

REVIEW ARTICLE

Writing the History of Postwar European Democracy

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Rita Chin, *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), £20 (hb), ISBN 978-0691164267.

Sheri Berman, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Europe: From the Ancien Régime to the Present Day* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), £13 (hb), ISBN 978-0199373192.

Peter Gatrell, *Unsettling Europe: How Migration Reshaped a Continent* (New York: Basic Books, 2019), £27 (hb), ISBN 978-0465093618.

Martin Conway, *Western Europe's Democratic Age: 1945–1968* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), £21 (hb), ISBN 978-0691203485.

Kiran Klaus Patel, *Project Europe: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), £16 (hb), ISBN 978-1108494960.

In 1998, Mark Mazower concluded his *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* with the thought that Europeans rest content to be no longer at the centre of history and politics. They should enjoy the economic and political stability they had gained instead. 'If Europeans can give up their desperate desire to find a single workable definition of themselves and if they can accept a more modest place in the world, they may come to terms more easily with the diversity and dissension which will be as much their future as their past'.¹ As the title of Mazower's book suggested, this scholar of southeastern Europe writing in the wake of the Yugoslav civil war was not sanguine about the history of democracy on the continent. Contested and weak in the first half of the twentieth century, its liberal parliamentary kind continued to find a strong challenger in the people's democracy of the Eastern Bloc, which at least gave it a mission. Post 1990, Mazower saw disorientation about the continent's future political direction, and predicted instead the victory of capitalism. Indeed, to him the European Union was more a concession by its constituent states in order to maintain or regain prosperous national economies than a bold democratic endeavour.²

Seven years later, Tony Judt published *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, a text that, together with Mazower, has become one of the defining studies of the continent that emerged from communism's collapse in Eastern Europe. Writing following the issuing of the euro and with the entry of the first wave of post-communist countries into the EU imminent, Judt ended his study in a more positive key. Contrary to Mazower, Judt thought Europe had the best chance to offer other countries and regions 'some modest advice on how to avoid repeating their own mistakes. Few would have predicted it sixty years before, but the twenty-first century might yet belong to Europe'.³ Judt seemed to be a little undecided, however, whether the EU could be credited for some of this resurgence. He praised the 'community of values' that it represented, and that it allowed for someone to be 'French and

¹ Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 402.

² *Ibid.*, 401–2.

³ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 800.

European, Catalan *and* European – or Arab *and* European’ at the same time.⁴ Yet the locus of participatory democratic politics remained on the national and not the European level, at which citizens, according to him, remained mostly passive. Thus, the advice that Europeans could give stemmed from their overcoming of extreme nationalism and re-establishing democratic institutions at the state level. At the time of writing this review, Mazower’s description of a weak commitment to democracy ‘which allows racist parties of the Right to coexist with more active protection of human rights than ever before’⁵ seems the more prescient.

A third interpretation, originally published in 2009, sidestepped both Mazower’s advice that Europe be content with a less historical role, and Judt’s more positive assessment that a chastened Europe could provide a model for other regions. In his *Passage to Europe: How the Continent Became a Union*, Luuk van Middelaar argued that it was precisely after the fall of communism that Europe had entered the stage as a historical actor. ‘Not until the fall of the Wall in 1989, which shook the whole of Europe to its core, did the circle of member states find itself unable any longer to shirk history. Since then it has taken a second step, throwing off the Community and entering into the river of time as a Union’.⁶

After taking a break from academia to serve as speech writer to Herman van Rumpoy, the president of the European Council, from 2009 until 2014, van Middelaar offered an updated English version of his book in 2016. Rather than prompting him to revise his findings, the eurocrisis, the first Ukraine crisis of 2013/14, and the debates over migration only strengthened his belief in the centrality of Europe in the making of history today. For him, Europe’s centrality was based on a public of ‘European citizens’ and a new form of democracy that meaningfully existed on the European level.

For other historians, those same crises may not have confirmed the findings of pre-existing accounts but added urgency to the questions that Mazower, Judt, and Middelaar asked: how strong were commitments to democracy in Europe and to what kind of democracy? How could the continent deal with internal difference? And did Europe matter to the outside world? It is no accident that each of the texts reviewed here appeared after 2016, during an era when Brexit and the rise of populism on either side of the Atlantic prompted a new wave of soul-searching about the nature of democracy and its continued existence in Europe. Each of the texts draws a direct connection to current politics, more precisely the rise of (mostly right-wing) populism, a resurgence of nationalism, and the issue of how European countries have dealt with their non-white populations. Both Mazower and Judt included immigration in their accounts – Middelaar much less so – but its salience, and with it the legacies of Europe’s colonial past, has gained greater prominence. Similarly, Brexit, for Mazower and Judt not even on the horizon, for Middelaar a possibility, has become a reality, and, together with the standoff between the European Union and the Hungarian and Polish governments, has put the spotlight on the Union’s stability, as well as its stance on democracy. It might thus be worthwhile to start with how recent texts have treated the EU as a democratic project.

The European Project and the Project of Democracy

Kiran Patel, a historian at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, offers the only account directly concerned with the history of the European Union from its founding until the Maastricht Treaty. What he offers is no simple chronology, however. *Project Europe* rather goes through a set of eight questions, concerns, or (mis)conceptions about the European Union from its supposed technocratic nature to the contribution it made to preserving peace in the bloc. Patel calls this a ‘problem-oriented approach’, which also sets the tone of his inquiry. He is not interested in writing a teleological or congratulatory history of European integration full of well-conceived and well-meaning steps. He instead

⁴ Ibid., 798.

⁵ Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 397.

⁶ Luuk van Middelaar, *The Passage to Europe: How a Continent Became a Union* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 131.

regards it as a process that was, while more than a series of accidents, also far from a smooth development of an ever-closer union. Patel wants to debunk the view that the Union from the beginning was destined to become a unique institution. In contrast, he argues that only by the late 1960s did the European Economic Community emerge as the dominant entity within a web of European institutions, and even thereafter its development was far from linear. For example, in relation to Brexit as a supposedly novel case of a member state leaving the Union, Patel points to earlier cases of countries withdrawing from the bloc: Algeria and Greenland both did, equally leading to difficult negotiations over their future relationship to the Union, even if, in their cases, the departure formed part of the process of decolonisation. The colonial reach of the early European institutions further points to their complicated relationship to democracy.

Democracy, according to Patel and contrary to the Union's mythology, was not an important issue until the late 1960s. Only once the European Economic Community had to contemplate the membership of countries that either were not at the time democracies or had recently overthrown dictatorial governments, such as Spain or Greece, did it make democracy a formal prerequisite for membership. Democracy here, for Patel, is self-evidently parliamentary democracy. 1968, the new social movements, and calls for a different, more direct, and less authoritarian democracy – something Conway has much to say about – are mostly absent from his account. Patel sees the '70s and '80s as pivotal for the Union's development: the bloc first came into its own negotiating a Cold War détente and responding to the economic downturn following the oil crisis. During this era, the creation of the European parliament also reflected a greater interest in the internal democratisation of the union. According to Patel, the EU always remained an elite project. And at the elite level, the assumption that the EEC was a democratic project followed automatically from the democratic constitutions of its member states and needed no further elaboration – nor was it particularly important for its founding generation. Patel therefore has fairly little to say about the parliament, the elections or those popular movements that attempted to create a democratic public sphere in Europe. Staying resolutely focused on the Eurocrats, to Patel the Community's contribution to the democratisation of Europe lay mainly in maintaining social peace within the bloc through the redistribution of economic resources and especially in easing the transition from agricultural to highly urbanised economies. Even in the chapter on 'Participation and Technocracy', Patel is more interested in the ways that ordinary Europeans were touched by the Community – in his view, seldom in a way they noticed – than in how they participated in its decisions. Their influence through referenda on the national level rather than through elections for the European parliament, which he only discusses in passing, locates its democratic potential in the narrow electoral sense, on the national rather than European level. Patel's argument on democracy on the European level thus might best be described by using Till van Rahden's concept of 'democracy as a way of life'⁷.

Martin Conway, as the title of his book would suggest, is much more directly interested in the establishment of democratic governance in the Western part of the continent following the end of the Second World War. He too rejects easy teleologies that treat this historical development as a given. Rather he seeks to demonstrate the processes by which this, rather than other types of, political regime was established. Conway contends that the consensus that a parliamentary and party-centred democracy could best ensure stability in Western Europe emerged sooner than could be reasonably expected. Considering the devastation of the war and the early utopian promulgations of social transformation, other outcomes were just as conceivable. Especially in the first two years after Germany's defeat, new forms of popular democracy were propagated by not only the Eastern but also Western democratic parties. Yet the combination of Soviet behaviour in Europe's East and a legacy of anti-communism in the West soon meant that the appeal of popular democracy waned. In the place of programmes for more participatory forms of democracy, a top-down version that privileged parliaments and parties as mediators of opinion became the dominant form of government in Western Europe and remained largely unchallenged until the late 1960s. Politicians in this type of democracy

⁷ See Till van Rahden, *Demokratie: Eine gefährdete Lebensform* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2019).

sought consensus and stability through the inclusion of institutional stakeholders such as unions, while at the same time excluding political extremes and other groups that might threaten their power, such as women or migrants. This version of democracy then defined the period from 1945 until 1968, which Conway labels Western Europe's democratic age. In so doing, Conway is not claiming that post-1968 Europe ceased to be democratic. He rather argues that during the earlier period this shared understanding allowed democracy to become an ostensibly European concept and turned Europe into a self-declared democratic project. Contra Patel, for whom democracy plays a minor role in the early years of the European Community, for Conway, the technocratic and consensual EEC was an agent of democratisation. Its makers and shakers did not find democracy irrelevant, but the Union's institutions rather reflected governing elites' belief in the centrality of rationally organised institutions for the efficient and rational running of society and for avoiding a return to the tumultuous interwar period. This placed a premium on pragmatic rather than aspirational political programmes. And, as Conway explains, the rule of law and the power of juridical institutions over elected ones was another aspect of this hemming in of the passions of the people.

Democracy, consequently, became less a matter of victory or defeat than a process of continuous negotiation. Civil servants, elected politicians, the representatives of interest groups, and an expanding penumbra of expert advisors constituted an increasingly homogenous if at times rather aloof culture of government, from which the people themselves were largely absent. It was also, however, a world where decisions accorded, more often than not, with the logics of rational pragmatism, and with the constraints imposed by respect for the rule of law.⁸

What is now frequently described as a democratic deficit is for Conway part of a specific understanding of democracy born out of the experiences of the interwar period and the Second World War. Patel is less interested in the specific ideas of democracy that underpinned early Eurocrats' focus on institutions and the rule of law, but to him too, the European Court of Justice plays a crucial role in advancing European integration, though not always in predictable or even planned ways. Ever since the 1963 ruling *van Gend en Loos v Nederlandse Administratie der Belastingen*, individuals in specific cases had standing before the ECJ, a right the Tindermans Report of 1975, named after the Belgian prime minister who had been tasked by the heads of the member states with furthering European integration, recommended strengthening. Rarely used in practice, Patel thus views this ruling, together with other measures such as the institution of direct elections to the European parliament five years later, as important steps towards a more democratic constitution. However, to him the focus on rights and the rule of law was as much, if not more, driven by institutional self-preservation rather than the ideological commitment that Conway cites. The measures for further democratic elements in the bloc align chronologically with the challenging of the postwar democratic consensus by students, feminists, migrants, and queer people and others. Precisely for Patel's larger narrative of 'Project Europe' and its deficits, it could therefore have been illuminating to get a better sense of the debates within the EEC surrounding the Tindermans Report and the decision for direct elections for the European parliament. According to Richard Ivan Jobs, the focus on a 'People's Europe' emerged in response to 1968 and challenges to the established democratic practices.⁹ Yet Patel's sweeping historical overview, while illuminating for our understanding of the European Union's crises today, prevents a deeper engagement with questions such as changing notions of democracy. In Patel's account, democracy remains fairly resolutely in the singular. Rather than exploring different democratic models for the Union, democracy primarily means having regular, multi-party elections, although Patel never states this explicitly. Tellingly, neither democracy nor democratic legitimacy earned an entry in the index of *Project Europe*. Considering that democratic legitimacy and expanding democratic

⁸ Martin Conway, *Western Europe's Democratic Age: 1945–1968* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 11–12.

⁹ Richard Ivan Jobs, 'Youth Movements: Travel, Protest, and Europe in 1968', *The American Historical Review*, 114, 2 (2009), 376–404, here 399.

participation forms an important part of the discourse of crisis surrounding the EU according to Patel, the lack of deeper discussion of how the meaning of this notion has changed is unfortunate.

Liberal Democracy and the Homogeneous Nation

A minimalist or procedural definition of democracy is more problematic still as it features in Sheri Berman's *Democracy and Dictatorship in Europe* – not least considering the title of her book. A political scientist at Barnard College in New York, Berman offers a wide-ranging exploration of the preconditions for democracy in Europe since the French Revolution. In eighteen chapters, Berman uses case studies of specific developments such as English Exceptionalism (twice), the rise of fascism in Italy, and the transition to democracy in Spain, ending with a chapter titled 'Lessons from Europe'. In her introduction, Berman discusses different definitions of democracy, and settles on 'liberal democracy' as a means to assess the continent's progress towards democratic consolidation. For her, liberal democracy means that 'a government must be willing and able to guarantee the rule of law; and must protect minorities and individual liberties; and leaders and citizens must respect the democratic "rules of the game", and treat all members of society as political equals'.¹⁰ Her definition of liberal democracy does not change over time; only the degree to which societies do or do not achieve its standards shifts. Berman's account thus acquires a more pronounced teleological bent than the other books under review.¹¹ Consolidated liberal democracy is the endpoint of a historical path – even if it might be contested thereafter too – something to be achieved at the end of a process that is ideally sequenced into state, nation, and then democracy building. A typical description of this kind of historical evolution runs as follows: 'With this Fifth Republic, France finally achieved the political stability and consolidated liberal democracy that had eluded it for so long'.¹² In contrast to Conway then, the debates of historical actors about the meaning of democracy and its contested nature, for example in the 1960s and 1970s, are entirely absent. This means that Berman neglects the heated controversy over de Gaulle's constitutional changes in the transition to the Fifth Republic and their – in the view of the critics – potential for creating a demagogic and thus potentially illiberal direct connection between president and people.¹³ Berman comes closest to a historical discussion when referring to recent proponents of so-called illiberal democracy. Coincidentally, or maybe not so coincidentally, her definition of liberal democracy and democratic stability appears fairly similar to the conceptions of the postwar elites that Conway chronicles: a 'liberal democracy' premised on elections, institutions, and the rule of law and, above all, a strong state.¹⁴ In Berman's account, challenges to this form of democracy primarily originate from opponents of democracy from the right. Communism, as either an alternative model of people's democracy or as a common enemy for Western European politicians, as in Conway, is absent in her account of Western Europe. While she does discuss the development of communist rule in the East, she hardly relates this story to contemporary events in the West. Equally absent are the new social movements of the 1970s, which found such 'liberal democracy' deficient and advocated for a democratisation of all aspects of social life.

Berman's investigation of the preconditions for democratic stability allows her to see larger patterns obscured by the historian's focus on historical variability. But when she applies this approach to explain the current crisis of democracy in Europe and the West more generally in her concluding 'Lessons from Europe' chapter, her analysis falls well short. To her, the postwar success of Western Europe in becoming democratic rested on the homogenisation of nations as a result of genocide and ethnic cleansing during the war, the modernisation of societies by fascists who broke with the last vestiges of Ancien Régime privileges, and a discrediting of totalitarian models of both fascism

¹⁰ Sheri Berman, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Europe: From the Ancien Régime to the Present Day* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5–6

¹² *Ibid.*, 380

¹³ Conway, *Western Europe's Democratic Age*, 264–5

¹⁴ Berman, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Europe*, 392.

and communism. The trifecta of preconditions for European democratisation almost reads like a distorted form of the dictum of the West German constitutional jurist Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde: ‘*The liberal secularized state is sustained by conditions it cannot itself guarantee*’.¹⁵

In Berman’s case, her theory-driven claim rests on historically problematic assumptions. The modernising effect of German society by the National Socialists has been called into question – one only needs to read Stephan Malinowski’s recent *Nazis and Nobles: The History of a Misalliance* in which he details the German nobility’s participation in the Third Reich and their continued domination of the higher echelons, especially of the military. Equally irritating is the opening of the postwar chapter focusing on the Soviet military’s violence during its advance through Europe rather than the equally if not more excessive violence of the retreating German forces that left millions of dead and displaced Europeans in its wake. Most critical, however, for both her description of the functioning of postwar democracy in Western Europe and the lessons she derives from it, is a twin lacuna, a lacuna that becomes even more glaring after reading Conway and Patel, but also Peter Gatrell or Rita Chin in parallel: decolonisation and migration.

Berman’s account of a homogeneous Western Europe made up of nation-states entirely ignores the European empires, the often violent process of decolonisation, and the immigration of former colonial subjects to the metropole. For the period after 1945, colonies only appear in the context of the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. Decolonisation is not mentioned once, Algeria only in the briefest of sentences on the transition from the Fourth to the Fifth Republic in France, and immigration only appears as a problem of the European democracies of today. As a result, challenges to the homogeneity of the nation emerge only recently, in reaction to which opposition ‘can be easily whipped up today’.¹⁶ Here, Berman’s theoretical framework would actually have served her well to investigate earlier opposition to immigration and contestations of citizenship in Europe prior to the 2000s – which, reading Rita Chin’s account, appear eerily familiar. But by ignoring all earlier migratory trends, Berman never does. Chin, in contrast, traces the waves of debates about European societies’ diversity to understand where current conceptions of ‘European liberalism’ originated. In five thematic chapters that follow a chronological arch, yet also contain significant overlap – and produce some repetition – Chin chronicles the debates about multiculturalism and multicultural policies from the immediate postwar period to the declared ‘death of multiculturalism’ in the 2000s.

As a story of managing increasingly diverse and thus pluralist societies that understood themselves as democracies – Eastern Europe is excluded from her account – Chin addresses similar topics as Berman. These include citizenship and elections, the rule of law, and the power of institutions. Yet her account reveals a much less consolidated European polity than Berman, and complements Conway’s argument concerning the contingent and contested nature of democracy in Western Europe. And like Conway as well as Patel, Chin highlights the role of imperialism for postwar Europe. France, Britain, Belgium, and the Netherlands remained colonial empires after 1945, and, as they lost their empires, first migration from the colonies and then wider labour migration – that also occurred in West Germany or Switzerland – soon made the metropolises more diverse than they had been before.

Chin consciously places herself apart from those previous writings of European history that, according to her, could largely ignore such topics well into the 2000s¹⁷ – though Mazower in his much darker account than Judt already placed greater emphasis on the colonial context – and convincingly argues that the twin forces of decolonisation and immigration had a profound impact on the debates and the legislation surrounding national identity, citizenship, and with them democratic rights in Western Europe. Once colonial subjects arrived in the metropole and thus reversed the flow of

¹⁵ Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, ‘The Rise of the State as a Process of Secularization (1967)’, in Mirjam Künkler and Tine Stein, eds., *Böckenförde: Religion, Law, and Democracy: Selected Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 152–67, here 167. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁶ Berman, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Europe*, 387.

¹⁷ Rita Chin, *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 3.

metropolitan citizens moving to the colonies, the former empires had to determine whether they would stand by the fiction that all colonial subjects were part of the same polity who therefore possessed full civic rights. In Britain this process began with the arrival of the *SS Empire Windrush* in 1948. Diversity thus far had been confined to the colonies, while the metropole had been imagined as a white space. Yet, migration, also from outside of Europe, was part of the postwar European reality from the beginning, with the place of the migrants within societies that saw themselves as predominantly white to be determined. The relevance to Berman's account becomes immediately apparent here as it contradicts the latter's account of ethnically homogenised societies after the Second World War. While the British government was worried about their arrival, it was also cognizant that it could not give up easily on colonial subjects' legal right to enter the metropole, lest it further anti-colonial sentiment. The British media, however, had few such qualms and mostly portrayed the ship's passengers as immigrants and strangers.¹⁸ In the following decades, as more and more people arrived from the Commonwealth and staked their claim to Britain, British official policy became more restrictive. Yet according to Chin, British policy makers were ahead of their continental colleagues in recognising British society as increasingly diverse. This resulted in Britain being the first European country to pass legislation prohibiting discrimination based on race or ethnic background in 1965.¹⁹ The British legislation was certainly more specific in the public spaces in which discrimination would be illegal, but considering that both the West German constitution of 1949 and the French constitution of 1946 had already carried clauses to guarantee the equality of 'races', this might also have to do with the specific legal condition of Britain lacking a written constitution. Britain was, however, the first European society in which the term 'multiculturalism' took hold in the 1970s, as an import from the United States where it had emerged in the 1960s 'as an antidote to the homogenizing overtones of the melting pot analogy'.²⁰

In France, the rights of immigrants and particularly immigrant workers became part of the demonstrations of 1968, but in West Germany such topics were mostly absent from the new social movements' discussions of a further democratisation of society. About a decade later proposals for communal voting rights for 'guest workers' and their participation in union elections brought attention to the connection of conceptions of democracy and immigration. And at just the same time, in Britain, the relatively liberal era came to an end. The late '70s and early '80s instead witnessed the rise of a more 'muscular' British identity. The Thatcher government now embraced arguments about Britain 'being swamped' with people from 'alien cultures' and highlighted the 'patience that white Britain lost' when immigrants supposedly took their jobs. In this way, the Conservative government introduced language that very neatly maps on to current populist and anti-immigrant rhetoric. At the same time, the Thatcher government also allocated funds to local governments to support urban renewal schemes and thought to address some effects of structural racism without naming it as such. Paradoxically given much of Thatcher's rhetoric, this expansion of local levels of self-governance can also be seen as a result of the changing perception of democracy originating in the late 1960s.

Short lived as such efforts ultimately proved to be, they paralleled similar ones in France, the Netherlands, and West Germany and point to another important aspect of democratic policies and practices neglected by those studies focusing on the nation and state alone: the local. Conway already points to the importance of local politics as laboratories of democracy amidst the breakdown of central governments and of communication at the end of the Second World War. In 1975, Sweden granted non-citizens who had been resident in a municipality for at least three years the right to vote in and stand for municipal elections.²¹ The Netherlands awarded the right to vote in municipal elections to non-citizens in 1985. The Maastricht Treaty of 1993 that introduced European citizenship – another

¹⁸ Ibid., 29.

¹⁹ Ibid., 90.

²⁰ Ibid., 12.

²¹ Peter Gatrell, *Unsettling Europe: How Migration Reshaped a Continent* (New York: Basic Books, 2019), 239.

theme curiously absent from Patel – granted the right to vote and stand in municipal elections to all European citizens everywhere in the EU.

Chin's account of local initiatives complements Conway by providing a perspective on how conceptions of democracy changed after 1968, not least under the influence and pressure of the continent's increasingly diverse population. In West Germany, unions became an important site of 'guest worker' political activity even before these individuals gained citizenship. And wherever citizenship rights extended to immigrants, those groups became bolder and more active in the political sphere, demanding not only to be heard but also to be part of political institutions and the structures of power. Here too, some of the opposition to such demands that Chin recounts could almost come verbatim from the current backlash against proponents of diversity and so-called identity politics.

Chin's book predates some of the more recent iterations of this debate but provides a historical perspective on them in a way that Berman's even larger account cannot. Focusing on Britain, West Germany, and France, as well as to a lesser degree the Netherlands and Switzerland, she manages to write at once a European history as well as one for each of these nation-states. Shared trends on top of the individual histories of these countries emerge, in which Europe confronted its increasingly diverse societies. Chin's focus on the label 'multicultural' and 'multiculturalism' provides a useful lens to structure her book, yet sometimes also seems to be tasked to do too much, especially for the earlier periods. As she acknowledges, the term only came into use in Britain in the 1970s and continental Europe after 1989.²² The concept was a rather late import into the European discourse, and as such its applicability for the decades before the 1970s seems limited. Nonetheless, the term helps the reader understand how European countries' conceptions of democracy changed as a result of immigration. The very 'European liberalism' that has become a defining feature of any debate on democracy and the balance of multiple competing rights can only be understood through its genesis against supposed Islamic illiberalism as well as the fall of the Iron Curtain and the expansion of the European project. The negotiation of freedom of worship and freedom of expression, for example, arose in its particular form from the demands of Muslim immigrants to be allowed to, for example, wear headscarves in public institutions in France and Germany or to use legal avenues of redress against perceived slights of their faith in Britain. Gender and sexuality, too, and the rights of women or LGBTQI* people over the last twenty years have become a litmus test for what it means to be a liberal European. What is missing from Chin's account as a result of her focus on Western Europe are the more recent challenges to this left-right alliance of European liberalism. Berman describes some of the attacks on 'liberal democracy' by the proponents of a so-called 'illiberal one' such as the current Hungarian and Polish governing parties. These governments, but also far-right parties like the German Alternative for Germany (AfD), with their fight against LGBTQI* rights and 'gender Gaga' in the name of an 'Occidental' and 'Christian Europe', threaten the consensus of left and right whose emergence Chin chronicles in the late 1980s and 1990s. This consensus had an opposition to Islam as allegedly threatening 'liberal values', in particular women's and LGBTQI* rights, at its core. The positions of someone like the Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán or of Alice Weidel of the AfD condemning all Muslims laid bare, in turn, the illiberal assumptions at the heart of this consensus which summarily dismissed the individual rights of entire groups. The weak commitment to democracy that Mazower stated in 1997, in which racist parties targeting immigrants were not seen as a direct danger to democracy as such, comes to the fore here once more. Using Chin as a vantage point, it points to the long history of such a weak commitment. And, as Chin's study shows, only when histories of European democracy accurately depict the diversity of European societies in the twentieth century could this weak commitment become more robust.

Enriching Disturbances

Though Chin's political sympathies for a diverse and pluralist Europe are clear, the focus on European politicians and their management of diversity cannot but make her account one in which migration

²² Chin, *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe*, 17.

poses a problem to European societies. Peter Gatrell in his *Unsettling Europe* aims to write a history of the continent through migration, and pointedly not immigration, in a different key. As Gatrell states in his conclusion, without migration the continent 'would have been much impoverished: less unsettled, perhaps, but greatly diminished'.²³ Cognizant of the dark side of migration – though primarily located for him in the violence against immigrants by the resident population – Gatrell is interested equally in the contributions that migrants made to the economic development and cultural diversity and richness of the continent. Moreover, '[w]ithout putting migration and migrants at its heart, the history of Europe since the end of the Second World War is incomplete'.²⁴ Decolonisation, urbanisation, labour migration: all of these were fundamental to the history of the continent, which Gatrell describes in five parts and twenty-four chapters that stretch from the immediate postwar period to the Arab Spring. The European Union mostly features in these later chapters and as a distinctly nondemocratic force, impeding rather than enabling movement and throwing up new borders as it expands eastwards, disrupting patterns of trade and migration forged in the Socialist Bloc or before. His account seems to implicitly confirm Patel's argument that the union was not primarily interested or particularly good at directly involving citizens and that economic relations rather than democracy stood at the heart of its actions. Yet in contrast to Patel, Gatrell argues that these actions rendered the union anything but remote from ordinary people's lives, fundamentally altering the freedom of movement of both those in the new member states and those left outside.

Gatrell's focus on Eastern Europe here and on other occasions might not be surprising for an author trained as a Russian historian. Yet, alongside Berman, he is the only one of the five authors to spend considerable time on that part of the continent. Rather than using it only as a negative foil, as Berman does, for Gatrell the processes of migration in Eastern Europe have their own history that also on various occasions runs parallel to that of Western Europe. Urbanisation and economic migration in the Soviet Empire followed (sometimes) surprisingly similar paths to those in the West, even if under an illiberal regime. The Soviet Bloc too had to manage the decreasing importance of agricultural workers and the depopulation of the countryside. And while migration was in theory planned, the *shabashniki* (seasonal workers on collective farms and construction sites) and the stereotypes they encountered were not dissimilar to those of labour migrants in Western Europe. The Soviet Bloc too started to recruit its own workers from abroad in the 1980s, Czechoslovakia being the first port of call followed by Hungary and the GDR. On other occasions, migrations such as the flight of East Germans into West Germany or of Hungarians into Austria and beyond after the crushed uprising in 1956 powerfully connect the two.

In his account of migration, Gatrell is less interested in democracy or democratic institutions per se. He barely writes about elections, parliaments, parties, or other forms of organised political life. In his discussion of 1956, for example, the political aspirations that turned protesters into refugees barely feature, nor does the effect of their presence on the politics of the countries they flee to. To Gatrell, their economic contribution and the crisis influence on the UNHCR's refugee regime matter more. And yet, his rich account of practices, from food to music, from housing to vacations, and the conflicts and comforts these could involve, provides the texture for Chin's more overtly political history. Gatrell describes, for example, life in the *bidonville* (slum) in France, the depiction of former colonial subjects in French popular culture, as well as their sense of displacement but also attachment to French culture.²⁵

Conclusion

As such, Gatrell's account leads us back to the definition of democracy and how that influences the writing of a postwar European history of democracy. The postwar Europe that emerges from Peter Gatrell's history of migration is decidedly less settled or consolidated than Sheri Berman's longer

²³ Gatrell, *Unsettling Europe*, 455.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 236–7, 262–3.

view perspective might suggest. Together with Rita Chin, Gatrell demonstrates that the constant movement of people challenged European societies' understanding of themselves. As the political theorist Michael Walzer had already laid out eloquently in 1983, the status of outsiders within a democratic society greatly matters for the democratic status of the said society. Immigration without a path to naturalisation and full participation in the rights of citizenship undermines the notion of freedom and equality fundamental to any kind of democracy. This particularly applies to the liberal model that features in Berman's account, but also underpins the rule of law that is fundamental to Conway's and Patel's narratives.²⁶ Thus, even if Gatrell himself does not delve into the implication of migration for a history of democracy in postwar Europe, his book makes clear why it is necessary. Viewed alongside Gatrell's study, Chin's history of multiculturalism then allows the reader to realise that this is not purely a retroactive view, but an issue that the continent's politicians repeatedly debated across the postwar era. The reader will also note from her account how dismayingly repetitive these debates have been. This includes both the arguments against immigrants' and their descendants' rights to be equal members of the continent's societies, as well as the attacks against those defending such rights and making a case for a more diverse society. Consider this section: 'But the most widely resonant controversy focuses on the left-wing Hackney Council's supposed outlawing of the nursery song "Baa Baa Black Sheep". These "loony left" caricatures reinforced the sense that Labour-led municipal authorities were "irrationally obsessed" with "fringe issues"'.²⁷ This was 1981, not 2021 – though the realisation that the so-called 'culture wars' are nothing new and democratic societies have survived the last forty years and actually expanded citizenship rights to immigrants and their descendants might also be encouraging. As might be Conway's historicisation of specific forms of democracy and the reminder that those periods identified with stability also rested on the exclusion and marginalisation of large groups, and might thus be less desirable than first appears. What emerges from Conway, Chin, and to an extent also Gatrell is, to use the latter's terms, that not only postwar Europe but also democracy is an inherently unsettled political state in need of constant renegotiation.

For all the political tumult that may have prompted these new studies, the chronology of postwar European democracy that emerges from these accounts is not fundamentally different from those of, say, Mazower or Judt. The democratic consensus identified by Conway overlapped at least from the 1960s with greater demands for participation from below, not least as a result of immigration. That demand in turn coexisted with a more outspoken definition of what 'Western' values of individual secular rights entailed. While colonialism and migration play a significantly larger role than they did in the earlier works, the Cold War has receded into the background as we move farther away from it. Yet considering the role that the 'Christian Occident' played in defining Western Europe against the socialist East would have enriched Chin's account of the emergence of that trope.

Even beyond Europe, almost all new regimes since the end of the Second World War have called themselves republican or democratic of one kind or another. Every government at least needed to claim to speak for the people. Without explicit proclamations about placing Europe in or outside such a history of the global march of democracy, all authors under review here place the continent very much within this wider history. Conway, Chin, and Patel in particular trace the specific meaning of that term in Western Europe, and Berman offers a taxonomy to consider different kinds of democracies of liberal and other kinds. A sign of the victory of the liberal model after 1989 is the term that Orbán uses for his regime: 'illiberal democracy'. Rather than defining itself positively in opposition, as people's democracies at least attempted to do, what is left is negation. His and that of a number of other primarily European governments' attempts to move away from liberal norms has implications for the future of the European Union and its claim to be a democratic project. What history by way of Patel's account can tell us about this future is difficult to surmise, as he himself concedes. That the absence of a grand plan did not prevent the eventual emergence of an overall effective bureaucracy might reassure those observing the absence of just such a plan for the Union's further

²⁶ Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 61–2.

²⁷ Chin, *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe*, 251.

democratisation. Yet Patel's assessment of a more recent overreaching and overstretching EU, limiting the space for more flexible and partial solutions, bodes less well, as does the bloc's historic distance from its citizens. However, there is 'life in the old dog yet', and the recent joint issuing of debt and greater openness to treaty reform within the EU demonstrate that the union might have more life in it as an institution. The way immigration, however, continues to be an effective weapon to scare European governments and the Union itself, as Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko recently showed, demonstrates the continued urgency for a conception of democracy that effectively accommodates diversity. A number of the books under review here provide a history for that.