

West European Politics,
Vol. 29, No. 3, 589–618, May 2006

Routledge
 Taylor & Francis Group

Book Reviews

Restructuring Europe: Centre Formation, System Building, and Political Structuring between the Nation State and the European Union

Stefano Bartolini

Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, 442pp, £45, ISBN 0-19-928643-4 (hbk)

From the quotation from Goethe's *Faust* on the front page to the absent index at the end, and through more than 400 pages that separate the two, Stefano Bartolini has written an unabashedly and brilliantly old-fashioned book. It is not a work of empirical theory testing; indeed, it is hardly concerned with explanation or causality at all. Rather it lies in that venerable tradition of European social theorising where the goal is an interpretation of a phenomenon via descriptive conceptualisation. The question Bartolini poses is: 'What is the EU?' And his answer is given in the form of 'holistic' macro-concepts – a 'conceptual combination' – that aim to capture the essence of the EU and, in particular, its relationship to the ongoing process of European state formation.

Bartolini summarises his conclusions – that is, his reconceptualisation of the relationship between the EU and its member states – in three theses. First, EU 'state-formation' is characterised 'by limited administrative capacities, by strong regulatory powers in selected fields, by very weak fiscal capacities, and by strong judicial capacities'. Second, the scope and depth of EU legislation are 'out of balance with its weak ... cultural integration, social sharing institutions, and participation rights'. Third, democratising the EU without deepening regional cleavages, opposition, and cultural discourse can lead to 'façade electioneering ... or dangerous experiments'. In sum, the EU has an uneven mix of federal and confederal elements, suffers from a 'democratic deficit', and coexists with civil society and intermediating institutions so weak as to render classic democratic politics problematic.

No student of current debates in EU studies – certainly no one who has dipped into the work of Giandomenico Majone, Fritz Scharpf, Mark Pollack, Joseph Weiler, Alan Milward, or Simon Hix, to name a few – will find any of this novel. The original contribution is meant to lie instead in the analysis itself. Bartolini's method, as it were, is that of an extended reflection on Europe based on classic macro-theoretical works in comparative politics, notably those of Stein Rokkan, Albert Hirschman, Karl Polanyi and, ultimately, Max Weber. These writers analysed the five-century process of national differentiation in Europe, which has forged, successively, distinctive states, markets, nations, democracies and welfare systems. Europeanisation, Bartolini argues, is the next stage, one that reverses the process in a direction 'towards legal, economic and cultural territorial de-differentiation'. Nonetheless, the older experience provides a useful analytical framework, as well as a necessary historical background, to understand the new. From this starting point, Bartolini seeks to capture the distinctiveness of the EU by offering his own macro-historical conceptualisation, focusing above all on Hirschman's triangular tension between 'exit', 'voice' and 'loyalty'. Bartolini's basic point is that the opportunity for 'exit' undermines existing institutions of 'voice' and 'loyalty' without

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54

replacing them at another level. This insight is backed with a plethora of new concepts, citations to some intriguing secondary literature, and a strikingly diverse collection of diagrams.

Much that Bartolini says along the way is convincing and, like his basic theses, consistent with existing research. One can only applaud his efforts to resist static analysis, to link the macro with the micro, and to break down the distinction between domestic and international politics. His summary of research on EU mass politics rightly stresses that cleavages on EU issues crosscut existing alignments, yet remain too weak to trigger a realignment. His description of the expansion of EU competences, some by intent, some by incremental accretion, is unobjectionable. His treatment of the EU as a 'checks and balances' polity rather than a directly democratic one is appropriate. The potentially problematic nature of a monetary union without a fiscal union, like the lack of coercive capabilities, is duly noted. The importance of European law and judges receives deserved emphasis. Bartolini is, to be sure, a bit more alarmist about the potential for a market-driven 'race to the bottom' than more empirically grounded scholars like Scharpf, but this is surely a process worthy of close monitoring.

All this is smart, sophisticated, and sensible. Yet one is left with the sense that this grand effort, despite its holistic conceptual ambition, adds up to less than the sum of its parts. Bartolini ultimately fails to exploit Hirschman's celebrated categories to capture and simplify the daunting complex, *sui generis* institutions of multi-level governance in Europe. He never demonstrates precisely how and to what extent the current malaise in European politics can be considered a function of European integration. While this is widely believed to be the case, it remains puzzling why an institution that clearly remains secondary to the governments of advanced industrial democracies, which are themselves faced with legitimacy concerns whether they are EU members or not, should be the cause of all this. In the end, Bartolini is more suggestive than conclusive. And thus we remain, upon reaching the final pages of this impressive scholarly effort, as baffled as ever by the deepest question Europeans face today, namely whether this extraordinary post-modern polity – the only fundamentally new macro-political form to emerge and prosper in nearly a century – can be restructured into a more legitimate, popular and effective system of governance.

*Andrew Moravcsik
Princeton University*

Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945

Mark N. Franklin

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 294 pp., £45, ISBN 0-521-83364-7 (hbk), £16.99, ISBN 0-521-54147-6 (pbk)

This book represents a major advance in the study of voter turnout. It will remain a major point of reference for many forthcoming studies on this topic. The aim of the book is to explain differences in turnout between countries and over time. The book thereby tackles the as yet unresolved paradox that occurs when comparing explanations of individual-level participation and aggregate-level turnout variation. Indicators that explain individual participation well, such as education, income or age, do not make much sense when assessed at the level of aggregated turnout variation over time. While overall levels of education and income have gone up over time, and in many western democracies the population is getting older and older, turnout is declining instead of increasing as would be expected from individual-level studies.