

# H-Diplo | Robert Jervis International Security Studies Forum

## Roundtable Review 14-17

Konrad H. Jarausch. *Embattled Europe: A Progressive Alternative*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021. ISBN: 9780691200415

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Introduction by Mary Nolan, Professor Emerita, New York University

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*Embattled Europe* presents a vigorous and richly documented defense of the contemporary European model, which according to Konrad Jarausch, is characterized by a truly democratic election system, robust welfare states, and peaceful international behavior. These are supported by both institutions and shared values. They offer, he argues, a better way of life than the United States and represent a model of democratic modernity from which the US can and should learn.

Jarausch develops these argument through a nuanced assessment of Europe's accomplishments, beginning with the successful transition of the formerly socialist states into versions of democratic capitalism. He pays particular attention to Europe's strengths in the areas of economic integration and competitiveness, social policy, and environmental protection. Yet, he is aware of the unevenness of these achievements, especially in Eastern and Southern Europe and of challenges that the European model has faced and is still facing from within and from without. *Embattled Europe* analyzes the sovereign debt crisis of 2008 and its extended aftermath and explores the 2015 migration crisis and growing opposition to immigration, multiculturalism, and Islam. Attention is paid, although perhaps not enough, to the rise of populist movements across Europe which call into question so many aspects of the European model. A final set of challenges have arisen from the lack of a common European security and defense policy on the one hand, and frequent disagreements between Europe and the US about foreign policy and military interventions on the other hand. All these notwithstanding, Jarausch concludes that Europe remains "a progressive alternative."

*Embattled Europe* is a timely and important work that tries mightily to counter the view that there is no alternative to the American system of neoliberal capitalism, weak social policy, inadequate response to the climate crisis, and interventionist foreign policy. *Embattled Europe* occupies a middle position between the much more critical assessments of the European model by authors such as Wolfgang Streeck, who argues that it is long since dead, and the rather Panglossian ones of scholars such as Jussi Hanhimäki in his recent *Pax Transatlantica*.<sup>1</sup> In Jarausch's telling, the Atlantic is wide and there is a clear market, climate, and war gap. I made similar arguments in my 2012 *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890-2010*, but have now come to see Europe, including Western Europe, and the United States as mirroring one another in a variety of domestic developments over that last decade or more.<sup>2</sup> Stephanie Mudge's *Leftism Reinvented: Western Parties from Socialism to Neoliberalism* also argues that the distinctiveness of Europe has eroded, not merely due to attacks from the right but equally from the transformation of classic social democratic parties.<sup>3</sup>

*Embattled Europe* is lucidly written and readily accessible to the general public. It offers to scholars and students both provocative macro arguments about post-Cold War European developments and lively micro portraits of the successful economic transition from socialism in Poland, of Germany's continued economic competitiveness, of Sweden's admirable welfare state, and of Denmark's environmental policies among others. If these examples highlight the best European practices, Jarausch acknowledges the diversity and unevenness of social policies, economic prosperity, and environmental activism across the continent. Overall,

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfgang Streeck, *Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2014). Jussi M. Hanhimäki, *Pax Transatlantica: America and Europe in the Post-Cold War Era* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Mary Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890-2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Nolan, *America's Century in Europe: Reflections on Americanization, Anti-Americanism and the Transatlantic Partnership* (Göttingen: Wallenstein, 2023).

<sup>3</sup> Stephanie Mudge, *Leftism Reinvented: Western Parties from Socialism to Neoliberalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).

however, this is an optimistic book about the possibilities for more progressive politics—and we can certainly use some optimism in these times.

The four reviewers are quite positive in their general assessment of *Embattled Europe*. Sandrine Kott calls it a “courageous and thought provoking book” that offers new perspectives on Europe as a political project and on the convergence of European societies and cultures. She agrees that Europe presents a progressive alternative and that there is a transatlantic civilizational division. Klaus Larres praises Jarausch for focusing on empirical analysis rather than theoretical discussions of the past and future of the EU/Europe. His pro-integration, anti-Brexit narrative moves easily between the high politics in Brussels, which foster ever closer union, and the national and local consequences of those policies. Federico Romero agrees that Europe is a better alternative and insists that the book has much to offer not only to a general audience but to scholars as well. He is, however, much more pessimistic about Europe’s “relevance and value as a progressive alternative for the future.” Carine Germond views the book as an important contribution to the growing body of recent work on European integration. She notes that the work is primarily aimed at a North American, or more specifically US audience, as Europeans by and large understand the beneficial character of the European model. Interestingly, all the reviewers are European; two teach in Europe, one in the US, and one splits her time between Geneva and New York City. Would a US reviewer have been as sympathetic to the overall argument?

Their generally positive assessments notwithstanding, each reviewer has concerns about particular arguments, emphases and omissions. Kott argues that the book’s opening discussion of 1989 and the subsequent transformations of socialist societies ignores the pre-1989 Eastern European openness to markets as well as the flourishing of nationalism there well before Communism fell. She wonders why Jarausch writes of “German reunification” rather than the more apt “process of absorption of the German Democratic Republic into the Federal Republic of Germany.” Germond notes that the discussion of the establishment and expansion of the European Union adopts a “quasi-teleological” narrative of “incremental and linear integration and effective response to challenges.” This “classic and over-confident narrative” has recently come under increasing criticism. Kott thinks it would be fruitful to distinguish more sharply between which aspects of the Europeanization of daily life and culture that Jarausch emphasizes are due to EU policies and which are the result of “the long history of European exchanges and cross-acculturations.”

Part II, which discusses the sovereign-debt, migration, and Brexit crises, is praised by Larres, but Romero finds it to be the weakest part of the book. The resolution of the debt crisis with its severe austerity prescription that Jarausch sees as necessary, was hardly a product of Europe’s ability to negotiate compromises that lessened tensions. Jarausch maintains that that is a key characteristic of the European model. Romero regrets that Jarausch did not link the 2008 crisis to the subsequent rise of right-wing populist movements across Europe. He finds the discussion of migration “sharper” but stresses that the outcome has not been the mixture of limiting immigration while promoting tolerance and integration that Jarausch advocates. Rather, across Europe nations have rejected migration and closed borders. Kott wishes that Jarausch had delved more into how populist parties made migration such a priority issue, even though, she claims, the issue is secondary to electorates on both sides of the Atlantic.

Kott both praises Jarausch’s discussion of the causes of Brexit and wishes he had further explored the motives of particular actors and the ways in which anti-European sentiment is rooted in the impoverishment of the working and middle-classes in the UK. She would have also liked more analysis of the weakness of British state institutions and the incompetence of its diplomats, both of which she attributes to decades of neoliberal policies.

Three reviews share a common criticism of Part III of *Embattled Europe* that highlights Europe’s continuing strengths in the areas of economic competitiveness, social policies, and environmental protection. Kott and Germond emphasize that many parts of Europe lack the advanced welfare and environmental policies of

Western Europe and Scandinavia. Germond notes as well that issues of gender equality and women's rights, a topic which Jarausch neglects, remain contentious in many European countries. Romero reiterates that Europe is "far larger, more differentiated and diverse" than Jarausch implies, writing that "the book's conceptual model reflects only one section that Jarausch metonymically elevates to the whole." Not only have the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe not caught up with Western Europe and Scandinavia, but not every country in these regions wants to emulate them. Moreover, he insists that Europe is not such a clear-cut alternative to the US as Jarausch claims. Europe is not just challenged from the outside by globalization and neoliberalism; the EU and individual nation states have co-produced the neoliberal global order and market culture that is to be sure much more pronounced in the US but present across Europe as well.

Nor does Europe represent a clear and viable alternative to the US in international affairs. According to Kott, Europe's preference for negotiation over intervention may well stem from its military weakness and economic interests. According to Larres, the current war between Russia and Ukraine illustrates longstanding problems within Europe. The EU lacks a shared, coherent and well-funded defense policy as well as an energy policy. It has focused too long on its internal problems and has no global strategic vision vis-à-vis the US, Russia and China. It remains in key ways dependent on the United States.

In his response, Jarausch acknowledges the challenges of writing a history of the present, but rightly insists that a generation has passed since the end of the Cold War and a provisional assessment of its historical significance is useful, indeed necessary. He admits that had the intended audience been continental Europeans, he would have attended more fully to the diversity within Europe. Nonetheless, he notes, his micro studies do include Eastern Europe and not just the more successful and studied Western and Northern European nations. He defends the EU's handling of the Euro crisis, noting that ultimately countries rallied behind the Euro. *Embattled Europe* was written before the February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, a possibility Jarausch, like most observers, had not foreseen. He speculates that the Ukraine war might be a major turning point that opens the way for a stronger European defense policy and expanded renewable energy. Whether it will increase Europe's global role, as Jarausch hopes, remains to be seen.

## Participants:

**Konrad H. Jarausch** is the Lurcy Professor of European Civilization at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill and the former director of the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung in Potsdam, Germany. He has written or edited about fifty books on German and European History such as *Out of Ashes: A New History of Europe in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016). He is currently writing an autobiography, entitled "The Burden of German History: A Transatlantic Life."

**Mary Nolan** is Professor of History emerita at NYU. She is the author of *Visions of Modernity: American Business and the Modernization of Germany* (Oxford University Press (1994) and *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890-2010* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), and co-editor of *Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties* (Routledge, 2018). She is currently working on the gender politics of right radical populism in Europe and the United States.

**Carine S. Germond** is a Professor of European Studies at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and, in 2022, a visiting scholar (sabbatical leave) at the European University Institute. She has published widely on the history of postwar European integration, Franco-German relations in twentieth-century Europe, and the European Union's agricultural and rural policy. Recent publications include i.a. *The European Ambition: The Group of the European People's Party and European Integration* (with L. Bardi, W. Gagatsek, K.M. Johansson, W. Kaiser, Nomos: 2020) and "Agriculture with a Social Twist: Education and

Vocational Training in the Common Agricultural Policy,” in S. K. St. John and M. Murphy, eds., *Education and Public Policy in the European Union* (Palgrave MacMillan: 2019), 89-110.

**Sandrine Kott** is Professor of Modern European History at the University of Geneva since 2004 and visiting professor at New York University since 2017. Her main field of expertise is the international and European history of social welfare and labor. Among her last publications are *Organiser le monde. Une autre histoire de la guerre froide*, (Paris, Seuil, 2021), *Sozialstaat und Gesellschaft. Das deutsche Kaiserreich in Europa*, (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, Kritische Studien, 2014, with Kiran Patel), *Nazism across Borders. The Social Policies of the Third Reich and their Global Appeal* (Oxford University Press, 2018, with Michel Christian and Ondrej Matejka), *Planning in Cold War Europe. Competition, Cooperation, circulation (1950s-1970s)* (Oldenburg, De Gruyter, 2018, with Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, Peter Romijn & Olivier Wieviorka), *Seeking Peace in the Wake of War. Europe, 1943-1947* (Amsterdam University Press, 2015, with Joëlle Droux), *Globalizing Social Rights. The ILO and Beyond* (Palgrave, 2013).

**Klaus Larres** is the Richard M Krasno Distinguished Professor of History and International Affairs, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is the author and editor of a number of books including *Uncertain Allies: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Threat of a United Europe* (Yale University Press, 2022) and is now engaged in conducting research for a book provisionally entitled “U.S.-China-Europe: the Search for Order and National Advantage.”

**Federico Romero** is Professor of History of Post-War European Cooperation and Integration at the European University Institute. Among his recent books, Ulrich Krotz, Kiran Klaus Patel and Federico Romero, eds., *Europe’s Cold War Relations: The European Community Towards a Global Role* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019) and Angela Romano and Federico Romero, eds., *European Socialist Regimes’ Fateful Engagement with the West: National Strategies in the long 1970s* (London: Routledge, 2021).

Review by Carine S. Germond, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and  
European University Institute (EUI)

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As Russian tanks and rockets strive to crush the aspirations of the Ukrainian people for a democratic and independent nation-state that is anchored in Western European economic and military alliances, the title of distinguished scholar Konrad Jarausch's latest book takes on a new meaning. Battered by myriad crises and a pandemic that have fueled populist, Eurosceptic discourses, Europe faces a new momentous existential threat. After nearly eight decades of peace, a new war is fought on the European continent and at the EU's immediate borders. Although essentially driven by security considerations, Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova's applications for fast-tracked European Union (EU) membership illustrate the enduring appeal that the European Union and the European way of life and values continue to have on neighboring countries.

The European way of life takes center stage in Jarausch's *Embattled Europe*. This new book is a logical addition to Jarausch's last opus, *Out of Ashes*, which revisited Europe's troubled history in the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Both monographs are based on a wide range of scholarly literature. Both also seek to elucidate the past and present trajectory of Europe. *Embattled Europe* is a welcome contribution to the wider scholarly debate on Europe, which has been concerned primarily with explaining how the EU handled, responded to, or was impacted by the semi-permanent state of crisis. Jarausch's new monograph is also part and parcel of a renewed interest in the history of European integration, spurred by the recent strings of crisis, many of which have roots in the continent's recent past. Other prominent Europeanists and historians, too, have newly sought to reevaluate the origins and development of the European project and the reasons for the EU's surprising resilience despite the rapid succession of crises that have put it to the test in the last two decades.<sup>2</sup> Similarly to these historical works, *Embattled Europe* seeks to offer fresh insights into the mid-term dynamics of European integration amid growing uncertainties and significant challenges to this on-going process.

In *Embattled Europe*, Jarausch makes a compelling and inspiring case for Europe and the European Union which goes decidedly against the grain of the gloomy predictions that Europe is in decline, disintegrating, or has become obsolescent.<sup>3</sup> Instead, the author sets out to balance Europe's strengths and weaknesses, its resilience, and rigidities, and, in doing so, attempts to cast light on some of the critical elements that unite and differentiate Europeans and Americans. Thus, the book is in one sense a cautiously optimistic, easily legible rebuttal to mainstream Eurosceptic discourses prophesying the demise of Europe. Another, which the author freely admits, is to serve as a challenge to conventional wisdom on both sides of the Atlantic about what the EU is, where it is headed, and what progressive, history-informed solutions a renewed transatlantic dialogue might bring about.

While essentially geared towards North American and European audiences, the book often appears mainly for the former's benefit given that the book was written during the contentious Trump Presidency that

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<sup>1</sup> Konrad Jarausch, *Out of Ashes. A New History of Europe in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> For example, Laurent Warloutzet, *Europe contre Europe. Entre liberté, solidarité et puissance* (Paris: CNRS édition, 2022); Kiran K. Patel, *Project Europe: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Mark Gilbert, *European Integration: A Political History* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020); Liesbeth van de Grift, Robin de Bruin, Wim van Meurs, Carla Hoetink, *The Unfinished History of European Integration* (Amsterdam : Amsterdama University Press, 2018); Wilfried Loth, *Building Europe. A History of European Unification* (DeGruyter Oldenburg, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Hans Vollard, *European Disintegration. A Search for Explanations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Douglas Weber, *European Disintegration? The Politics of Crisis in the European Union* (London. Red Globe, 2018); Francesco Bongiovanni, *The Decline and Fall of Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Richard Youngs, *Europe's Decline and Fall. The struggle Against Global Irrelevance* (London: Profile Book, 2010).

accentuated divisions within American society and between Europe and the US. Europeans, for their part, are well acquainted with the merits of a capitalism tempered with social welfare provisions, solidarity, and redistribution, as well as multilateralism and peaceful diplomacy. Inherited from Europe's turbulent history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these features are widely accepted as essential hallmarks of the postwar European societal project. The American societal model is on the contrary based on radically different premises. Lack of knowledge or understanding of the two continent's historical and cultural specificities has indeed, at times, fostered incomprehension on both sides of the Atlantic. Likewise, as Eurosceptics of all persuasions are gaining traction in EU countries, national parliaments, and even in the European Parliament, it is not wholly remiss to outline the progressive and, overall, exceptionally successful alternative that Europe represents. Yet, why is it still, Jarausch asks, that Europeans feel that they have more secure and satisfying lives than their American counterparts? In examining how Europe tackled the economic, social, and security transformations of the post-Cold War order and, albeit painfully and slowly, reformed itself, the book is in part an answer to that question.

*Embattled Europe* takes us through a grand tour of Europe, East-West, and South-North, in an attempt to consider the continent in its diversity and unity. Except for Switzerland, Jarausch's 'Europe' overlaps for the most part with the EU's confines. Deftly moving from the micro to the macro levels, each chapter moves to a new city or place in Europe, which acts as a thematic and national case study and provides a starting point for a diachronic discussion of Europe's challenges over the last four decades. The book's structure is elegant and sensible with its four chronologically organized parts, each sub-divided into three thematic sub-sections.

The first part spans roughly the period between 1989 and 2004-7. It emphasizes the difficulties and successes of Eastern European countries' economic and societal transformation and European integration advances in the wake of the lifting of the Iron Curtain. The voyage starts in Sopron, Hungary, with two seemingly innocuous yet historic events that initiated a peaceful revolution, a radical but non-violent systemic change and transfer of power in Central and Eastern Europe, stemming from both "a collapse from above and an overthrow from below" (33). Starting with a description of a luxury shopping center in Poznan, Poland, Jarausch next illustrates the variegated fortunes of the transition of the Central and Eastern European economies and societies into capitalist democracies, and the many upheavals brought on by the downfall of Communism. Because of the underestimated magnitude these changes, the transition remains unfinished in many former Soviet satellites (53). This in turn has provided a fertile ground for social discontentment and contestation of Western liberal democratic norms with, as a result, a trend toward illiberal democracy in some countries. Subsequently, the small Luxemburgish village of Schengen provides the setting for the signature of an agreement establishing border-free travel. The then five signatories—France, Germany and the three Benelux countries—relinquished an essential part of their sovereignty. Still, the Schengen agreement also boosted deepening and widening European integration by establishing a single market within which persons, capital, goods, and services could move freely. These four freedoms have since become inalienable principles of the EU, as British officials discovered with much aggravation during the Brexit negotiations. The new enlarged Europe, which arose from various treaties, was not a mere abstract creation; according to Jarausch, it has created new 'Europeanized' Europeans and a "lived sense of Europe" (69).

The second part of the book picks up at the end of the 2000s and explores a decade-long of crisis. Three crises—the Euro-crisis, migration, and Brexit—take center stage. All three had a strong disintegration potential, yet the threat to unity and prosperity contributed to strengthening rather than loosening European institutional cooperation. Greece, whose abysmal debt and near bankruptcy threatened to unravel the Euro, the EU's single European currency, exemplifies the ravages of the sovereign debt and fiscal crisis. Political commitment to European integration and pragmatic solutions, often based on the lowest common denominators, helped growth return, albeit with dramatic social consequences. More importantly, the lessons drawn from the Euro-crisis have led to a more constructive response to the Covid pandemic. The shores of the Sicilian island of Lampedusa witnessed the terrible human price paid by desperate migrants fleeing war and poverty to seek better lives for themselves and their families in Europe. Like the Euro-crisis, the

migration crisis highlighted the shortcomings of European integration. It also raised moral, political, and humanitarian dilemmas with no easy solutions, especially as Europe still grapples with the social and economic consequences of the Euro-crisis and the Covid pandemic and a rising populist, Eurosceptic challenge to liberal democracy. In London, the United Kingdom's exit from the disparaged EU split British political parties and society into adverse camps, broadly alongside divisions between globalization's 'losers' and 'winners.'<sup>4</sup> Yet, it united Europeans and European institutions in their unconditional support of the Single Market's four freedoms as a core principle of the EU, much to the chagrin of two successive British Prime Ministers.

While the first two parts of the book are primarily concerned with the struggles of and the challenges to integration in the post-Cold War era, the third section examines the reasons behind the continued relevance—and resilience—of the European model. Jarausch lays down three main arguments to refute the doom and gloom predictions about Europe's demise, from which Americans might also learn valuable lessons. The Volkswagen 'car city' in Wolfsburg, Germany, is a representative example of how European countries have managed to cope with the increasing competitive pressures of globalization. Rather than the American-style neoliberal deregulation, Europeans have long favored a social market economic model, which mitigates capitalist competition with social benefits in one form or another.<sup>5</sup> For Jarausch, the—arguably unfinished—adaptation of this model to globalization pressures has meant that Europeans have been able to keep competitive industries while maintaining a welfare state. This balance between competition and social solidarity remains an essential feature of European economies and society, where inequalities are overall lower than in the US. As shown by the Swedish example, the successful, albeit uneven, restructuring of the welfare state provides another explanation for Europe's success in preserving its citizens' quality of life and welfare benefits—including pensions, health, and labor conditions. Moreover, high levels of environmental protection and green energy production, such as that produced in a Danish wind farm off the coast of Anholt, are positioning Europe among the innovative drivers of competition, welfare reforms, and climate change (204).

The last and fourth part looks at the most recent transatlantic challenges affecting Europe and the United States, from security and grassroots populism to global governance. Jarausch identifies three main shared challenges. The first concerns new threats to security and defense and the changing nature of warfare in post-Cold War Europe. The protracted Ukraine crisis, and its escalation into a (proxy) war fought with means other than strictly military, raises difficult, still unresolved questions regarding the EU's future enlargement, Europe's military defense, and NATO's role. It also highlights Europe's and the United States' different handling of international relations conflicts. However, for the author, the soft-power/multilateralism approach of the EU and the United States' hard-power/unilateralism are interdependent and complementary in maintaining peace and security (228). Protests by the Yellow Vests in the Parisian streets epitomize the protean threat of populist politics across Europe, exploiting social, economic, and cultural anxieties. Yet, according to Jarausch, populists, whether left or right, cannot solve the underlying problem, which lies beneath the rise of populism, namely that of individual participation in mass democracy (249). The journey ends in Davos, Switzerland. The posh Alpine hotspot, where the world leaders meet yearly, initiates a discussion about Europe's attempt to play a leading international role. This last chapter also circles back to some critical issues, such as transatlantic value gaps and normative disagreements and the distinctive tax-funded European lifestyle, which provides a better quality of life, society, and public services than in the United States.

Jarausch provocatively concludes that the continent is a beacon of progressive politics because its political system is politically more representative and legitimate, socially just, and sustainable, and its diplomacy is

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<sup>4</sup> For example, Sara B. Hobolt, "The Brexit Vote: A Divided Nation, A Divided Continent," *Journal of European Public Policy* 23 (2016): 1259–1277.

<sup>5</sup> See José María Gil-Robles y Gil-Delgado, Fausto de Quadros, Dario Velo, eds., *The European Union and Social Market Economy* (Bari: Caccucci, 2014).



peaceful. His account of the recent events that have shaped Europe is comprehensive, engaging, and often stimulating, if sometimes over-optimistic. This optimistic bias, which stems from the effort to dispel the prevailing pessimistic or negative narrative about Europe, has two potential caveats. First, it chimes strongly with the classic narrative of European integration, one of optimism and progress, which viewed European integration as an incremental and linear development, shaped by a succession of crises and relaunch. However, this classic, over-confident narrative has come in the past decade years under increasing historical criticism for its quasi-teleological nature.<sup>6</sup>

Second, it tends to overestimate European strengths. As scholars have been trying for over a decade to ‘de-center’ Europe,<sup>7</sup> the author’s claim that the European model is “the only serious alternative to the Anglo-American way of life” (281) may need to be further nuanced. One may also miss a more robust engagement with the shortcomings of the European social model, which, even though it offers better protection than its American counterpart, does not always live up to its ambitions. Also, there are sometimes strong differences among European states. For instance, the reform of European welfare systems is undoubtedly more advanced in Northern European countries like Sweden than in the southern, Mediterranean, and Eastern and Central European countries and represents a highly contentious, electorally risky issue for many governments.<sup>8</sup> This disconnect between the ambitions, capabilities, and reality is also visible in European and national climate change policies with (Nordic) leaders, such as Denmark, and (Southern) laggards.<sup>9</sup> Successful illiberal, populist, Eurosceptic movements, including in the traditionally pro-European EU founding members, still threaten the future of European integration. In the education and economic domains, American universities and multinational companies continue to rank far above European ones in world rankings. Gender equality and women’s rights, which are neglected, remain a divisive matter within Europe and a source of transatlantic incomprehension, even more so after the recent decision of the conservative-dominated US Supreme Court to overrule women’s constitutional rights to an abortion. Notwithstanding, *Embattled Europe* is enjoyable and valuable for lay and specialist readers who are interested in contemporary Europe and transatlantic relations.

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Mark Gilbert, “Narrating the Process: Questioning the Progressive Story of European Integration,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 46 (2008) : 241-262; Laurent Warloutzet, “Dépasser la crise de l’histoire de l’intégration européenne,” *Politique européenne* 44 (2014) : 98-122.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Wolfram Kaiser and Kiran Klaus Patel, eds., *Multiple Connections in European Co-operation: International Organizations, Policy Ideas, Practices and Transfers 1967–92* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> On the state of welfare state reforms in the EU, see, for example, Caroline de la Porte, Heike Heins, eds., *The Sovereign Debt Crisis, the EU and Welfare State Reform* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016); Anton Hemerijck, *Changing Welfare States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Silja Häusermann, *The Politics of Welfare State Reform in Continental Europe: Modernization in Continental Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> On this, see Tanja A. Börzel, “Why There is No ‘Southern Problem’. On Environmental Leaders and Laggards in the European Union,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 2000 (7): 141-162.

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 Review by Sandrine Kott, University of Geneva and New York University
 

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Konrad Jarausch, a recognized specialist in German and European history, has written a courageous and thought-provoking book which provides a welcome response to former President Donald Trump's 'America first' policy, to his constant attacks against the European Union and his glorification of the Brexit interpreted as a 'great victory.' In response to these attacks, the book asserts that "Europe is still functioning quite well in many respects—perhaps even better than the United States" (143). In fact, beyond this "perhaps," the book defends an explicit thesis contained in its subtitle: Europe represents a progressive alternative to the political choices that have been made in the United States and have created a very unequal and violent society. Related to this, the book offers a second thesis, that of the growing civilizational divergence between the United States and Europe which goes beyond temporary political dissonance: what Jarausch calls the "Transatlantic Divorce" (254). This second thesis resonates with my own transatlantic experience as a French historian who specializes in German history, as a professor at the University of Geneva and visiting professor at New York University. It is therefore with great interest and profit that I read this book, which is extremely rich and still pleasant to read. The argumentation is always nuanced while remaining easy to follow.

Because of the point of view and chronology it adopts—it covers the period after 1990—this book differs from the numerous publications on European history that have appeared since the 1980s on both sides of the Atlantic. I would divide them in three main groups. First, many large syntheses have been published in the last decades, often adopting a "short century" perspective and stopping with the collapse of the Communist world.<sup>1</sup> They seek to give a fairly complete picture of European history in the twentieth century while adopting, most often, a particular angle.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, there is a flourishing historiography of Europe as a political project.<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, this political project has inspired a set of works and initiatives that highlight the convergences of European societies and cultural commonalities and wonder about the specificities of a "European model." These undertakings, which often gather historians from various European countries can be coined as connected histories of Europe and, in their various forms, they aim to contribute to the construction of a collective European identity.<sup>4</sup>

Konrad Jarausch's book belongs in one way or another to all three traditions but offers a new perspective made possible by the focus on the post-communist decades and the implicit comparative perspective with the US. The book is structured in three thematic parts in which each chapter is organized around an exemplary national case.

The first part delineates the contours of the new Europe after the end of Communism in the East. The first chapter paints a broad picture of the end of the Eastern European popular democracies, which the author refers to in a positive way as the "peaceful revolution." In this chapter, as in the following one on post-Communist transformation, Jarausch is careful to avoid simplifications. In particular, he rejects the simplistic interpretation—formulated by the US President George H.W. Bush—that summarized the fall of Communism as a victory of freedom over tyranny (29). The author rightly evokes the contradictory

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<sup>1</sup> With the important exception of Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006) which has an entire part (over 100 pages) on post 1990.

<sup>2</sup> One example Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin books, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> To cite only one recent book: Kiran Klaus Patel, *Project Europe: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020) first published in German in 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Two digital projects should be quoted here: the German Clio online Europäische Geschichte <https://www.europa.clio-online.de/redaktion> with a book series: *Schriftreihe: Europäische Geschichte in Quellen und Essays* (Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart) and the French *Encyclopédie d'histoire numérique de l'Europe* <https://ehne.fr/fr>

aspirations of the population and the tensions they generated in post-Communist societies. He underlines the social difficulties linked to a sometimes too rapid transition to a market economy.

In this respect, following the recent historiography, Jarausch could have stressed more clearly the extent of the changes already at work in the Eastern European countries and the fact that an elite already convinced by the superiority of the market economy was ready to implement neo-liberal measures that were far from being all imposed by the West.<sup>5</sup> In the same way, the nationalism of post-socialist societies had been flourishing in the crushing statism that reigned in the countries of real socialism (51). One may also wonder about the use of the term German reunification, when it has rather been a process of absorption of the German Democratic Republic into the Federal Republic of Germany, which transformed the East Germans into foreigners in their own country with all the subsequent consequences.<sup>6</sup>

In the third chapter, Jarausch examines European integration and the enlargement to the East as a political construction but also as a lived reality, particularly for the younger generation who benefited from exchange programs. He rightly insists on the limits of the political—but not the economic—integration that he sees as an “unfinished project” (75). In this respect, it would have been possible to insist more on the original ambiguity of the European project. As a political project it was carried by those who resisted fascism, but it was also a means of solidly attaching West Germany and members of the former Nazi elites who remained in power in that country to the West.<sup>7</sup>

In the second part, Jarausch selects three crises that Europe has faced since the end of the Cold War: the economic and debt crisis, the migration crisis, and Brexit. Greece is the entry point to the debt crisis, which the author rightly attributes largely to the corruption of political and economic elites without, however, mentioning the harmful role of the Orthodox Church. Italy serves as an entry country in the migrant crisis. Jarausch underlines the gradual evolution of behavior, which is also found in Germany, from a welcoming attitude to a growing xenophobia. He shows how this mistrust was fed by certain episodes—such as the assaults of German women by young migrants during the Cologne carnival of 2015/2016 (112)—but also by the propaganda of extreme right-wing parties. Here it could be interesting to examine the way in which populist parties make migration a priority issue, as in the United States, even though it has generally been shown that it remains secondary for their electorate.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, the chapter provides an opportunity to highlight the bureaucratic and irrational nature of the European Union’s policy, whereas as Jarausch points out, “an aging population needs immigrants to maintain the welfare state” (121). In order to explain Brexit, he convincingly manages to articulate different levels of explanations: a weak general attachment to the European project; the use by certain individual and collective actors (one would like to have read more on their motivations) of the anti-European rhetoric in a context of impoverishment of the working and middle classes; and the incompetence of the British political class both

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<sup>5</sup> On that point see in particular Gil Eyal, Iván Széleányi, and Eleanor R Townsley, *Making Capitalism without Capitalists: Class Formation and Elite Struggles in Post-Communist Central Europe* (London, New York: Verso, 1998) or Johanna Bockman, *Markets in the Name of Socialism: The Left-Wing Origins of Neoliberalism* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Some critical voices in West and East Germany have even described the second unification as a “colonization” of the former GDR. Wolfgang Dümcke and Fritz Vilmar, ed., *Kolonialisierung der DDR kritische Analysen und Alternativen des Einigungsprozesses* (Münster: Münster Agenda-Verlag, 1996). An extreme but not un-interesting point of view in Fritz Micklisch, *Die Kolonisierung der DDR: wie die einst « lieben Brüder und Schwestern im Osten » von den kalten Kriegen im Westen gebast, gedemütigt und bestraft werden* (Berlin: Verlag am Park, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> See for example Vanessa Conze, *Das Europa der Deutschen. Ideen von Europa in Deutschland zwischen Reichstradition und Westorientierung (1920–1970)* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2005); Ronald J. Granieri, *The Ambivalent Alliance: Konrad Adenauer, the CDU/CSU, and the West, 1949–1966* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> For a quick overview Paul Hainsworth, *The Extreme Right in Europe* (London, UK: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 70-77.

on the question of the referendum and on the negotiation of the exit treaty which testified to a fiasco of the British diplomatic services to a degree that the European negotiators had not anticipated.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, what could have been emphasized more is the fact that the whole Brexit sequence highlighted the decrepitude of the British institutions and state apparatus following decades of neo-liberal policies. Part of the left, in France in particular, welcomed the British departure with relief since they viewed Britain as the Trojan horse of neo-liberalism. To these clearly situated and mediatized crises, the author could have added the more latent crisis of democracy, which is taking different forms in Europe than in the United States. Beyond populism, which is studied precisely in the third part of the book (chapter 11), questions relating to the classical expression of democracy can be found in the levels of abstention in the different European countries. On the other side, the French Yellow Vest movement which opens Chapter 11 is not just a repetition of the “poujadist movement” (233), organized in the 1950s by Pierre Poujade as a tax revolt of modest shopkeepers and farmers. The Yellow Vest movement also questioned the very verticality of the French Fifth Republic democracy. It provided a space of discussion in the innumerable barracks built on the roundabouts in which citizens met to heavily debate on various social and political issues. The discussions around the role of parliament (embodied in the projects for a French VI Republic), the invention of new forms of direct democracy, for which Switzerland constitutes a reservoir of experience, is also a pressing issue right now all over Europe.<sup>10</sup> Here again, the terms of the debate in European democracies are different from those in the United States, where exclusion from the vote of a growing part of the population and gerrymandering are eroding the basis of the representative democracy.

The third and longest part focuses on “continuing strength.” Using Germany as an example, chapter 7 champions the existence of a high level of economic competitiveness that, contrary to neo-liberal assertions, is not contradictory to a social model that introduces regulation of the labor market. The two chapters on the restructured welfare state and the protected environment are certainly those through which the divergence between the United States and various European countries can be documented most clearly. Nevertheless, as Jarausch shows very well, it is important here to establish clear distinctions between the various countries, which do not all have social policies as extensive as those of Sweden or environmental measures as advanced as those of Denmark. Nevertheless, it is indeed in Europe that we find the most advanced social and environmental measures, and the European Commission’s impulses, even if insufficient and contradictory, to enact real environmental regulations and play a driving role, including in world arenas, where Europe is represented with a single voice (chapter 12). The fact remains, and recent events have clearly shown, that in matters of defense (chapter 10), Europe is still, via NATO, closely linked to the United States, even if dissonance was heard on the intervention in Iraq in particular (219). If the European states have favored negotiation over aggression, it is perhaps also because of their own relative military weakness, not to mention the economic interests at play. Recent events have shown that in the face of an inflexible enemy, rearmament appears to be the only solution. Here the European pacifist model finds its limits.

For a European readership one interest—among many others—of this book is that it is written from a US perspective. This point of view allows the author to displace the questions that Europeans ask about themselves that often tend to obscure what unites them in favor of what divides them. Even if Jarausch is careful to establish clear distinctions between the different European countries, he stresses the existence of a “European model” (8). This model is a construction that results from the initial postulate of the book: the existence of a “European experience as an instructive guide” (8); the different chapters, each in its own way, were selected to provide evidence of the specificity of this European experience vis-à-vis the United States. This approach is perfectly legitimate and fruitful and could be questioned further. In this respect, it would have been interesting to distinguish more clearly between what comes from the long history of European exchanges and cross-acculturations, from the progressive convergence between European societies (especially

<sup>9</sup> On Brexit see several inspiring contributions in *Contemporary European History*, Volume 28, Issue 1, (2019) 1-81.

<sup>10</sup> Gérard Grunberg, « Les “gilets jaunes” et la crise de la démocratie représentative », *Le Débat* 204, n° 2 (2019): 95-103.

Western ones), and what comes from European policies: those of the European Union, but also those of other European organizations and associations (for example, trade unions, economic organizations) that played a role in the elaboration and the implementation of common policies.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, and to come back to the European welfare state model, the European Union bodies play a subsidiary role here but the “European model,” moving beyond all the differences, is the result of a long-standing emulation since the nineteenth century between experts and politicians of the different nation states and has been encouraged by the existence of private or intergovernmental associations (what we would now label non-government organizations, NGOs) that have prompted exchanges. This was and still is largely supported by the social democratic parties, a current which is missing in the US and whose direct contribution to the “European model” should be more clearly underlined. As the book shows, however, this model as well as social democracy as a political inspiration (and not just as a party), is threatened by the development of financial capitalism and by the impoverishment of states due to the tax evasion of large multinational companies, many of which have their headquarters in the United States. This economic and military entanglement or dependency constitutes an important limit to the transatlantic divergence.

To conclude, this very rich and well-documented book sweeps through 30 years of European history in an often very insightful way. Jaraus presciently highlights the fragility of the Ukrainian situation (207-216) and anticipated in some way the rise of Eric Zemmour, one of France’s far-right leaders (243). The book provides a very welcome voice in the United States and one would hope that it will be widely read in particular by those who are locked in the certainty of the superiority of their economic and social model. In return, it also gives food for thought to Europeans who tend to forget what brings them together.

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<sup>11</sup>As an example Hartmut Kaelble, *Auf dem Weg zu einer europäischen Gesellschaft : eine Sozialgeschichte Westeuropas, 1880-1980* (München: C.H. Beck, 1987) and Hartmut Kaelble, *Sozialgeschichte Europas: 1945 bis zur Gegenwart* (München: Beck, 2007).

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Review by Klaus Larres, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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*Embattled Europe: A Progressive Alternative* is a fine and readable book. The volume is clearly aimed at a more general readership, and Konrad Jarusch succeeds in enlightening the non-European reader in particular about both the history and intricate details of the European integration process. He greatly enhances the understanding of his readers about the politics, economics, and culture of the European continent and the complex mechanisms and procedures that together make up the “European model.” At the end of his book readers will have realized, for instance, why the European Union (EU) has three presidents (the president of the European Commission, the Council, and the Parliament), how they cooperate and compete with each other and how the manifold European institutions both contribute and hinder policymaking on the European continent. Not least, thankfully, readers will also have fully grasped the crucial role the individual nation-states continue to play in European politics and within the EU as well as the many achievements and the main challenges of the EU.

Jarusch’s account is not unbiased, however. Jarusch strongly defends the European model, as it has developed since the 1952 Schuman Plan, the founding of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1958, the creation of the European Communities (EC) in 1967, and in particular since the early 1990s, when the Maastricht Treaty led to the setting up of today’s EU. One might question this pro-European enthusiasm, but Jarusch skillfully presents his case and is very persuasive regarding the benign and progressive nature of the European Union. Within the rich European integration history Jarusch clearly comes down on the pro-integrationist, anti-Brexit and empirical side. He avoids getting entangled in the often complex theoretical discussions about the past and future of the European Union.<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of the book Jarusch deals extensively and in a lively way with the impact on Europe of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Communist revolutions of 1989/90. He looks at the difficult post-Communist transformation processes in Poland and the Baltic states and also addresses the slow rise of right-wing populism which had its contemporary roots during these tumultuous years. Subsequently Jarusch analyzes the twin problems of widening and deepening the European integration process in the 1990s and early 2000s. He frequently steps down from the high-level of policy making in Brussels and the various national capitals to deal with the micro-level consequences of the process toward an “ever closer union,” which has profoundly affected European citizens on a daily basis. Clearly the creation of the Euro in the late 1990s was part of this, as was the Schengen process of passport-free travel within the EU, which began with an agreement signed on June 14, 1985, in the small winemaking town of Schengen in Luxembourg. But also schemes such as the Erasmus/Socrates initiative of exchange programs for university students or the Europe-wide “interrail pass” have had a profound beneficial impact on creating mutual understanding among young people in particular on the continent (and in the UK between 1973 and 2020). The “European project,” as this process is often referred to, also had profound consequences for the EU countries’ relations with each other as well as with Russia, China and, above all, the United States.<sup>2</sup>

Jarusch dedicates many enlightening pages to the sovereign debt crisis of 2007/08 and the discussion about whether or not a hugely indebted Greece should be allowed to leave or perhaps even be pushed out of the common currency. For a while, the influential German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble was a strong proponent of the latter. The reaction of individual European nations states (not least Germany and France),

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<sup>1</sup> For some insightful accounts, see Hubert Zimmermann and Andreas Dürr, ed., *Key Controversies of European integration*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Palgrave Macmillan/Red Globe Press, 2021); Antje Wiener, Tanja A. Börzel, Thomas Risse, eds., *European Integration Theory*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Lisbeth Hooghe and Gary Marks, “Grand Theories of European Integration in the Twenty-First Century,” *Journal of European Public Policy* (2019), DOI:[10.1080/13501763.2019.1569711](https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2019.1569711).

<sup>2</sup> Klaus Larres, *Uncertain Allies: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Threat of a United Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022).

but also the US, and the role of the European Central Bank (ECB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as well as the angry responses from the European voters in the south of Europe, are complex matters. They are seldom properly understood. Jarausch succeeds extremely well in enlightening the reader about the main facts, details, and the excruciating negotiations that took place almost continuously among the major European players and the IMF and US, and never loses sight of the wood for the trees. This is a great achievement.

Jarausch also deals extensively with the causes, nature, and consequences of the various waves of migrations with which the Europeans have been confronted in the post-Cold War years. In this context German Chancellor Angela Merkel's dilemma of 2015 became well known (and rhetorically exploited by presidential candidate Donald Trump a year later), when she agreed to let almost 1 million migrants enter Germany without proper oversight. It proved to be ammunition for the rise of the right all over Europe. The migration factor—in addition to long-standing British post-imperial dissatisfaction about no longer being a global power—was also the major factor which led to the Brexit referendum in the summer of 2016. The migration crisis was exploited by the likes of Nigel Farage in the UK, who stoked the fear of Polish migrants 'invading' Britain which decisively contributed to a narrow victory of the pro-Brexit camp.

Although after a transition period the UK formally left the EU in January 2020, Brexit and its consequences continue to burden European politics. Brexit has contributed to an economic decline in the UK (on top of the impact of the Covid crisis) and to great tension between the EU and the populist right-wing Johnson administration in London. At the time of this writing, the Northern Ireland (NI) protocol continues to be controversial and the EU may still take the UK government to court for introducing legislation to abrogate the NI protocol. The protocol, after all, is an integral part of the international EU-UK treaty dissolving London's membership of the EU, which cannot be unilaterally abandoned by one side only.

The remaining chapters of the book deal with Europe's economic competitiveness or lack thereof and the challenges of globalization. They also consider—in Jarausch's view—the superior European welfare states and ambitious European efforts regarding climate change and the protection of the environment. Jarausch also analyzes in detail the populist backlashes in response to these efforts and considers Europe's controversial Covid policies.

There are also two good chapters on European "Defense Disagreements" and the EU's "Global Role." While the author can hardly be blamed for publishing his book too early (i.e., before the Russian aggression against Ukraine), the long-standing insufficient European defense policies and also the EU's relatively weak global role, including the ambiguous and often contradictory EU policies toward Russia and China and the Indo-Pacific, ought to have been addressed somewhat more extensively in the book.

But perhaps this indicates a wider problem. Europe and the EU have been much too preoccupied over the last few decades with 'naval gazing,' as extremely well analyzed and reflected by Jarausch. In view of the Great Recession and the Euro crisis, the long-standing migration problems, the rise of right-wing populism even within the EU's own ranks (Hungary, Poland, above all) and many other daunting problems, this is, however, not surprising.

Still, long-term strategic thinking within the EU has been greatly neglected. Only French President Emmanuel Macron has attempted to do so in a serious way, starting with his Sorbonne speech of 2017. Germany, the strongest and arguably most important EU country has much disappointed in this respect. Neither Merkel nor her successor Olaf Scholz have displayed much strategic imagination regarding Germany's and the EU's global role. Lately the EU Commission under President Ursula von der Leyen has drawn up a EU global strategy, including a strategy of how to deal with China and the Indo-Pacific, but these strategies still need to be implemented. It will take much time (and a lot of money) to turn the EU into a serious global and military power.

The Ukraine war has clearly demonstrated at least three huge deficiencies: the EU, and individual European countries, lack a coherent, well-thought out and sufficiently funded defense and military policy. The EU also lacks a thorough energy strategy. Above all, the Europeans continue to be greatly dependent on the US in almost all respects (including trade relations, defense and nuclear policy, technological know-how, energy, and a wider global strategy to deal with rising and non-benign powers). Developing and implementing a comprehensive global outlook and strategy will take many years; it will not arrive over night.

It remains an open question, moreover, despite Germany's new military *Zeitenwende*, whether European voters are ready to accept the weakening of their welfare states and a serious drop in their living standards in order to dedicate more resources to the development of the global role of the EU, even in Europe's backyard in Eastern Europe. After many months of war, at present the continent's populations (though not their political leaders) are more occupied with the high rates of inflation, rapid price increases, not least for energy and food, and declining living standards than with the brutality and ruthlessness of Russia's war against Ukraine.

Jarausch has written a great and very readable book on the European status quo as it stood prior to the war in Ukraine. As Jarausch is such a prolific writer and thinker one hopes that he is already working on a much-needed sequel: how the Ukraine war and the radical shock of having got Russia totally wrong are influencing the EU and the European concert of nations.



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Review by Federico Romero, European University Institute

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Whether you read it as a history of Europe after 1989 or a comparative argument rooted in historical knowledge and sensitivity—it is both—this is an instructive and convincing book. You may or may not agree with the notion that Europe is the “progressive alternative” in today’s world, depending on your perspective and reference points. Konrad Jarausch certainly makes a sharp, wide-ranging, compelling case for it.

It builds upon Jarausch’s previous history of postwar Europe to bring up to date his balanced, moderately optimistic view of the continent’s recent history as the progressive construction of a re-civilized society.<sup>1</sup> Jarausch’s postwar history navigated a middle way between the more upbeat accounts, like Richard Vinen’s, and the gloomier one advanced by Mark Mazower.<sup>2</sup> Here, though, he embraces Europe far more resolutely, since he contrasts it with the United States, and the resulting comparison emphasizes Europe’s achievements and promises.

By and large, I share the author’s opinion on the relative advantage of Europe’s societal and economic arrangements. I am less optimistic about their relevance and value as a progressive model for the future, especially if projected on a global scale. However, I certainly agree with Jarausch’s assessment that Europe’s mix of market forces and social protection provides “a better quality of life for most citizens than the vaunted ‘American Dream’” (5), whose thrust towards higher incomes comes at the price of widespread insecurity, inequality, and discrimination.

This, in a nutshell, is the main claim that Jarausch advances at the end of a skillful reconstruction of Europe’s history since 1989. He uses the methodology of the ‘history of the present,’ a wide array of public sources (speeches, statistical data, media commentary and interviews), and his keen sense of historical depth in order to reconstruct the ways in which the recent past shaped the present.

In Part 1, he situates the origins of 1989 in the corrosive effects that détente and its trans-European dynamics had on the legitimacy of Communist elites and their faith in their own project. He contrasts this nuanced analysis with the hubristic and “simplistic view of history” (29) promoted by conservatives (particularly but not exclusively in the US) who read the Cold War as a moral battle between liberty and totalitarianism whose solution ineluctably implied a “single sustainable model for national success” (29), i.e., an individualistic market democracy. He then moves on to an overview of the post-Communist transformation of Central Eastern Europe that balances the achievements and ravages of the market *shock therapy*. He highlights the “Europeanization of daily lives” and the emergence of “a transnational realm of shared experiences” (68) in the context of the European Union expansion as well as the emergence of nationalism rather than Western-style liberalism.

Part 2 tackles the “avalanche of crises” (77) that beset Europe from the financial collapse of 2008 to the migrants and refugee crisis of 2015 and eventually to Brexit. If the latter is analyzed under the unequivocal label of “self-destruction” (122), Jarausch’s narrative of the management of the financial crisis is uncharacteristically contradictory and strikes me as the only unresolved part of the book. He tries to balance the creditors’ and debtors’ reasons within a precise but rather anodyne account of the (mis)handling of the Eurozone financial crisis. He starts out with a severe assessment of Greece’s fiscal blunders, and more broadly of the Southern economies’ inability to capitalize on the low-interest era brought in by the Euro. He argues that the politics and economics of austerity were a necessary correction, but the evaluation is far from adamant. This case belies the typical feature of the EU that Jarausch rightly praises across the book, i.e., its

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<sup>1</sup> Konrad Hugo Jarausch, *Out of Ashes: A New History of Europe in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin, 1998); Richard Vinen, *A History in Fragments: Europe in the Twentieth Century* (London: Little Brown, 2000).

ability to forge compromises and find inclusive solutions that temper rather than exasperate tensions. He does not connect this crisis to the rise of nationalist populist movements that endanger democracy where it is historically weaker. Later in the book, when assessing the populist insurgency, Jarausch's emphasis shifts somewhat, as he stresses the need to address "the sources of popular resentment" and argues that "closing the growing gap between winners and losers of globalization requires a correction of neoliberal policies that favor the wealthy" (249), in Europe no less than in the United States.

His account of the migrant crisis is sharper as he reconstructs how EU policymakers muddled through with unsatisfactory compromises. He sees an "unresolvable ethical dilemma" (120) between the right of asylum and the politics of domestic consensus and control. Jarausch advocates a strategy aimed at limiting immigration while also pursuing "a systematic effort at integration as well as tolerance" (249). So far, though, the nationalist rejection of migrants has prevailed and it determines the current default option of closed borders—on increasingly harsh and often brutal terms. Europe's human rights aura has been utterly sacrificed in the process and one can only wonder about its long-term consequences, not only for the external image of the EU but for its core identity.

Part 3 engages in a close comparison between the EU and the US that is driven by sharp criticism of unfettered neoliberalism. Jarausch emphasizes the "more stable and sustainable European business culture" (147), the self-reinforcing and stabilizing pattern of the "social market economy" that tackles global challenges "through a careful balance of neoliberal initiatives and social supports" (157), and the labor market and welfare policies that "buffer the vagaries of the market" (162). His key point concerns Europe's ability to conciliate "competition and solidarity" (162) so as to contain "the polarization of society" (182) and promote better environmental protection than the other industrialized countries of the world. "America may be a great place for capitalist winners," he concludes, "but a chastened and peaceful Europe takes better care of those in need" (286). With a solid grounding in refined, nuanced, solid historical analysis, Jarausch eschews the naïve idealizations that used to erect a model upon a set of stereotypes,<sup>3</sup> and provides us with the matrix for a more systematic and detailed comparison.

Finally, in Part 4 Jarausch reviews the strengths and weaknesses of the EU in world politics, particularly in the crises that affected it most directly, ranging from terrorism to the Ukraine. Clearly dismayed by the negative example set by the Trump presidency, he calls for an extended EU-US cooperation capable of multiplying their resources in the effort to consolidate peace, democracy, and multilateralism.

Thus, Jarausch provides an extended, lucidly analyzed and well-argued case for his main contention that "the best practices of this European way of life are therefore exemplars of progressive politics" (281). He looks at business practices, economic institutions, social compacts, and public policies with a view to their combined impact on the quality of life for the large majority of the population. The glue that keeps them together in a dynamic, effective mix of moderate liberalism and extended social protection is revealed by the recurrent keywords that Jarausch deploys to characterize this complex socio-political mechanism. First and foremost is *compromise*, most noticeably between a broad range of political voices in pluralistic parliaments and coalition governments, but also among social groups. *Balance* between market forces and social protection, and more broadly between contrasting priorities, is another constitutive feature. Finally, problem-solving by *negotiation*, internationally as well as domestically, defines the political grammar of Jarausch's Europe.

The European Union is not dominant in this picture—which is focused first and foremost on the diversity and complexity of Europe's societal fabric—but is nonetheless cardinal for many reasons. The first is the pre-eminent role it acquired (particularly over the last thirty years) as the epitome of this connected and coordinated diversity. Second, it embodies the continent's political practice of balanced, negotiated

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<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Jeremy Rifkin, *The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

compromises. As “a hybrid form of political cooperation, that both strengthens and surpasses its member states,” the EU is a promising and yet “unfinished project” (75) that needs to advance much further beyond intergovernmentalism. In his concluding pages Jarausch mentions but does not analyze the panoply of ambitious EU policies engineered in response to the pandemic, but one can safely assume that their thrust towards a unified health, economic, and environmental strategy confirms, and further corroborates, his advocacy of a crucial EU role.

There are only two issues that I find problematic, or at least unresolved, in Jarausch’s admirable analysis. The first one concerns the contours—both geographical and conceptual—of the Europe he writes about. The model he extols is fully alive only in parts of the continent—the Scandinavian countries and those of the Atlantic North-West (plus Austria and Switzerland). However, Europe as such is far larger, differentiated, and diverse. Thus, if the history he traces here duly embraces Europe’s Western and Eastern portions (less so the Southern ones), the book’s conceptual model reflects only one section that Jarausch metonymically elevates to the whole. In this respect it is less original (and possibly less usable) than the more circular pattern of East-West transfer and contamination that Philipp Ther put at the center of his reconstruction.<sup>4</sup>

We need not be dragged into a tired debate about *core* and *periphery*, but Jarausch’s argument often hints at such a dynamic: “the Mediterranean and Eastern European countries still have a considerable way to go in order to catch up to the EU’s standards in prosperity, self-government, and cooperation” (281). This is not only factually true, but it reflects the key assumption that shapes EU culture and mindset. Besides, many Eastern and Southern Europeans no doubt subscribe to such an aspiration—by way of attempted emulation no less than emigration. However, several do not, and indeed object to the very notion of a one-way catching up process. They tend to coalesce around anti-EU nationalism, but this does not make them less European. While I share the normative Europeanism that Jarausch endorses, in historical terms Europe is also, perhaps mainly, the recurrent tension between centripetal and centrifugal trends within it.

Even more cogently, the assumption that North-West Europe’s standards *ipso facto* define the EU order and self-image (for a long time a self-evident paradigm in Brussels and other capitals) has been one of the key obstacles to effective policy solutions. It reproduces a hierarchy of leaders and laggards, it presupposes an Eastern or Southern adjustment rather than the pursuit of EU-wide solutions (as seen particularly in the fiscal and immigration crises), and it precludes the analytical inclusiveness that is a prerequisite for effective policy compromises. The EU responses to the pandemic and, more recently, to the Russian war in Ukraine, seem to indicate that the metonymical reduction of Europe, and most particularly of the EU, to its prosperous North-West might be losing its grip. For a long time, though, and most relevantly in the thirty years the book explores, it operated at the very core of the EU as a formidable barrier to the pro-active solutions Jarausch advocates.

My second concern stems from the way in which the challenges of globalization (in terms of competition, innovation, adaptation) are presented throughout the book. They come from the outside, they originate from a dimension that is external to the book and the story it narrates, they rain upon the actors almost as natural events. In many ways, this cannot be avoided. For reasons of space and consistency, every text needs to simply refer to an external framework without analyzing it or even summarily describing it. I am totally sympathetic to the difficulties Jarausch mastered so well in producing a consistent, coherent eloquent story. Besides, most Europeans (like almost everyone else across the globe) no doubt perceive global pressures and trends as exogenous forces originating from a space they neither control nor fully understand.

Yet, the EU and some of its member states were among the most relevant shapers—alongside the even more influential US government and transnational financial actors—of the late twentieth century structure of globalization. Unlike governments and business in less prosperous parts of the world, they were not just at

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<sup>4</sup> Philipp Ther, *Europe Since 1989: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

the receiving end of options and rules that were chosen elsewhere. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the EU decisions on the Single Market, privatizations, and monetary union were significant factors of the march towards global liberalization. They actively co-produced the architecture of financial de-regulation, fostered the geography of global supply-chains, and resolutely promoted the culture—as well as the practices and legal frameworks—of unfettered market competition.

Jarausch concludes with a plea to “Europeans and Americans ... to reject the temptations of neoliberalism in order to reinvigorate the social solidarity of the welfare state” (281). As a European citizen, I could not agree more; as a historian, I would have welcomed a sharper analysis of Europe’s own neoliberal intoxication at the turn-of-the century.

“Writing a History of the Present: Responses to Reviews of *Embattled Europe*”

Writing a ‘history of the present’ is a risky undertaking that may lead an author severely astray. Much of the documentary record is still inaccessible and events remain in flux, lacking a clear caesura that would structure a narrative. But because an entire generation has elapsed since the end of the Cold War, I nonetheless believe that a preliminary assessment is needed in order to get one’s bearings in a confusing world. Such major developments as the post-Communist transition in Eastern Europe or the neoliberal response to globalization in the West, not to mention worldwide Islamic terrorism and the remapping of the continent, call for an explanation that analyzes how their present impact is becoming part of history. *Embattled Europe* is therefore an initial attempt to make sense of some crucial European developments during the last generation by putting them into a longer time perspective. Since the reviewers have dealt fairly with the book’s intent, the following remarks will merely address a few of their major comments.

In a spirit of cautious confidence, the book was written for an Anglo-American audience during the presidency of Donald Trump. Much of the populist right in the US and UK has engaged in vicious Eurobashing, denigrating the European way of life and predicting the imminent downfall of the European Union (EU). In this reactionary discourse Europe became the signifier for a liberal alternative to a neo-liberal, xenophobic, and sexist vision of America and Great Britain. In order to offer a rebuttal to these misleading attacks and predictions of doom, I wanted to stress not just the survival of the continent in the face of challenges like the Euro crisis, the migration wave, or the Brexit shock, but also to emphasize the progressive character of the European achievements. Therefore I have tried to argue that the increasing cultural gap between the United States and the continent has led to divergent interpretations of the same fundamental values of the West. Had the book been directed towards a continental public, it would have more strongly engaged the discrepancy between the European promise and the often frustrating performance of the EU.

Achieving this double historiographical and political purpose required an exploration of the European model as a distinctive way of life. As the reviewers note, the challenge was to distill some shared traits without falling prey to the naïve optimism of the Europhiles or the hypercritical pessimism of the Eurosceptics. In spite of numerous differences between individual countries, most of them have parliamentary governments, social market economies, and multilateral foreign policies, thereby allowing more citizen participation, more welfare support in their capitalist economies, and a more peaceful international stance than in the US or the UK. What needed to be explained is the progression from the euphoria of the ‘peaceful revolution’ in Germany and Eastern Europe to the disappointment of the financial crisis, mass migration, and British withdrawal from the EU, which threatened its very survival. Some of the explanations of continental survival have to do with European competitiveness, welfare states, and environmentalism, just to mention a few. In order to prevent a divorce, transatlantic relations have to be mended by a reset in democratic governance, defense policy and environmental cooperation—a development in which the Biden administration has made a promising start.

One of the key difficulties of such an undertaking, correctly stressed by several commentators, is the question of diversity and unity that defines what is meant by the contours of Europe in different contexts. Often the continent is equated with the European Union and the policies decided in Brussels because the EU speaks in the name of Europe. In contrast, I wanted to emphasize that the ‘lived Europe’ of Schengen, Eurailpass, or Erasmus exchanges was not coterminous with the European institutions like the European Parliament or the High Court, constituting instead a Europe of popular experiences from below. Moreover, what is commonly called Europe tends to be Northern and Western, thereby largely overlooking Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean countries, or the Balkan states. By locating each chapter opening in a different state, I tried to address the issue of diversity within the continent even if the Franco-German axis does dominate much EU decision making and the northwestern lifestyle tends to be emulated by other member states.

Another problem area that required a nuanced treatment is the ambivalent role of neo-liberalism as the guiding economic philosophy of the EU. The focus on the establishment of a common market, the legal framework of free internal trade, and the free movement of goods, people, services and capital breathes a neo-liberal spirit that has hindered the development of a common social and welfare policy. As a result, the integration of Eastern Europe into the EU structures has in some cases proceeded by a so-called shock therapy of rapid marketization that created an illiberal backlash in the affected population. Moreover, the response of the creditor nations to the sovereign debt crisis which emphasized austerity and fiscal orthodoxy exacted a high price in a decline of living standards in the concerned nations before growth visibly resumed. But ultimately the Eurozone members did rally around a defense of the shared currency and in the subsequent Covid emergency created the possibility of joint borrowing in order to help the weaker economies. In general, the reviewers seem to accept the argument that some neo-liberal policies helped European competitiveness, but that the welfare states needed to be preserved and common policy responses had to be developed.

Finally, the commentators correctly point out the weakness of Europe in its global role, energy security, and military posture, which became all too evident in the response to the Russian invasion of the Ukraine. Already the annexation of the Crimea and the occupation of Eastern Ukraine in 2014 suggested that Vladimir Putin's Russia had embarked on an expansionist course that would severely test the resolve of Western countries which had hitherto relied upon a codependency by purchasing Russian oil and gas. While few pundits predicted the all-out attack on Kiev in 2022, it is shockingly clear that the emphasis on mutual trade will not suffice to preserve peace. Putin's invasion produced exactly the opposite of its intention, namely a strengthening of Ukrainian nationalism, a concerted European reaction, and a tightening of transatlantic relations. In Germany, Sweden, and Finland, the Ukrainian war triggered a fundamental rethinking of security policies in a veritable *Zeitenwende*. Written before the Russian attack, *Embattled Europe* could not foresee Moscow's aggression—but its plea for Europe's development of renewable energy, the strengthening of defense capacity, and the beefing up its global role might help explain the united resolve of its reaction to the aggression. More than the Covid pandemic, the Ukrainian war may yet turn out to be the next historical caesura.