

United States faces from China and Russia. As his own analysis shows, the more pressing threat from both countries comes from their efforts to exploit fractures in the U.S. political system and the polarization of American society. His solutions include ranked-choice voting to strengthen candidates who appeal to the political center and independent commissions to put a stop to extreme gerrymandering.

Tomasky notes that most adults living in the United States today were born between 1945 and 1980, a period he terms “the Age of Consensus”—a brief interregnum in 200 years of otherwise intense partisan division. As a result, they are taken aback by today’s polarization even though it represents a return to the historical norm. The difference, however, is that in earlier eras, the two main parties were “divided within themselves as much as with each other.” Those broad, unstable coalitions had to negotiate positions internally. Today, a “near-total absence of intraparty polarization” has allowed the country to devolve into political tribalism. Tomasky convincingly describes how this happened but not why; nor can he explain why members of Congress compete so fiercely to dedicate their lives to an institution that gets almost nothing done. Tomasky’s list of fixes is almost identical to Diamond’s, but he concedes that many of those measures will take a very long time, or will make relatively little difference, or are merely “pies in the sky.”

The British Are Coming: The War for America, Lexington to Princeton, 1775–1777
BY RICK ATKINSON. Henry Holt, 2019, 800 pp.

It is hard to believe that the author of this sparkling, minutely detailed history

has not spent his entire career studying the American Revolutionary War. Yet Atkinson is best known as the author of acclaimed volumes on World War II. Like those books, his new one is mostly a military history, and less an account of the broader revolution. Still, Atkinson displays a remarkable ability to bring leaders and unnamed soldiers alike into three-dimensional clarity. Wonderful maps enrich the narrative and capture the reader’s imagination, distinguishing taverns from churches and rail fences from stone walls. Although the narrative at times wallows in the sheer physical misery of fighting and dying in a brutal war, few who read the prologue will want to put the book down until they’ve finished the whole thing.

Western Europe

Andrew Moravcsik

The Unsettling of Europe: How Migration Reshaped a Continent
BY PETER GATRELL. Basic Books, 2019, 576 pp.

This important book puts today’s levels of migration to Europe in historical perspective. Far from being unprecedented, large population movements have been the norm since World War II, after which over 12 million people fled Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. From the 1950s on, Eastern Europeans steadily left the Soviet bloc. In the 1960s, decolonization led millions to head for metropolises in the West, and guest workers came northward to Germany from countries

such as Turkey (although the great majority of these *Gastarbeiter* returned home). The end of the century saw further displacement caused by wars in the former Yugoslavia and waves of economic immigration. The author, a demographic historian, concludes with a dose of idealism: Europe should embrace immigration and diversity, which have made the continent what it is. Yet this seems to ignore political reality. Recent migration rates are the highest Europe has seen since the postwar movement of Germans. The percentage of foreign-born people in France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and the United Kingdom is substantially higher than it was decades ago. In a period of low economic growth, European societies are grappling with tricky questions of cultural integration and difference. This book does surprisingly little to illuminate how many governments today face the political pressure to restrict immigration.

Eric Hobsbawm: A Life in History
BY RICHARD J. EVANS. Oxford University Press, 2019, 800 pp.

This biography traces the life of Eric Hobsbawm, one of the greatest historians of the twentieth century and an unrepentant communist. His story, with all its contradictions, parallels that of many radical leftist intellectuals in Europe during the middle of the century. A lower-class Jewish orphan who grew up in Vienna and Berlin during the 1930s, Hobsbawm took to the streets to fight fascists and reasonably concluded that strict solidarity with a radical party was the only way to make political change. He never renounced communism, as so many other leftists ultimately did. But he did come to

place greater value on intellectual diversity, tolerant leadership, and grassroots organization within left-wing politics. Hobsbawm's writings helped revolutionize the historical profession. He wrote omnivorously, on banditry, Luddism, local anarchism, rural uprisings, agricultural collectives, and other forms of working-class and peasant resistance to the march of industrialization. In later life, as a respected university professor and BBC lecturer, he penned a series of revisionist Marxist histories of Europe's industrialization, revolutions, and empires that became bestsellers—not least in the developing world, which was then undergoing similar upheavals.

Protest and Power: The Battle for the Labour Party

BY DAVID KOGAN. Bloomsbury, 2019, 448 pp.

Two decades after the triumph of “New Labour” under Tony Blair, why is the British Labour Party run by a left-wing radical who favors nationalization, coddles autocrats, flirts with anti-Semitism, and lacks either the will or the ability to oppose Brexit outright? Based on detailed interviews and crammed with juicy anecdotes, this book is in many ways the definitive chronicle of Jeremy Corbyn's unlikely march from backbench obscurity to party leadership. Like many accounts by insider journalists, however, its underlying explanation rests almost entirely on personalities, accidents, errors, and dumb luck. From this perspective, the reemergence of the Labour left resulted from a backlash against Blair's involvement in the Iraq war, changes that “democratized” Labour party rules and boosted radicals over moderates, and New Labour's

mismanaged privatization policies. Kogan neglects to trace the larger forces—including globalization, inequality, deindustrialization, and nationalism—that have undermined the political order in every Western democracy, not just in the United Kingdom.

The Silk Road Trap: How China's Trade Ambitions Challenge Europe

BY JONATHAN HOLSLAG. Polity, 2019, 232 pp.

Holslag claims that China poses a mortal economic threat to Europe and the West. The topic is timely, since the EU is currently considering following the United States in tightening controls on Chinese trade and investment. Of course, this book is hardly the first to list Beijing's sins: bilateral trade surpluses, unfair treatment of foreign investors and firms, and forced technology transfers. Nor does it contain original data or rigorous analysis. For example, nowhere does Holslag explain why bilateral deficits and debt should matter to a region that runs a net external surplus or specify exactly what political threats a competitive China poses to Europe. The author argues, however, that what is needed is less theory and more policy analysis: in the introduction, he suggests that European countries need to band together and act decisively in order to maximize their economic growth. It is surprising, therefore, that the conclusion proposes no specific policies except, in just one sentence, the adoption of stronger but fewer European standards.

Hitler: A Global Biography

BY BRENDAN SIMMS. Basic Books, 2019, 704 pp.

Too many books are written about Hitler. Many are amateur efforts, and even those

that aren't rarely add anything new. Yet this vivid and painstakingly researched volume revises fundamentally how historians ought to view the geopolitical motivations of the Nazi leader. Simms argues that Hitler did not see the Soviet Union as the primary obstacle to his expansionist ambitions. From the start, his real enemies were the United Kingdom and the United States, the victors of World War I, the conflict that had decisively shaped his worldview. These countries were (from Hitler's perspective) racially pure "Anglo-Saxon" superpowers that possessed significant air and naval power, lorded over colonies, and molded the "plutocratic" system of international finance. Hitler's supposedly controversial strategic choices—such as diverting military resources to the Balkans, declaring an apparently needless war on the United States, launching a brutal attack on the Soviet Union, and even attempting to exterminate the Jews—were far more rational than most critics allow, given his often idiosyncratic assumptions. All these actions were part of a larger mobilization of resources and popular support for an inevitable war of attrition against the Anglo-Saxons. Some will dispute this thesis. Nevertheless, the book is engaging and essential reading for anyone interested in Hitler's policymaking.

The Future of British Foreign Policy: Security and Diplomacy in a World After Brexit

BY CHRISTOPHER HILL. Polity, 2019, 256 pp.

This book by a respected Cambridge professor seeks to predict how Brexit will affect the United Kingdom's diplomacy and geopolitical standing. A classic academic policy book, it proceeds at a

leisurely pace. It takes a hundred pages to reach the central question: Will Brexit actually make any difference to British foreign policy? Or can London and its partners simply replicate their current levels of cooperation by other, perhaps more informal means? Here, Hill seems unsure. On the one hand, he persuasively dismisses as nonsense the rhetoric of Brexiteers about renewing special relationships with English-speaking peoples and forging bilateral agreements with China, India, Russia, and others. On the other hand, he recognizes that EU foreign policy is still decentralized, with member states allowed to set their own agendas, and that the United Kingdom has always played a “semi-detached” role in the making of EU foreign policy. How much will actually change? This fine overview concludes with more questions than answers.

Western Hemisphere

Richard Feinberg

Silver, Sword, and Stone: Three Crucibles in the Latin American Story

BY MARIE ARANA. Simon & Schuster, 2019, 496 pp.

Fifth Sun: A New History of the Aztecs

BY CAMILLA TOWNSEND. Oxford University Press, 2019, 336 pp.

In trying to weave a coherent narrative of centuries of Latin American history, Arana too often relies on a handful of thin sources and simplifies complicated events. In her telling, venal, self-interested elites (“silver”), violent

rulers and rebels (“sword”), and cynical, compromised religious institutions (“stone”) have perennially plagued the region. The Aztecs, the Incas, and the Spanish were all bloody-minded peoples tamed only by brutal despots; home-grown revolutionaries inevitably became “tinpot dictators, insatiable caesars.”

Arana’s bleak vision sees no enduring success stories, no emerging middle-class democracies, no meaningful social progress. Latin America is defined only by “the essential exploitation at its core, the racial divisions, the extreme poverty . . . the corrosive culture of corruption.” By perpetuating such profoundly negative (and poorly substantiated) stereotypes, Arana inadvertently provides ammunition for U.S. President Donald Trump’s disparaging comments about the region.

In sharp contrast to Arana, who uses lurid, florid prose, Townsend employs the meticulous language of a scholar who has immersed herself in primary texts.

Townsend mined the accounts written in the Aztec language, Nahuatl, by indigenous historians in the decades immediately following the Spanish conquest. These texts present an invaluable counterpoint to the self-serving narratives of the Spanish conquistadors and their priests. Townsend rejects the portrayal of the Aztecs as driven by blood lust, superstition, and fatalism. Instead, she shows that the Aztec emperor Montezuma II behaved rationally, drawing on his extensive intelligence-gathering system, carefully weighing his policy options, and tending to the responsibilities of government. The Spanish forces’ superior weaponry and access to reinforcements from Spain—coupled with the devastation wreaked by smallpox—eventually led to the defeat of