

staffers who knew him best; as Swaim tells it, the governor was self-absorbed to the point of dementia and by turns abusive and dismissive. As a neophyte speechwriter, Swaim struggled to capture and reproduce the vapid grandiosity and unctuous piety of his employer's natural style. But that was what the public seemed to want, and this memoir is less an account of a politician's fall than an inquest into mass democracy. American politicians, Swaim suggests, are expected to gush forth industrial quantities of platitudinous, staff-written "language": letters to constituents, op-eds, speeches at forgettable functions for small-bore interest groups, and so on. What kind of society, Swaim wants readers to ask, insists on these debased effusions of hollow words? His speechwriting days may be over, but Swaim seems to have found his true voice.

---

*America in Retreat: The New Isolationism and the Coming Global Disorder*

BY BRET STEPHENS. Sentinel, 2014, 288 pp.

The Obama administration took office believing that its predecessor had squandered U.S. power and prestige through belligerent unilateralism and misguided interventions. Obama devoted himself to pulling back and trying to rebuild bridges. Critics argue that the reaction has been overdone and has caused more problems than it has solved. Stephens is one of the administration's most intelligent and articulate critics, and his book gives its target no quarter. He makes a powerful case for the vices of isolationism and the virtues of a vigorous American

global role, arguing that retreat can turn into rout and that disaster can follow on its heels. The dismal experience of Iraq after the withdrawal of U.S. forces is a microcosm of what he fears could happen around the world more generally, and he rails against the increasing number of voices on both sides of the aisle that seem not to realize the danger or not to care. With Russian aggression in Ukraine, Chinese bellicosity in the East China and South China Seas, and the Middle East in turmoil, he has a point. Defenders of the administration will respond that it fully understands that point and that Stephens exaggerates the extent of the recent retreat and the direness of the global situation.

GIDEON ROSE

---

## Western Europe

---

*Andrew Moravcsik*

---

*Germany, Russia, and the Rise of Geo-Economics*

BY STEPHEN F. SZABO. Bloomsbury, 2014, 200 pp.

*The Paradox of German Power*

BY HANS KUNDNANI. Oxford University Press, 2015, 160 pp.

**G**ermany—which boasts a trade surplus larger even than China's, plays a preeminent role in the EU, and enjoys a reputation for sound domestic governance—might be today's most underrated global power. Its power rests not on military might but on what

Szabo describes as “geo-economic” clout, derived from the practice of a kind of commercial realpolitik that privileges the country’s economic well-being above all other interests. Especially important is the influence of big export and foreign investment firms on German policies. Szabo focuses in particular on the complex, clandestine, and sordid drama of recent German-Russian relations. The actors include giants such as the German engineering firm Siemens, which has long faced accusations of corruption and bribery (and has admitted some wrongdoing), and Gazprom, the state-controlled Russian energy conglomerate, which in 2005 hired former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder to chair the board of an affiliate it had formed to build a major Russia–Germany gas pipeline. Szabo’s core thesis—that big business runs the show in Berlin—has been somewhat overtaken by events, as German firms have helped shoulder the large costs of sanctions against Russia and might do the same in the wake of a eurozone-backed restructuring of Greek debt. Yet this analysis remains an original and indispensable corrective to the overly political-military focus of most writing on Europe, Russia, and global politics.

In his wide-ranging book, Kundnani examines the exercise of German geo-economic power in Europe. He reviews the well-known history of “the German question”—the long-running debate about Germany’s proper role in Europe. He goes all the way back to the story of the country’s initial unification in 1871 and examines its postwar policies in order to show that present-day Germany is more straightforwardly self-interested

than is commonly argued. Until recently, Germany exploited a combination of successful labor reforms, rising global demand, and a privileged position in the eurozone to generate enormous and, for others, destabilizing trade surpluses. A desire to defend this advantage explains in large part Berlin’s hard line during the euro crisis. Germany, Kundnani argues, increasingly exercises a “semi-hegemonic” position, at least within Europe, due to its growing influence and tough diplomacy.

---

*The Full Catastrophe: Travels Among the New Greek Ruins*

BY JAMES ANGELOS. Crown, 2015, 304 pp.

*Modern Greece: What Everyone Needs to Know*

BY STATHIS N. KALYVAS. Oxford University Press, 2015, 264 pp.

Since the birth of modern Greece 200 years ago, the Greeks have tried—and inevitably failed—to live up to the legacy of their illustrious ancient forebears. Two recent books examine the current state of the country. The Greek American journalist Angelos offers a fairly conventional portrait of dysfunctional Greece, served with an extra-large dollop of local color. He concerns himself mostly with exceptional individuals on the edges of society: asylum seekers from Africa and Asia and the right-wing extremists who hate them, people who file fraudulent disability benefit claims, Greeks old enough to remember the Nazi occupation of their country, and a group of scheming civil servants

who murdered their boss. This all makes for fun reading, but Angelos doesn't do enough to show how the experiences of these groups are representative of everyday Greek life or how they will shape the country's future.

Kalyvas, one of the leading comparative political scientists of his generation, takes a more thoughtful and measured approach. His insightful introduction to Greece's modern political history argues, somewhat surprisingly, that the country has often been ambitious and successful. The Greeks established the first independent state in Ottoman Europe, imposed egalitarian land reforms, fought off communism, generated substantial economic growth, and now maintain a stable, inclusive, and liberal democracy. This record compares quite favorably with that of the rest of the Balkans (which share Greece's geography and history of foreign occupation), much of Latin America (which shares Greece's autarkic interwar policies), and southern Italy (which, like Greece, suffers from tax evasion, corruption, and clientelism). Yet precisely because the goals have been so ambitious, Greece's road to modernity has been paved with intermittent disasters that have drawn in the great powers. Each half-successful modernization effort has eventually triggered an economic boom and bust; the current economic crisis is Greece's seventh in modern times. Kalyvas' slim volume puts this story into perspective with remarkable clarity and brevity. If you read one general introduction to Greek politics, this should be it.

**Not all readers  
are leaders,  
but all leaders  
are readers.**

- Harry S. Truman

**SIGN UP for the  
Foreign Affairs  
Books & Reviews  
newsletter**



ForeignAffairs.com/newsletters

---

*Out of Ashes: A New History of Europe in the Twentieth Century*

BY KONRAD H. JARAUSCH. Princeton University Press, 2015, 880 pp.

*Rethinking the European Union*

BY NATHANIEL COPSEY. Palgrave, 2015, 272 pp.

As twentieth-century Europe recedes into the past, books are appearing that seek to make sense of it. Jarausch, a distinguished historian of Germany, views the period through the lens of the continent's experience of modernization: a rise in economic productivity of unprecedented speed and the consequent effects on social structure, cultural discourse, and political ideas. Jarausch focuses mostly on the last of those categories, interpreting the century as the battleground for a grand conflict among three ideologies that sought to shape European political action: communism, fascism, and (more or less social) democratic capitalism. It's a story of war, revolution, and, in its final chapters, peaceful integration. This approach is insightful, although readers will learn little about how Europeans thought, felt, expressed themselves, or lived their daily lives. A larger problem lies in the book's relatively weak conclusion, which inadvertently shows how difficult it is for an approach like Jarausch's to come to grips with twenty-first-century Europe, which has so far experienced hardly any war or revolution and has seen the momentum toward integration that defined the final decades of the last century grind to a halt.

Observing that trend, Copsey, a British political scientist, questions the idea that building an "ever-closer union" is still Europe's aim and notes that the

EU now tends to limit itself to a relatively narrow set of issues rather than act as a broad-based, genuinely representative political forum. One consequence is that Europeans increasingly voice concerns about the legitimacy of various EU actions but lack the means to address them. The author's focus on the euro perhaps blinds him to the EU's other achievements, and he cannot resist making an idealistic appeal for the union to take on new issues. But otherwise, this is an uncommonly sensible book.

---

## Western Hemisphere

---

*Richard Feinberg*

---

*Listen, Yankee! Why Cuba Matters*

BY TOM HAYDEN. Seven Stories Press, 2015, 288 pp.

*Haydée Santamaría, Cuban*

*Revolutionary: She Led by Transgression*  
BY MARGARET RANDALL. Duke University Press, 2015, 248 pp.

*Raúl Castro and Cuba: A Military Story*

BY HAL KLEPAK. Palgrave, 2012, 132 pp.

**I**n his new book, Hayden reflects on a lifetime of political struggles for social justice and more participatory forms of democracy. *Listen, Yankee!* features conversations between Hayden, a lifelong American political activist and co-founder of Students for a Democratic Society (a progressive group active in the 1960s), and Ricardo Alarcón, a longtime confidant of former Cuban President Fidel Castro. Despite the book's title,