

Recent Books

elite individuals and elite institutions in recent years, the debate over meritocracy will likely become more intense.

Time to Start Thinking: America in the Age of Descent. BY EDWARD LUCE. Atlantic Monthly Press, 2012, 320 pp. \$26.00.

In the debate over whether the United States is in decline and, if it is, what should be done about it, Luce takes a strong view. American decline is well under way, he argues, and the odds for a reversal of fortune are perhaps lower than Americans would like. On the one hand, Luce sees an inexorably rising China, which even according to conservative projections may have a GDP that is 25 percent bigger than that of the United States by 2030. On the other, Luce sees a United States that cannot reform. Tea Party fervor ensures that the GOP will be strong enough and conservative enough to block needed change. President Barack Obama, in Luce's view, lacks the political drive and skills to push the GOP back. Most fundamentally, Luce fears that the United States no longer knows how to promote the prosperity of the American middle class. In this well-reported and extensively researched book, Luce puts his finger on many of the country's most serious problems and explores the gaping disconnect between elite optimism and popular bewilderment, anger, and despair.

Western Europe

ANDREW MORAVCSIK

Walther Rathenau: The Life of Weimar's Fallen Statesman. BY SHULAMIT VOLKOV. Yale University Press, 2011, 256 pp. \$25.00.

During the first decades of the twentieth

century, Walther Rathenau headed one of Germany's largest corporations, penned thoughtful works of social philosophy, and served briefly as the Weimar Republic's foreign minister, before anti-Semitic radicals gunned him down in 1922. As a businessman, intellectual, moderate politician, unconverted Jew, and perhaps also gay man, he symbolizes the progressive forces that eventually failed to block the Nazi cataclysm. Much has been written about him, but Volkov's short biography focuses uniquely on Rathenau's inner ambivalence and conflict. His arrogant, distant, contradictory, and meddling persona triggered vicious hatred but also fascinated great novelists, such as Robert Musil. In his public writings and speeches, Rathenau criticized capitalists, Jews, partisan politicians, nationalists, and modern artists, yet in his private life, he cultivated and emulated them. Volkov believes Rathenau's inner turmoil stemmed largely from his Jewishness, which set him apart. Yet perhaps Volkov underestimates how much Rathenau was a man of his times. With so many social conflicts swirling about, anyone who sought to reconcile and reform the disparate elements of German society was destined to become a man with too many qualities.

The Headscarf Controversy: Secularism and Freedom of Religion. BY HILAL ELVER. Oxford University Press, 2012, 288 pp. \$55.00.

Elver analyzes the headscarf debate in Denmark, Germany, the United States, and especially France and Turkey. She advocates protecting headscarves by enforcing a right to personal religious choice. The European Court of Human

Rights should be more consistently secular in its jurisprudence, she argues, particularly as applied to Muslim symbols, adding that attempts to ban headscarves rest on prejudice and misunderstanding. The real and often silent victims of a ban, she claims, are women who freely choose the headscarf and must thus endure the “social tragedy” of isolation. Other unintended consequences, she maintains—without much empirical evidence—include the de facto exclusion of Muslim women from the workplace and the encouragement of religious fundamentalism. In most Western countries, the headscarf question (at least concerning adults) has been all but resolved in favor of Elver’s position, with the debate now largely restricted to more extreme forms of traditional religious dress, such as the *burqa* and the *niqab*, which conceal nearly the entire body. The book provides an insightful perspective on this trend, grounded more in constitutional law than empirical sociology or political history.

Governing for the Long Term: Democracy and the Politics of Investment. BY ALAN M. JACOBS. Cambridge University Press, 2011, 320 pp. \$93.00 (paper, \$25.99). Policymakers and journalists tend to live in the here and now. They leave it to social scientists such as Jacobs to tackle important issues that are too diffuse or complex to explain in a stump speech or a newspaper article. Many tough problems facing modern democracies require that immediate pain be inflicted on citizens in exchange for broader, long-term benefits. Jacobs argues that in order to succeed in managing these “intertemporal policy choices,” politicians must surmount three political challenges: focusing the attention

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Recent Books

of voters, correctly predicting positive long-term trends, and committing to policy solutions even when they are opposed by influential interest groups. To simplify a complex argument, Jacobs is a Goldilocks democrat: only governments that are neither too populist nor too insulated can create and maintain fair long-term policies. This book contains much sound and detailed policy advice drawn from detailed case studies of policymaking in Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States, especially with regard to pension reform. Yet Jacobs' insightful analysis can also be applied to debt reduction, global warming, education, immigration, and many other controversial issues.

Saving Europe: How National Politics Nearly Destroyed the Euro. BY CARLO BASTASIN. Brookings Institution Press, 2012, 404 pp. \$34.95.

The euro hangs in limbo, and no one can be sure exactly how the current crisis will end. So one might be tempted to ignore a 400-page book written in midstream, most of which concerns the period—long ago, it seems—when Silvio Berlusconi still headed Italy, Nicolas Sarkozy still led France, and Greece still seemed salvageable. Yet Bastasin's book is worth reading for its detailed political narrative of the crisis to date, drawn largely from journalistic sources and focusing on the interaction among decision-makers in Europe's capitals. Bastasin is unsentimental and rightly rejects simplistic narratives that blame the crisis solely on fiscal profligacy, easygoing cultures, or corruption in Mediterranean countries. He highlights subtler factors, such as the advantages the single currency has afforded German

lenders and exporters. In the end, however, Bastasin indulges in some federalist sentiments. The euro should be maintained, he urges, by surrendering outdated national identities and embracing cosmopolitan political solidarity—a solution that seems neither technocratically appropriate nor politically feasible.

The Patagonian Hare: A Memoir. BY CLAUDE LANZMANN. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012, 544 pp. \$35.00.

Most people never find anything serious about which to obsess. Lanzmann's early life suggested he would be no exception. Born in Paris in 1925 to Jewish parents, he joined the antifascist resistance as a teenager, served as Jean-Paul Sartre's right-hand man at *Les Temps Modernes*, spent years as Simone de Beauvoir's quasi-marital lover, and became a partisan in the politics of the French left. Noble causes all, but they amounted to little more than an evanescent dilettantism of a distinctively Parisian variety. Then, Lanzmann found his obsession: the Holocaust. This stream-of-consciousness autobiography describes—in excessive detail for most non-French readers—how gossipy and trivial Lanzmann's life had become, and then how the rediscovery of his Jewish heritage restored its focus. His 1985 film about the Holocaust, *Shoah*, was immediately hailed as a masterpiece. Nearly ten hours in length, it offers not only a fastidiously detailed history of Nazi extermination but also a remarkable innovation in documentary filmmaking. The film eschewed photos and films of the camps, relying instead on oral testimony, often with eyewitnesses (prisoners and guards alike) reenacting past events. On the surface, it is an

understated, even bland mode of documentary. But it reveals layers of obsession: an obsessed director telling the stories of those obsessed with telling their stories.

Western Hemisphere

RICHARD FEINBERG

Cuban Economic and Social Development:

Policy Reforms and Challenges in the Twenty-first Century. EDITED BY

JORGE I. DOMÍNGUEZ, OMAR

EVERLENY PÉREZ VILLANUEVA,

MAYRA ESPINA PRIETO, AND

LORENA BARBERIA. Harvard

University Press, 2012, 388 pp. \$24.99.

In this informative collection, leading Cuban social scientists express their frustration at the slow pace of economic reform, even as they recognize that the magnitude of Cuba's accumulated problems demands skillful surgery. Pavel Vidal Alejandro expertly unravels the distortions caused by the dual currency system and calls for a gradual transition to a single, devalued Cuban peso. Armando Nova González and Anicia García Álvarez document Cuba's disastrous agricultural sector and recommend strengthening property rights and creating market incentives to stimulate farm output. Drawing on opinion surveys, one of the book's editors, Espina Prieto, brilliantly smashes the myth that Cuba is a frozen-in-time society, revealing dynamic social mobility and changing values. Mindful that Cuba is a small island economy, Pérez Villanueva and Pedro Monreal González suggest realistic ways for the country to take better advantage of foreign investment and international value chains. As a whole,

the essays in this book suggest that Cuba must replace its stagnant economic management with a more modern regime built around a smarter state, refined regulation, and targeted social welfare programs.

Shaping the Future of the Asia and the Pacific-Latin America and the Caribbean Relationship. BY THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK,

THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT

BANK, AND THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT

BANK INSTITUTE. Asian Development

Bank, Inter-American Development

Bank, and Asian Development Bank

Institute, 2012, 142 pp. Free online.

This timely collaboration among regional development institutions details recent trends in trade, investment, and development cooperation between Asia and Latin America, a historic transformation of the global economy that is still in its early stages. Among the main findings and conclusions are the following: Asia's share of Latin American trade surged to 21 percent in 2011, second only to the United States', which was 34 percent; Asian investments in Latin America, although rising, are lagging relative to the growth of Asian-Latin American trade; and the two emerging regions could benefit from sharing development experiences in areas such as export promotion, poverty reduction, natural-disaster mitigation, and financial regulation. Indicating the high degree of transpacific dynamism, the study records 18 current interregional free-trade agreements and 12 more in the pipeline. To attract more high-quality Asian investment and technology, Latin American countries, the authors urge, should continue to liberalize their regulatory policies, upgrade their infrastructure, and invest in international education. Brief but illuminating case