

PERRY ANDERSON

## AFTER THE EVENT

C RITICISM IS THE oxygen of self-reflection for any writer, as time is a test of intellectual or political judgement. I will try to say something about each, in responding to this trio of assessments, all acute, of *The New Old World*. First, as to its form, about which Philippe Schmitter expresses a courteous puzzlement. How should the book be classified? Is it sufficiently coherent to admit of any proper classification? Concluding that it would perhaps be best to assign it to the category of theoretical works on European integration, he confesses incomprehension as to why, in that case, so much of the book should be taken up with studies of the recent histories of France, Germany, Italy, Cyprus and Turkey.<sup>1</sup> He is certainly right that the movement of analysis in *The New Old World*, which runs from the supranational to the national and back to the supranational, is staccato rather than legato. The different levels of enquiry are juxtaposed, not integrated. In that, however, they could be said to reflect the disjuncture between the two arenas of European politics in the period under consideration, between which there was little lived connexion, a gap now closing. But Schmitter's question can still be asked: why, in a work on the history of the EU, descend from the all-Union level to deal with developments within particular countries at all?

The answer lies in the political purposes of the book. Most of the literature on the EU, as noted in its foreword, is highly technical, enjoying little currency among non-specialists; in addition much of it is so ideologically uniform as to stifle, rather than arouse, any interest in the variety of political conflicts and cultures across Europe. The result, reinforced by a widespread conformism of media opinion, remains a

surprising intellectual parochialism—a lack of any genuinely European public sphere. This will only be remedied when political curiosity can cross national borders in a natural to-and-fro of the kind that marked the continent's republic of letters in the time of Montesquieu or Hume, even that of Curtius or Benda, not to speak of its revolutionary versions in Trotsky or Gramsci. The aim of writing about the core countries of the Union, and its Eastern Question, on the plane where politics retains vastly greater popular meaning than in the rarefied machinery of Brussels, was to offer some reminder, however diminished, of this tradition.

To national introversion has corresponded, over the same period, continental self-satisfaction. This was the second target of *The New Old World*. If in the case of the first, the critical intention was performative, in that of the second it could hardly be more demonstrative. The book is a systematic attack on the European narcissism that reached a crescendo in these years: the claim that the Union offers a 'paragon'—in the formula of the late Tony Judt, echoed by so many other pillars of European wisdom—of social and political development to humanity at large. Since 2010, the lacerations of the Eurozone have left their own cruel commentary on these vanities. But have they, for all that, disappeared? That it would be premature to think so can be seen from an august example. Jürgen Habermas has just published another book about the EU, now following *Ach, Europa* (2008) with *Zur Verfassung Europas* (2011).<sup>2</sup> Its centrepiece, an essay entitled 'The Crisis of the European Union in the Light of a Constitutionalization of International Law', is a remarkable illustration of the patterns of thought indicated. Some sixty pages in length, it contains around a hundred references. Three quarters of them are to German authors. Nearly half of these, in turn, are to three associates whom he thanks for assistance, or to himself. The residue is exclusively Anglo-American, dominated—a third of the entries—by a single British admirer, David Held of recent Gaddafi fame. No other European culture figures in this ingenuous exhibition of provincialism.

More arresting still is the theme of the essay. In 2008 Habermas had attacked the Lisbon Treaty for failing to make good the democratic deficit

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<sup>1</sup> Despite his demurrer, a glance at Schmitter's *How to Democratize the European Union . . . And Why Bother?*, iconoclastic by any standards, is enough to indicate why I describe the logic of his own views as radically democratic.

<sup>2</sup> For discussion of *Ach, Europa*, see *The New Old World*, pp. 512–4.

of the EU, or offer any moral-political horizon for it. The Treaty's passage, he wrote, could only 'cement the existing chasm between political elites and citizens', without supplying any positive direction to Europe. Needed instead was a Europe-wide referendum to endow the Union with the social and fiscal harmonization, military capacity and—above all—directly elected Presidency that alone could save the continent from a future 'settled along orthodox neo-liberal lines'. Noting how far from his traditional outlook was this enthusiasm for a democratic expression of popular will that he had never shown any sign of countenancing in his own country,<sup>3</sup> I commented that, once the Treaty was pushed through, Habermas would no doubt quietly pocket it after all.

The prediction was an underestimate. Not quietly pocketing, but extravagantly trumpeting the Treaty, Habermas has now discovered that, far from cementing any chasm between elites and citizens, it is no less than the charter of an unprecedented step forward in human liberty, its duplication of the foundations of European sovereignty in at once citizens and peoples—not states—of the Union, a luminous template for a parliament of the world to come. The Europe of Lisbon, leading the way in a 'civilizing process' that pacifies relations between states, confining the use of force to punishment of those who violate human rights, is blazing a trail from our indispensable, if still improvable, 'international community' of today to the 'cosmopolitan community' of tomorrow, a Union writ large embracing every last soul on earth.<sup>4</sup> In such raptures, the narcissism of recent decades, far from abating, has reached a new paroxysm. That the Treaty of Lisbon speaks not of the peoples but of the states of Europe; that it was rammed through to circumvent the popular will, expressed in three referenda; that the structure it enshrines is widely distrusted by those subject to it; and that so far from being a sanctuary of human rights, the Union it codifies has colluded with torture and occupation, without a murmur from its ornaments—all of this vanishes in a stupor of self-admiration.

No single mind can stand, as such, for an outlook. Now laden with as many European prizes as the ribbons of a Brezhnevite general,

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<sup>3</sup> Habermas's impassioned intervention in the French referendum on the European Constitution in 2005, warning of catastrophe if it were rejected, was accompanied by complete silence as to the absence of any popular consultation in Germany, as indeed earlier over Maastricht.

<sup>4</sup> *Zur Verfassung Europas*, Frankfurt 2011, pp. 82–96.

Habermas is no doubt in part the victim of his own eminence: enclosed, like Rawls before him, in a mental world populated overwhelmingly by admirers and followers, decreasingly able to engage with positions more than a few millimetres away from his own. Often hailed as a contemporary successor to Kant, he risks becoming a modern Leibniz, constructing with imperturbable euphemisms a theodicy in which even the evils of financial deregulation contribute to the blessings of cosmopolitan awakening,<sup>5</sup> while the West sweeps the path of democracy and human rights towards an ultimate Eden of pan-human legitimacy. To that extent Habermas represents a special case, in both his distinction and the corruption of it. But the habit of talking of Europe as a cynosure for the world, without showing much knowledge of the actual cultural or political life within it, has not gone away, and is unlikely to yield just to the tribulations of the common currency. It is against this that *The New Old World* is in good part directed. Schmitter would be entitled, if he cared, to move it to a lower shelf, marked Polemics.

Alain Supiot points to another and larger limitation of the book. Beyond the awkward fit, or lack of it, between supranational and national levels, is the absence of any sustained treatment of Eastern Europe. This is something of which I was particularly conscious in designing its structure, since two earlier works on Europe had been built around systematic comparison between Western and Eastern Europe. I would have liked, in however reduced a measure, to retain something of that balance in looking at the continent today. Reasons of space and of existing coverage made me feel it was preferable to concentrate on just one legacy of that earlier history: what has become of the Ottoman remains in Turkey and Cyprus, of which any critical awareness is rare in today's EU. Supiot's critique is a more far-reaching one, however, than of a shortage of equivalent discussion of the ex-Communist countries of Eastern Europe in *The New Old World*. It focuses on the structural consequences of enlargement to the East within the EU as a whole. Indicated at the outset of the book as a major transformation to come, the effects of expansion are not, as he rightly notes, given commensurate treatment thereafter. How decisive their contribution has been to the overall neo-liberal turn of the Union may be moot, but that enlargement has worked in this direction there can be little doubt. Where I would enter a caution is in eliding too swiftly the doctrinaire neo-liberalism adopted by ex-Communist East European elites with the exploitative pragmatism of

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<sup>5</sup> 'The cunning of economic reason': see *Zur Verfassung Europas*, p. 77.

the still-Communist rulers of China. However ruthless their treatment of labour, their handling of currency, land and capital markets, not to speak of state enterprises, remains distinct, like the economic growth they have posted to date.

Moving to Western Europe, our judgements differ to some extent on one institution. Suptot sees the German Constitutional Court as a bastion of democratic principles ignored elsewhere in the EU, suggesting that I wrongly dismiss its verdict on the Lisbon Treaty as an expression of German nationalism. This is not so. The Court's judgement has been attacked by Habermas and others along these lines,<sup>6</sup> but I do not share their view. My criticism is of its inconsistency. If democratic rights are as unretrenchable as the Court's opinion theoretically holds them to be, the Lisbon Treaty—blatantly designed to flout the democratic will of French and Dutch voters—should not have been upheld by it. The reason the Court did so, waving democratic principles with one hand while rubber-stamping their evacuation with the other, was entirely traditional: to accommodate the political establishment of the day. Suptot is correct in saying that the German Court enjoys greater moral authority and perhaps a higher level of legal culture than its counterparts elsewhere in the EU. But this is not a very high bar to exceed. The reality, as shown by many decisions of the Court—most recently its approval of Schroeder's dissolution of the Bundestag in 2005—is that its judges, all political appointees, rarely balk at bending to the powers that be, provided the two major parties are at one on an issue, as over the Chancellor's ability to call a snap election by faking a vote of confidence in the Chamber, or ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. Its more candid members make no secret of this. Once asked where he would place the degree of real independence of the German Court—closer to the Italian Constitutional Court, famous for its general pliability, or the US Supreme Court, capable of defying any Executive—Dieter Grimm, perhaps its most distinguished recent member, replied without hesitation: better than the Italian, but nearer to it than to the American. It is unlikely that the oligarchy of the EU will ever encounter much of a setback at Karlsruhe.

Where Suptot looks back with admiration to a time when the European Community respected the principles of the welfare state, Jan-Werner

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<sup>6</sup> For example, Daniel Halberstam and Christoph Möllers, "The German Constitutional Court Says "Ja zu Deutschland", *German Law Journal*, October 2009, pp. 1241–58.

Müller discounts any belief that there was a golden age of broader democratic will in its early years. Insulation of elites from the masses and aversion to popular sovereignty was built, he argues, not only into the process of European integration from the start, but post-war reconstruction of the nation-states of the continent themselves. Chief among the instruments in restricting the exercise of popular will was the very species of institution to which Supiot now looks as a safeguard of it—the new constitutional courts, with the Bundesverfassungsgericht itself in the lead. Backing these up was an array of political prohibitions and exclusions, of which the banning of the German Communist Party under Adenauer and the *Radikalenerlass* under Brandt set the example. The era of a ‘Social Europe’ was the epoch of the Cold War, when the battle against Communism required a tight corset to keep democracy upright. There is more continuity than generally allowed, by myself and others, to the shortcomings of the democracy on which today’s Union nominally rests.

There is undoubted force to this case. But it is not uniform across the members of original Community. Müller’s prime evidence comes from West Germany, emerging from Nazism and confronting East Germany on the front line of the Cold War. There American influence was always strongest, and the battle cries of the Free World in its struggle against Totalitarianism rang loudest. In France, the Fourth Republic set up no constitutional court, while the PCF was too large for its proscription to be feasible. Not that there was any inhibition about unleashing police repression where required: Jules Moch could rival any German social democrat in no-holds-barred anti-Communism. But the structural constraints on popular will came rather from such a high turnover of cabinets that a permanent body of unelected *hauts fonctionnaires* could dominate the executive. In Italy, the configuration was different again. There the PCI was long flanked by a mass Socialist Party, and so could not be confined to a ghetto, while the attempt by Christian Democracy to rig the electoral system—Scelba’s *legge truffa* of 1953—was thwarted not by misgivings of the Vatican, but popular mobilization of the Left against it. Müller’s larger argument about the origins of European integration remains. Many of the political actors behind the Treaty of Rome—Spaak, Hallstein, Mollet, Martino—were, of course, stalwarts of the Cold War. But the trigger for the Treaty came in a recoil from the US, not the USSR. It was the political lessons Paris drew from the portcullis Washington dropped on the Suez Expedition in 1956 that cleared the way

to the Franco-German understanding on the Common Market. Monnet himself, the ancestor of integration, was certainly a quintessential figure of the corridors rather than the hustings. But he was also remarkably free from the Cold War fixations of the period, looking forward to a united Europe that would balance between America and Russia.

However constrained the West European democracies of the post-war period, they nonetheless involved genuine mass parties and governments responsible to voters, as the EU of the last twenty years has not. A metamorphosis since Maastricht is unmistakable. Müller, highlighting the *diktat* to Greece, concedes as much. His concern that Hungary is breaching democratic norms in another way is well taken. This is a process, however, that began not with Orbán but his predecessor Gyurcsány, an ex-Communist ruler to Supiot's specifications, Brussels's favourite politician in Budapest, whose boasts that he lied to voters continuously to win office set in motion the local degradation of the political process. Nor, of course, are the regressions in Hungary to be compared with the violations of every principle of democracy and human rights at work in the military occupation and ethnic cleansing of a large part of Cyprus, a member-state of the Union about whose fate not a critical peep is to be heard in what passes for a European public sphere.

Müller ends by wondering whether Germany could use its power to recast the EU into a form at once more effective and more democratic than its present shape. The reality to date has been just the opposite: the regime in Berlin has deepened both the disarray and the autocracy of the system at Brussels. To see why, a sense of the underlying dynamic at work in the crisis of the Eurozone is needed. Put simply, it is a resultant of the intersection of two independent fatalities. The first is the general implosion of the fictive capital with which markets throughout the developed world were kept going in the long cycle of financialization that began in the eighties, as profitability in the real economy contracted under the pressure of international competition, and rates of growth fell decade by decade. The mechanisms of this deceleration, internal to the workings of capital itself, will be familiar to any reader of Robert Brenner's work.<sup>7</sup> In turn, its effects in the vast expansion of private and public debt, to prop up not only rates of profit but political electability,

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<sup>7</sup> See *The Economics of Global Turbulence*, London and New York 2006; and taking the story up to the crash of 2008, 'What is Good for Goldman Sachs is Good for America', CESTACH paper, April 2009.

have been magisterially set out by Wolfgang Streeck in these pages.<sup>8</sup> The American economy illustrates this trajectory with paradigmatic clarity. But its logic has been system-wide.

In Europe, however, a further logic was set in motion by the reunification of Germany, and the design of the monetary union agreed at Maastricht, followed by the Stability Pact, both cut to German requirements. Presiding over the common currency would be a central bank of Hayekian conception, answerable neither to voters nor governments, but only to the single objective of stable prices. Dominating the new currency zone would be its biggest economy, now enlarged to the east, with a major reservoir of cheap labour just across its borders. The costs of reunification were high, dragging down German growth. To recoup, German capital enforced an unprecedented wage repression, accepted by German labour under threat of outsourcing to Poland, Slovakia or beyond.<sup>9</sup> As manufacturing productivity rose and relative labour costs declined, German export industries became more competitive than ever, taking an increasing share of Eurozone markets. In the periphery of the Eurozone, on the other hand, the corresponding loss of competitiveness of the local economies was anaesthetized by a flow of cheap capital borrowed at interest rates held virtually uniform across the space of the monetary union, according to German prescriptions.

When the general crisis of over-financialization set off in the United States hit Europe, the credibility of this peripheral debt crumbled, threatening a chain of state bankruptcies. But whereas in the US, massive public bail-outs could stave off the collapse of insolvent banks, insurance companies and corporations, and the printing of money by the Federal Reserve could check contraction of demand, two barriers blocked any such temporary resolution in the Eurozone. There, not only did the statutes of the ECB, enshrined in the Treaty of Maastricht, expressly forbid it from buying the debt of member states, but there was no *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*—that ‘community of fate’ of the Weberian nation—to bind rulers and ruled together in a common political order, in which the former will pay a heavy price for ignoring altogether the existential needs of the latter. In the European simulacrum of federalism, there could be no ‘transfer union’ along American lines. Once crisis

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<sup>8</sup> ‘The Crises of Democratic Capitalism’, NLR 71, September–October 2011.

<sup>9</sup> For figures of German wage costs between 1998 and 2006, and a forecast of their impact on the southern economies, see *The New Old World*, p. 52.



struck, cohesion in the Eurozone could only come, not from social expenditure, but political dictation—the enforcement by Germany, at the head of a bloc of smaller northern states, of draconian austerity programmes, unthinkable for its own citizens, on the southern periphery, no longer able to recover competitiveness by devaluation.

Under this pressure, governments in the weaker states have fallen like ninepins. The political mechanisms have varied. In Ireland, Portugal and Spain, outgoing regimes presiding over the onset of the crisis have been swept away in elections installing successors committed to more drastic doses of the same remedies as before. In Italy, internal erosion and external intervention combined to replace a parliamentary with a technocratic cabinet, without recourse to the polls. In Greece, a regimen imposed by Berlin, Paris and Brussels has reduced the country to a condition reminiscent of Austria in 1922, when a High Commissioner was posted to Vienna by the Entente—under League of Nations colours—to run the economy to its satisfaction.<sup>10</sup> All but universally, the prescriptions applied to restore the faith of financial markets in the reliability of local intendancies include cuts in social spending, deregulation of markets, privatizations of public property: the standard neo-liberal repertoire, assorted with increased tax pressures. To lock these in, Berlin and Paris are currently resolved to force the requirement of a balanced budget into the constitution of all seventeen nations of the Eurozone—a notion long regarded in America as a shibboleth of the crackpot right.

The nostrums of 2011 will not cure the ills of the Eurozone. Spreads on government debt are not going to return to pre-crisis levels. Nor is the accumulation of debt only public—far from it: by some estimates, unsecured bank liabilities may be as high as €1.3 trillion. The problems are deeper, the remedies feebler, the enforcers brittle than officialdom can admit. As it becomes clear that the spectre of defaults has not gone away, the expedients patched together by Merkel and Sarkozy are unlikely to last. The partnership between them has not, of course, been equal.

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<sup>10</sup> Picked for the job was the right-wing mayor of Rotterdam, Alfred Zimmerman, a stalwart of the suppression of a Dutch attempt to emulate the German revolution of November 1918, who remained in control until 1926. 'He untiringly criticized the government, emphasized its shortcomings, demanded more and more economies, more and more sacrifices from all classes of the population', and pressing 'the government to stabilize its budget on a much lower level', took the position 'that until this was brought about the control had to continue': Charles Gulick, *Austria from Habsburg to Hitler*, Berkeley 1948, vol. I, p. 700.

Germany, more than any other state the ultimate author of the euro-crisis, in driving through a system of capital relaxation abroad and wage repression at home, has also been the principal engineer of the attempts to stifle it. In that sense, the hour of a new European hegemon has arrived. With it, punctually, has appeared the first unabashed manifesto of German paramountcy in the Union.

In a leading article for *Merkur*, the Federal Republic's most important organ of intellectual opinion, the Konstanz jurist Christoph Schönberger explains that the kind of hegemony Germany is destined to exercise in Europe has nothing in common with the deplorable 'slogan of an anti-imperialist discourse à la Gramsci': it is to be understood in the wholesome constitutional sense expounded by Heinrich Triepel, to designate the leading function of the most powerful state within a federal system, such as that of Prussia within Germany in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The EU is just such a system—an essentially inter-governmental consortium gathered in the European Council, whose deliberations are necessarily 'sound-proof' to the public, and which only science fiction could imagine might ever become 'the blue flower of democracy clean of all earthly institutional residues'. But since the states represented in the Council are vastly unequal in size and weight, it would be unrealistic to think they could coordinate between themselves on equal terms. To work, the Union requires the state that is a different order of magnitude in population and wealth to give it coherence and direction. Europe needs the hegemony of Germany, and Germans must cease to be shy in exercising it. France, its nuclear arsenal and seat in the Security Council now of little relevance, must adjust its pretensions accordingly. Germany should handle France as Bismarck dealt with Bavaria in that other federal system, the *Kaiserreich*, soothing the lesser member with symbolic awards and bureaucratic balances under Prussian primacy.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Christoph Schönberger, 'Hegemon wider Willen. Zur Stellung Deutschlands in der Europäischen Union', *Merkur*, no. 752, January 2012, pp. 1–8—the first issue of the journal under a new editor. Bismarck's opinion of the Bavarians, of course, is famous: 'half-way between an Austrian and a man'. The conceptual inspiration for Schönberger's construction, the inter-war jurist Heinrich Triepel, was not just an admirer of Bismarck's marshalling of Germany under Prussian hegemony. In 1933 he welcomed Hitler's assumption of power as a 'legal revolution', and ended his book on hegemony in 1938 with a paean of praise to the Führer as the statesman who, in annexing Austria and the Sudetenland, had finally realized the age-long German dream of a fully unified state: *Die Hegemonie. Ein Buch von führenden Staaten*, Stuttgart 1938, p. 578.

Whether France can so readily be lowered to the status of Bavaria in the Second Reich remains to be seen. Under Sarkozy, the analogy might not seem so outlandish, in the cleaving of Paris to the priorities of Berlin. But perhaps a better parallel would be a more contemporary one. In these years, the anxiety of the French political class never to be separated, but always associated, with German designs within the Union has become increasingly reminiscent of that other ‘special relationship’, the desperate British clinging to the role of *aide-de-camp* to the United States. Yet it may be wondered how long such French self-subordination is likely to continue, without a reaction. Boasts from the General Secretary of the CDU that ‘Europe now speaks German’ are a recipe more for resentment than compliance. The new hegemon may be flexing its muscles. But it remains a lame one, unable either to dismantle the monetary union generating disorder, or to move beyond it towards a political union in which it would have to accept fiscal transfers its electors refuse.

Equally fragile are other fixtures of the current landscape. The Hayekian levees of the European Central Bank are likely to come under mounting pressure from the tides of debt as the crisis continues. Should the waters rise much higher, it is improbable they will resist. If no self-attribution is more central to the ideology of the Union than its claim to embody the rule of law, no bureaucracy has been more flexible in finding ways to void it. Who would be surprised to learn from its lawyers that the clauses in the Treaty of Maastricht apparently forbidding the Bank to buy government debt, properly understood, actually mean that—via, no doubt, a decorous detour—it is obliged to do so?<sup>12</sup>

Nor, finally, do the two regimes trying to corral the rest of Europe into the stockade of their stabilization schemes themselves look particularly durable. In Germany, Merkel has lost one regional poll after another, even in the safest Christian Democratic bastion of all, Baden-Württemberg; while her FDP partners face—not for the first time—electoral extinction. In France, Sarkozy has forfeited the National Front vote without compensation in the centre, and now lags behind the hitherto blandest PS

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<sup>12</sup> Procedures already smoothly at work, as an insider reports with satisfaction. ‘The whole concept of getting around European rules and doing QE without calling it QE was extremely clever’, Lucrezia Reichlin—former head of research at the ECB—told the *Financial Times* on 8 February 2012, adding that it was Trichet’s idea. Under Draghi, banks now reap further benefits from an engrained Italian respect for rules.

functionary of all. There seems little reason why the rejection of incumbents that has been the pattern of every European poll since the crash of 2008 should not take this pair down, too. Whether the return of social democracy to power in Paris and Berlin would much affect the course of the crisis is another question. Left to itself, in all probability it would make little difference; it is easy to imagine Hollande or Gabriel coming to power in much the same fashion as Rajoy, without any positive voter investment, as the only alternative to hand. Serious popular turbulence would, of course, change matters. To date, that has surfaced only in Greece. Elsewhere, the elites have yet to hear from the masses. That there is no guarantee that even acute hardship must detonate, rather than numb, popular reactions is clear from Russian passivity under the catastrophe of Yeltsin's rule. But the populations of the Union are less beaten and, were conditions to deteriorate sharply, their fuse is likely to be shorter. Looming at the back of all scenarios is the bleak fact that, even if the crisis of the euro could be resolved without steep cost to the weakest, improbable enough, the underlying contraction of growth would remain.

Looking outwards, however, there is one area where the recovery of office by Social Democrats and Greens might alter calculations. Of the major regimes surveyed in *The New Old World*, only that in Turkey has prospered since the crisis. There Erdoğan secured a third mandate in the summer of 2011, if still with a vote below that of Menderes or Demirel at their height, and on the back of a burst of consumption for electoral purposes that is unlikely to be sustained. As with Menderes, each extension of power has meant an increment of repression: *noyautage* of police and judiciary, imprisonment of journalists, bludgeoning of students and trade-unionists, trumped-up charges against opponents, drone-directed slaughter of Kurds. These are no disqualification for the Union, where the door for Turkey remains ajar. Before the crisis, a departure of Sarkozy and Merkel from the scene would have swung it open. Since then, the AKP regime in Ankara, flush with rapid growth and hot money, has turned to the Middle East as a more welcoming arena for its ambitions, and acquired a new swagger—not to the point of withdrawing its candidacy to the EU, but putting it on the back burner, while it pursues a Neo-Ottoman role as mentor to the Arab world, warmly encouraged by America. How the new self-confidence of Turkey as a regional power would interact with a friendlier Franco-German axis, once the import bubble floating Turkish growth bursts, remains to be seen.

For the moment, at least, the operations of each around the Mediterranean largely converge. The period since the crisis has seen, as predicted, the first open rehearsal of Europe for the role of deputy empire in its regional theatre; in keeping with expectations, it was Sarkozy who took the initiative.<sup>13</sup> With his standing at home plunging in the polls, and his image abroad compromised by ties with the falling dictatorships in Tunisia and Egypt, he opted for an attack on their Libyan counterpart to cleanse his slate and restore his popularity. Enlisting Britain and bouncing Italy, along with assorted lesser lands, under cover of a UN authorization to ‘protect civilian lives’ by ‘whatever means necessary’, a prolonged aerial assault was launched, logistically dependent on Washington, Turkey scavenging in the ruins.<sup>14</sup> The destruction of the Gaddafi regime has set the precedent for further and firmer adventures, should the occasion arise. The Alawite dynasty in Syria, under joint EU sanctions and Turkish encirclement, is next in the line of fire, with a supporting media and financial barrage from Qatar; Iran lies ahead. The implications for domestic society of a return to older European footholds in North Africa and the Levant have yet to unfold. Some indications of the tensions it could bring are already visible in disputes between France and Italy over the fate of immigrants from the Maghreb and attrition of Schengen rules. Tripoli and Tunis are closer to Rome and Paris than are Ankara or Iskenderun. The southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean are unlikely to offer Europe a good conscience on the cheap indefinitely.

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<sup>13</sup> *The New Old World*, pp. 544 ff, 198–9.

<sup>14</sup> For the political realities of the Libyan operation, and the UN’s mantle over it, see the detailed analysis in Hugh Roberts, ‘Who Said Gaddafi Had to Go?’, *London Review of Books*, 17 November 2011.