazine writing, notably an episodic approach to presentation and an overemphasis on the current conventional wisdom. Peet and La Guardia argue that although establishing the euro was a mistake based on over-optimistic beliefs about future economic convergence and institutional development, muddling through remains the only viable alternative. Yet when it comes to how, exactly, to do that, they seem as perplexed as today's European leaders.

The Europe Dilemma: Britain and the Drama of EU Integration

BY ROGER LIDDLE. I.B. Tauris, 2014, 256 pp. \$95.00 (paper, \$35.00).

The Trouble With Europe: Why the EU Isn't Working—How It Can Be

Reformed—What Could Take Its Place
BY ROGER BOOTLE. Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2014, 224 pp. \$29.95.

Pity British politicians, who must contend with absurdly polarized domestic opinion when it comes to the euro and the EU. Both these books come plastered with plaudits from British pundits and professors, yet they contain starkly opposing policy prescriptions. What they share is an extremism that would condemn either approach to failure if it were ever put into practice.

Liddle harbors genuine pro-European convictions. He believes, even now, that British Prime Minister Tony Blair, whom Liddle served as a special adviser on Europe, should have brought the United Kingdom into the eurozone, not only for pragmatic economic purposes but also to advance broader political and ideological goals. This fascinating book traces

Liddle's growing disillusionment as he slowly recognized that his political master, always focused on the next election, would never commit to the euro. Undaunted, Liddle devotes his final chapter to describing a "progressive" alternative to the status quo. He calls for the United Kingdom to adopt the euro and for Brussels to pursue a reflationary (and, hence, anti-German) monetary policy in the eurozone, increase stimulus spending, and craft a pan-EU foreign policy.

Bootle is a capital-market investor who advises the British Conservative Party. He believes that the EU is an illegitimate, overregulating, declining failure, and he advocates British withdrawal. Yet after pages of invective, the economic case for his position turns out to be surprisingly weak. Bootle presents no hard data on the likely impact of withdrawal on foreign direct investment, employment levels, or the financial sector in the United Kingdom. Indeed, he remains openly agnostic, and in some cases is even skeptical, about whether the country would be better off without the EU. Faced with such unsatisfying alternatives, no wonder British politicians cannot make up their minds.

Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I

BY ALEXANDER WATSON. Basic Books, 2014, 832 pp. \$35.00.

The centennial of World War I has renewed public interest in the conflict's legacy. Most of the attention has been focused on its causes and on participants' memories of life in the trenches. Yet that kind of remembrance overlooks the question that is perhaps most puzzling to contemporary sensibilities: If, as most

analysts believe, this horrific war was unintended, then why did it last so long? What explains the four years of remarkably persistent commitment to the war effort by all parties—but particularly by Germany, which was surrounded by enemies and where between 80 and 90 percent of adult males under 50 served in the military? Watson's original and often riveting book traces the subtle interplay of propaganda, hardship, and martial enthusiasm that strengthened the resolve of publics in Central Europe. It goes on to trace the ruthless economic exploitation of eastern Europe by Austria and Germany and the suffering caused by the equally brutal economic blockade imposed by the war's eventual winners on its eventual losers, both of which help explain why public support for the war waned. Yet the destructive legacy of this experience also illuminates the socially, politically, and economically polarized politics of the interwar period, which led to the rise of extremism and the outbreak of World War II.

The Greenest Nation? A New History of German Environmentalism

BY FRANK UEKÖTTER. MIT Press, 2014, 232 pp. \$28.00.

Today, Germany is the “greenest” of the world's major economies, far ahead of the United States when it comes to environmental policy. Uekötter, who belongs to a new generation of environmental historians, explores why Germany—a crowded nation of industrial exporters—has produced one of the world's most advanced approaches to environmental protection. The conventional view holds that Germans have been rich for long

enough to develop (and afford) “postmaterialist” values and had, for a time, a strong and chic Green Party that surfed a global wave of environmentalism. Some of Uekötter's evidence points in that direction. But his account demonstrates that even as the German Green Party faded, Germany continued to implement and maintain important environmental policies through fiscal and regulatory means, suggesting that the party and its historical moment has had a lasting impact on mainstream German politics.

Western Hemisphere

Richard Feinberg

Back Channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations Between Washington and Havana

BY WILLIAM M. LEOGRANDE AND PETER KORNBLUH. University of North Carolina Press, 2014, 544 pp. \$35.00.

Economic Normalization With Cuba: A Roadmap for U.S. Policymakers

BY GARY CLYDE HUFBAUER AND BARBARA KOTSCHWAR. Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2014, 136 pp. \$23.95.

LeoGrande and Kornbluh's exhaustive and masterful diplomatic history will stand as the most authoritative account of U.S.-Cuban diplomatic relations during the five decades of Cuban President Fidel Castro's rule—at least until scholars gain better access to Cuban archives and officials. Skillfully interpreting reams of declassified memorandums,