

the ideological differences in the Parliament. The voting patterns of EPP and PES have remained the same after the enlargement as they were before. Given the concept of two main ideological cleavages in the EP – the left-right and integration – the results have shown that while the two major political groups tended to vote alike when it came to issues connected to the level of integration among the member states, they differed on the left-right issues.

The author's approach to individual chapters and the partial research problems can be considered to be correct, well explained and reasoned. He is aware of the potential limitations of the methods used and comes up with alternative explanations for the results of the research. His research technique is rigorous, transparent and could be quite easily replicated. In this respect, Bressanelli's publication is not one of those whose primary goal is to present new methods or approaches. Instead, the main contribution of his work lies in the persuasive attempt to apply the classic theoretical framework of party families, ideology and competition on the level of the political system of the EP. The argument that to extend the breadth of the discipline of comparative politics, it is necessary to climb up the ladder of abstraction and thus perceive the Union as a developing political system, regardless of its sui generis character and how it differs from the political systems of national states (p. 6–7), can only be agreed with. Even more commendable in this respect is the fact that the analysis is not limited to the 'old' EU member states but clearly shows that the accession of the 'new' member states and the presence of their political parties has not had any major negative impact on the political groups' organization, ideological coherence and level of competition. Consequently, Bressanelli's conclusion which contains a clear and by no means subtle policy message concerning the

capability of the political parties to constitute a key pillar in the developing political system of the Union can be considered reasonable and well-founded.

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**Cramme, Olaf
and Hobolt, Sara B., eds.**

DEMOCRATIC POLITICS IN A EUROPEAN UNION UNDER STRESS.

Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2014.
272 pages.

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Democratic Politics in a European Union under Stress is the first comprehensive political analysis of the Euro crisis that erupted in Greece 2010 and has subsequently been a dominant issue in national and continental debates. The intervention in monetary policy by the union has left a profound mark on democratic politics all over Europe. Dr. Olaf Cramme, Director of the Policy Network and a Visiting Fellow at the European Institute of LSE alongside Professor Sara Hobolt, who is the Sutherland Chair in European Institutions and Professor at the European Institute of LSE, bring together some leading academic minds to analyze a union which is under stress and very much threatened for survival. The changing public attitudes and voting preferences, institutional and societal norms and political traditions of the member states bring forth the valid question: Is the EU politically sustainable?

While previous commentary focused on either the regulatory procedures and policies of banks or the technocratic details of EU monetary policy, the contributors here are skeptical of radical reform and skeptical that the EU can go back to how it was before. Firmly planted political traditions offer policymakers a difficult choice in their efforts to reconcile national preferences with broader European interests. Any sort of cohesion has been put under such pressure that dysfunction occurs. An increase, generally speaking, in economic and fiscal coordination at the European level and EU crisis management, in particular, has received fierce criticism for the democratic erosion in the EU. Such criticism, while warranted, is addressed in the volume. Tensions, new governance structures and the shifting balance of power are provided by Crammed and Hobolt in their rich commentary, with distilled wisdom and hope for a post-crisis EU.

The volume approaches the central question of EU sustainability from different perspectives, such as citizens' ambiguous attitudes towards the union, the response ability of national and European institutions and, arguably most importantly, the projection of legitimacy and democracy from the national to the EU level.

The subsequent twelve chapters in this collection are a significant contribution to three current debates; the presumed structural flaws of the European Monetary Union (EMU) and the EU's response to them, the ability of politicization to reduce the EU's democratic deficit, and the future of European integration between the poles of federalism and collapse. In their approach to this complex and topical subject the volume is divided into two parts: the first part examines the political consequences of the crisis, while the second explores the prospects for a more legitimate and democratic EU. Opinions on both the pros-

pects and remedies for a democratic and legitimate Union differ considerably though in this collection. In the first part of the volume, Fritz W. Scharpf convincingly presents the fragility of political legitimacy of the current euro regime, meanwhile Frank Schimmelfennig investigates how the euro crisis has affected differentiated integration, aptly pointing out (p. 132–133) one of the most important problems for democracy in the EU today: the increasing EU interference with democratic choice at the national level. These two scholars are bookends to an accounting of the political consequences of the crisis. Sara B. Hobolt examines EU citizens' complex attitudes toward the EU, Hanspeter Kriesi and Edgar Grande show the Europeanization of the national political debate within the media. Jonathan White exposes the difficulties that political opposition have faced against executive-dominated emergency politics while Tapio Raunio explores the increased involvement of national legislatures in EU politics.

The prospects of increased legitimacy and democracy within the EU is discussed in the second part of the volume, particularly in the first and final chapters which give the reader innovative interpretations of European integration. While, perhaps a bit dry, Waltraud Schelkle offers an insurance view of monetary integration. He makes the claim that contrary to the popular opinion that the diversity of EU economies is to blame for Eurozone woes, it is this very diversity that has helped member states cope with the interdependence of the monetary union. Severer Gustavsson gives a thought-provoking contribution, arguing that political liberalism needs to be restored in order to sustain the informal pact of confidence that member states rely upon. The new EU economic governance structure is explained in Simon Hix's overview, and scholars Catherine E. de Vries, Damian Chalmers and Mariana Chaves investigate the current state

of democracy in the European Union. Interestingly enough, in her contribution which examines the supranational and intergovernmental channels of electoral democracy in the EU, de Vries' found that such channels work better. The second part of the volume is also given considerable context in Andreas Follesdal's chapter. He reviews the usual arguments about the democratic deficit of the union and recommends new democratic standards. According to Follesdal, this asymmetric polity relies heavily on federalist theory.

There are several strengths found within *Democratic Politics in a European Union under Stress*. The euro crisis 'has challenged many existing preconceptions and long-held-assumptions within the EU' (p. 5). The legitimacy problems of the EU is a consequence of the crisis. This point has been effectively conveyed by the authors in this volume. Meanwhile, another strength is the volume's thematic comprehensiveness in uniting contributions that both produce the standard concepts of European integration studies and political theory, while addressing more general, fundamental questions about the EU's political sustainability. These questions are then examined, with case studies thoroughly exploring the questions of legitimacy and democracy in the EU from the perspective of specific actors.

There are some criticisms. Due to the plurality of approaches and topics, it is difficult for the reader to follow all the arguments put forth in the book. The lack of integration of the chapters may be taken by fellow academics as a major shortcoming as might the novice reader. Finally, a concluding chapter that both recounts and integrates the numerous avenues of thought presented in the volume would have been beneficial, especially if this volume is intended as a textbook.

However, because the volume is diverse in methodology, encompassing counter-factual

reasoning, empirical data, such as public-opinion polls, party positions, newspaper articles, economic indicators, and EU law, the volume adds up to both an encompassing and profound account of the present state and prospects of democratic politics in the union. To their credit, Cramme and Hobolt have produced a fine work in which scholars have spent considerable time looking at some deeper questions with a critical eye. The volume is a valuable contribution to the field because it offers fresh perspectives on democratic politics in the constantly changing European Union.

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**LeDuc, Lawrence and Niemi,
Richard G. and Norris, Pippa, eds:**

**COMPARING DEMOCRACIES 4:
ELECTIONS AND VOTING
IN A CHANGING WORLD.**

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The book *Comparing Democracies 4* with the subtitle *Elections and Voting in a Changing World* published in 2014 under the editorial supervision of Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi and Pippa Norris is the fourth volume of successful series of collectively created publications which brings together prominent scholars and summarizes the current state of the art in the field of electoral research and the overlap into the theory of democratic functioning. All of