

The end of history and the last European

Professor Michael A Wilkinson

LSE Law

Summary

1. European integration consolidates a postwar order of passive authoritarian liberalism
2. End of the Cold War signs the deepening and widening of this order *and* a series of challenges to it
3. 'Long decade' of Euro-crises is unresolved, revealing its weak hegemony
4. (Rupture from the EU is a necessary but not sufficient condition to restore democracy).

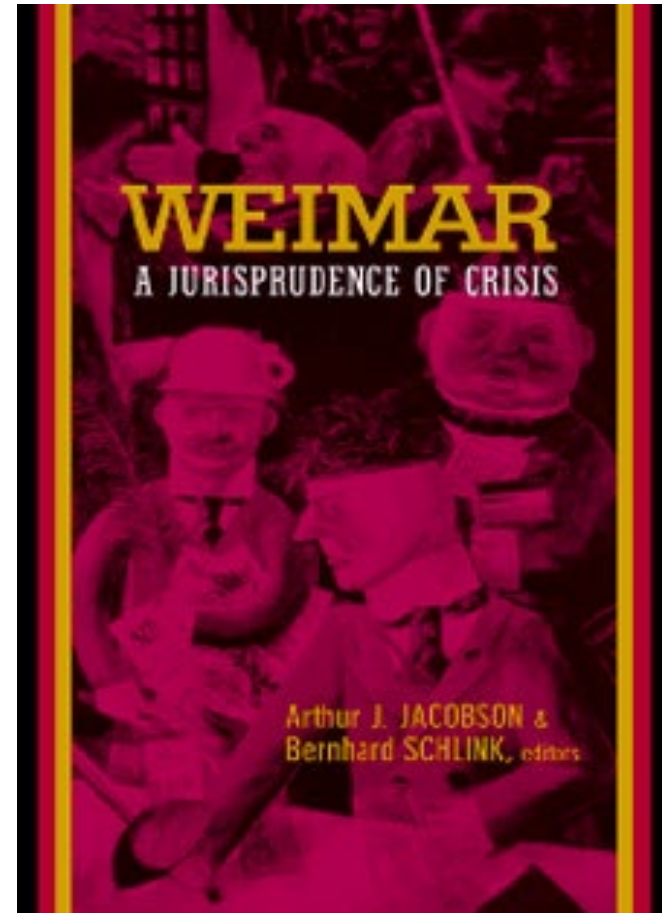
‘the march of the masses onto the stage of history’

OXFORD CONSTITUTIONAL THEORY



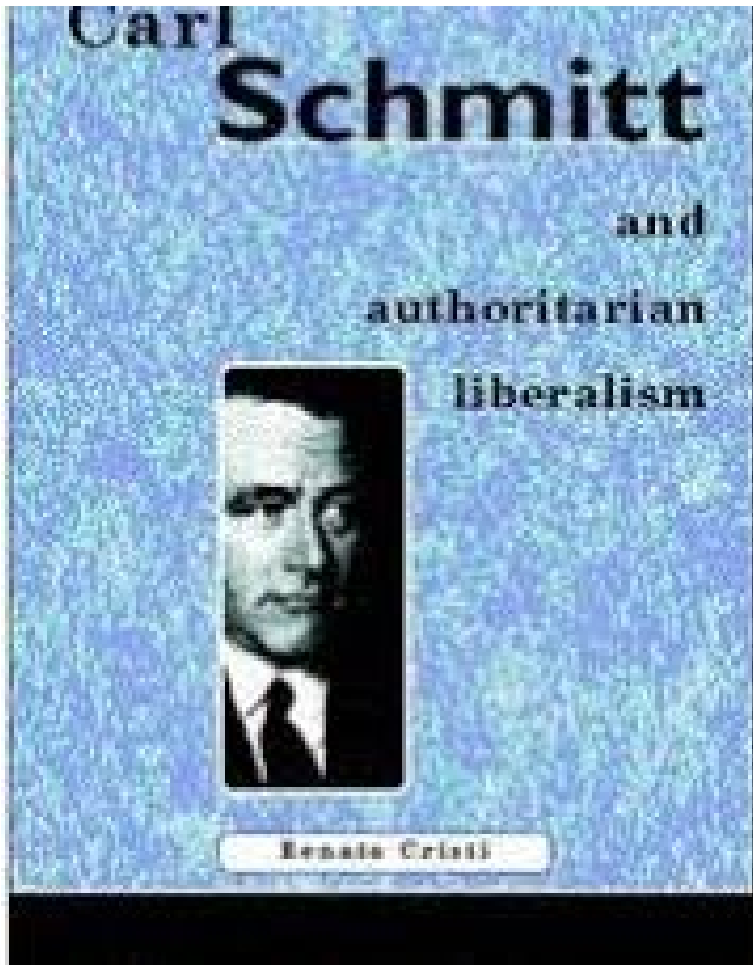
*Authoritarian Liberalism
and the Transformation
of Modern Europe*

MICHAEL A WILKINSON



Tension between liberalism and democracy

Bourgeoise fear of mass democracy



‘Now the proletariat becomes the people, because it is the bearer of this negativity (that was Sieyes’ ‘third estate’: which was nothing and shall become everything). It is the part of the population which does not own, which does not have a share in the produced surplus value, and finds no place in the existing order... Democracy turns into proletarian democracy, and replaces the liberalism of the propertied and educated bourgeoisie.’ [Schmitt, *Verfassungslehre*, 271 – 272]

Polanyi's *The Great Transformation*



the stubbornness with which economic liberals supported authoritarianism 'resulted in a decisive weakening of the democratic forces which might otherwise have averted the fascist catastrophe' [242].

Lippmann Colloquium: 'birth of neoliberalism'

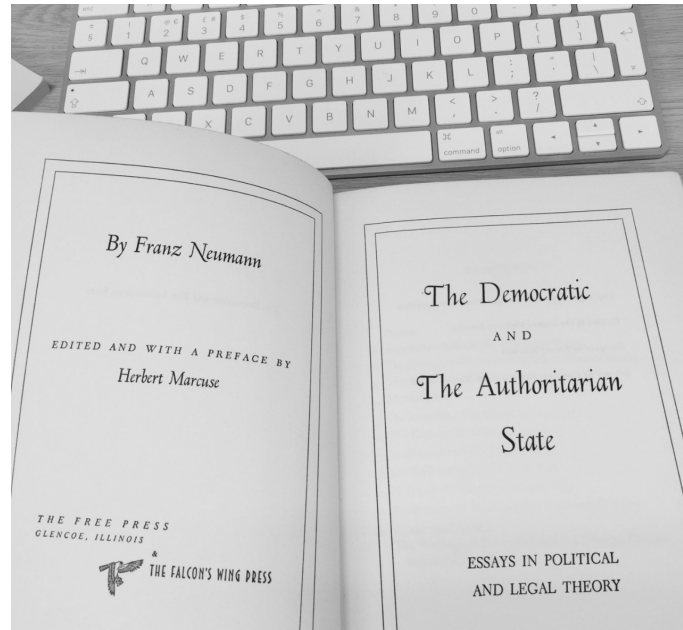
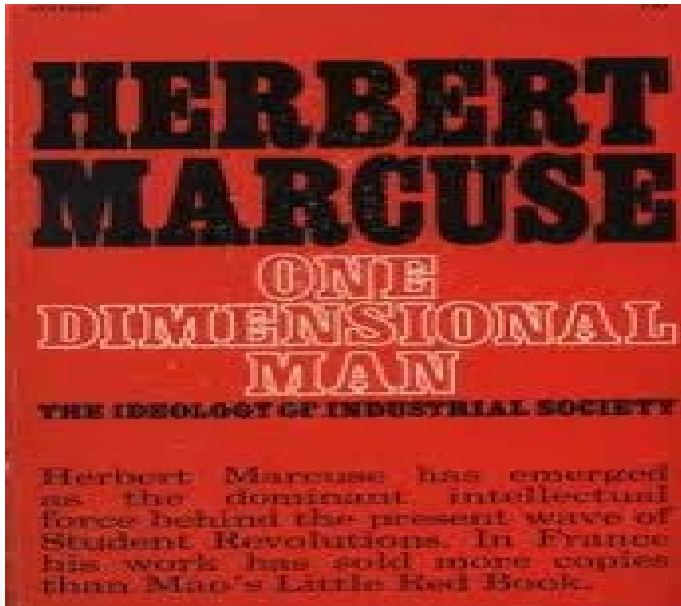


'At the end of the 1930s, neoliberalism appeared to offer a possible compromise between different factions of the ruling elite trying to safeguard the autonomy of the economic field.'
[Denord]

(Lippmann, Rougier, von Mises, Aron, Hayek, Rustow, Ropke, Marjolin, Rueff)

Part I Postwar: Demobilization of the masses

- Freedom *from* politics
- Abandonment of class struggle
- ‘Catch-all party’ (Kirchheimer)
- Christian Democracy
- Turn to law, technocracy and consumerism

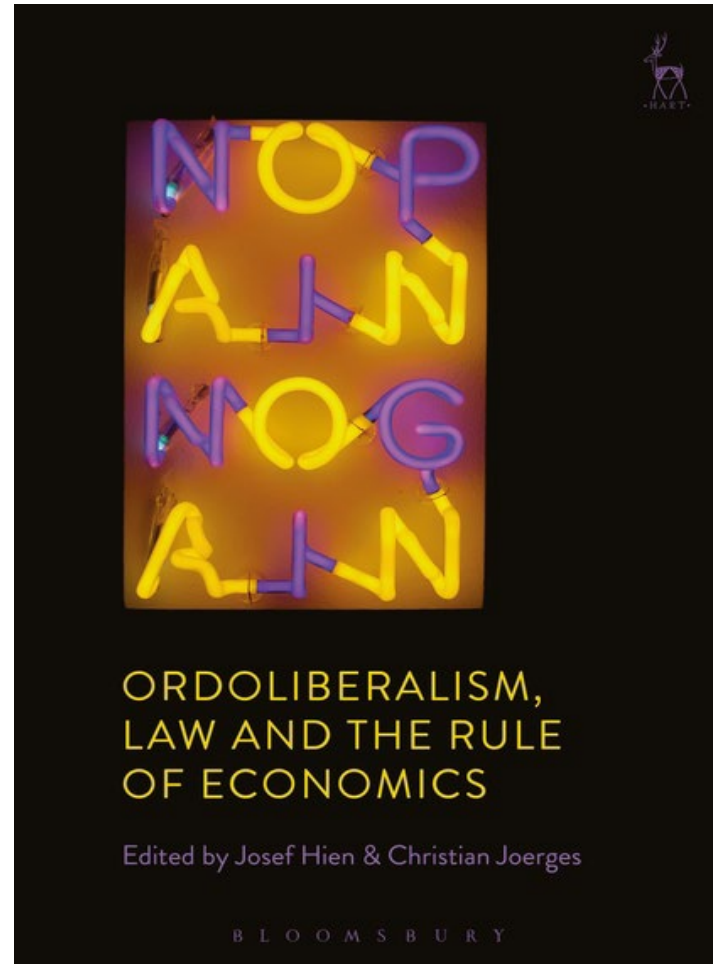


‘citizens’ alienation from democratic political power was increasing in Europe at a ‘tremendous speed’ [Franz Neumann, 1953]

'Economic without Political Liberalism': Ordoliberalism

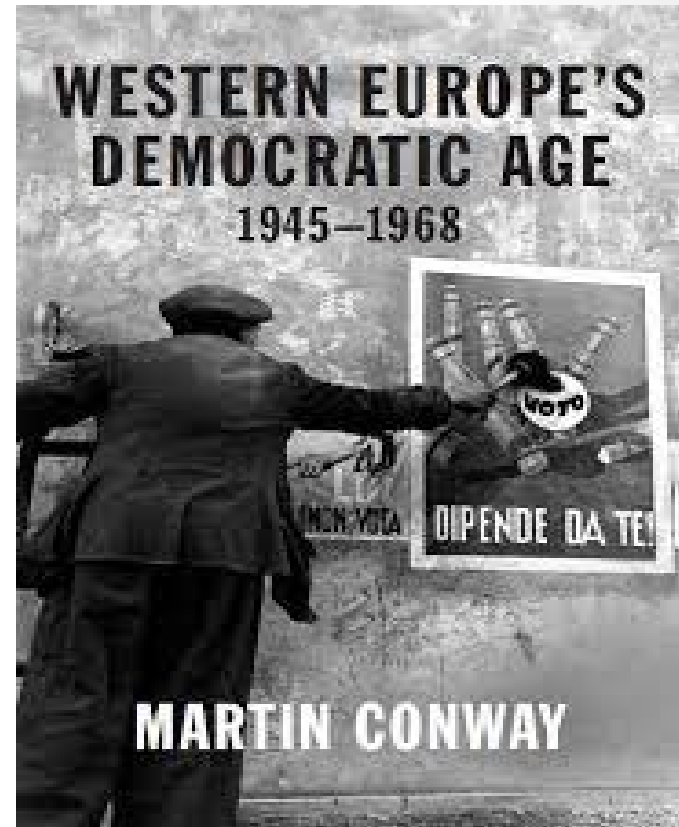
Ordoliberals 'do not see democracy in [their] perspective. There is a general tendency to confuse constitutional democracy with the anarchic majoritarian democracy that the Jacobins read into Rousseau, and to see totalitarian dictatorship as its inescapable fruit.'

[Friedrich, 1955]



Lack of political interest... is the historical concomitant of authoritarian rule... In the past it was the authoritarian rulers who prevented the many from taking an interest in politics, whereas in the present it may be the indifference of the many that produces and supports authoritarian rulers. But the difference is not as great as it may seem.

[Dahrendorf, 1964]



‘the elevation of law... in its more conservative formulations... came close to endorsing an authoritarian configuration?’



‘In unearthing and re-evaluating concepts [such as an objective order of values] post-second world war constitutional theorists established a continuity between the conservative thought of the Weimar period and the legitimation of the Bonn Republic’ [Clara Maier]

Cold war liberalism/
militant democracy

'We are (afraid of) the People'

- Myths of hyperinflation, democratic excess and legislative positivism
- Turn to law, lawyers and experts
- 'complete legalisation of constituent power'
- European integration as *raison d'état*
- Constitutionalisation by the ECJ



- “The Community is a creation of law. That is what is decisively new, distinguishing it from previous attempts to unite Europe. Neither violence nor submission are used as a means, but a spiritual, a cultural force, the law. The majesty of law shall achieve what blood and iron could not do in centuries.”
- Political messianism goes hand in hand with a ‘self-referential conception of law’ [Weiler]



The European Economic Constitution

The theory of an economic constitution has been developed in opposition to policies of central economic planning, ad hoc intervention and discretionary administrative controls. Determinative are principles derived from individual liberties that inform the governance of the economic system as a whole.' [Mestmäcker]



Rethinking the Union of Europe Post-Crisis

Has Integration Gone Too Far?

GIANDOMENICO MAJONE

CAMBRIDGE

‘The possibility of separating economics and politics was a key... assumption of the founders of the EEC. It was not a new idea but rather a return to a classical liberal tenet’ [Majone, citing Röpke]

‘The EU’s liberalism is most obvious in the priority it accords to the protection of (some) individual rights and the tight constraints impeding political action:

The European Court of Justice is more immune from political correction than the constitutional court of any democratic state.’ [Scharpf, 2010]



State transformation

- *Vincolo esterno*
- ‘hard but hollow’
- Permissive consensus (including the left)
- Failures of social Europe



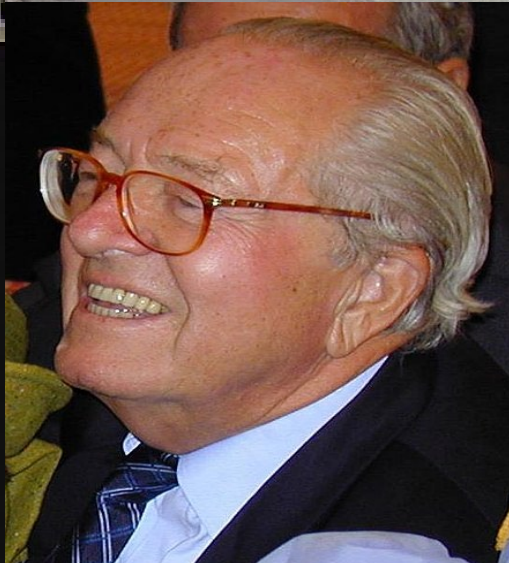
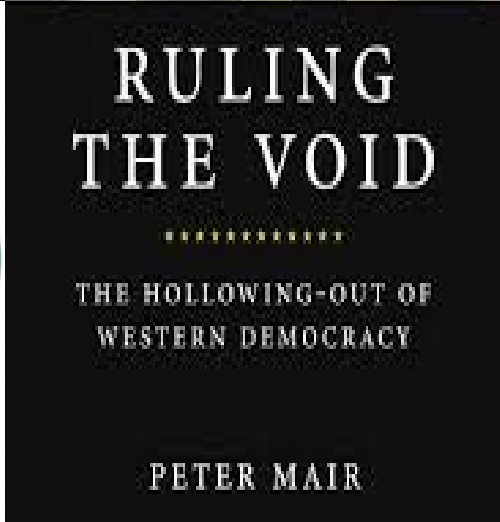
The end of history and the last European



‘In line with Kojève, I argued that the European project was in fact a house built as a home for the last man who would emerge at the end of history. The European dream - most fully felt in Germany – is to transcend national sovereignty, power politics, and the kinds of struggles that make military power necessary...’

Francis Fukuyama, ‘Afterward’ to the second paperback edition of *The End of History and the Last Man* (2006)

Part II Maastricht era



Democratic disconnect



Marcel Gauchet - the 'social fracture' [le debat, 1990]



EU as a 'stepping- stone'
to the constitution of a
world society

mismatch between
system and lifeworld

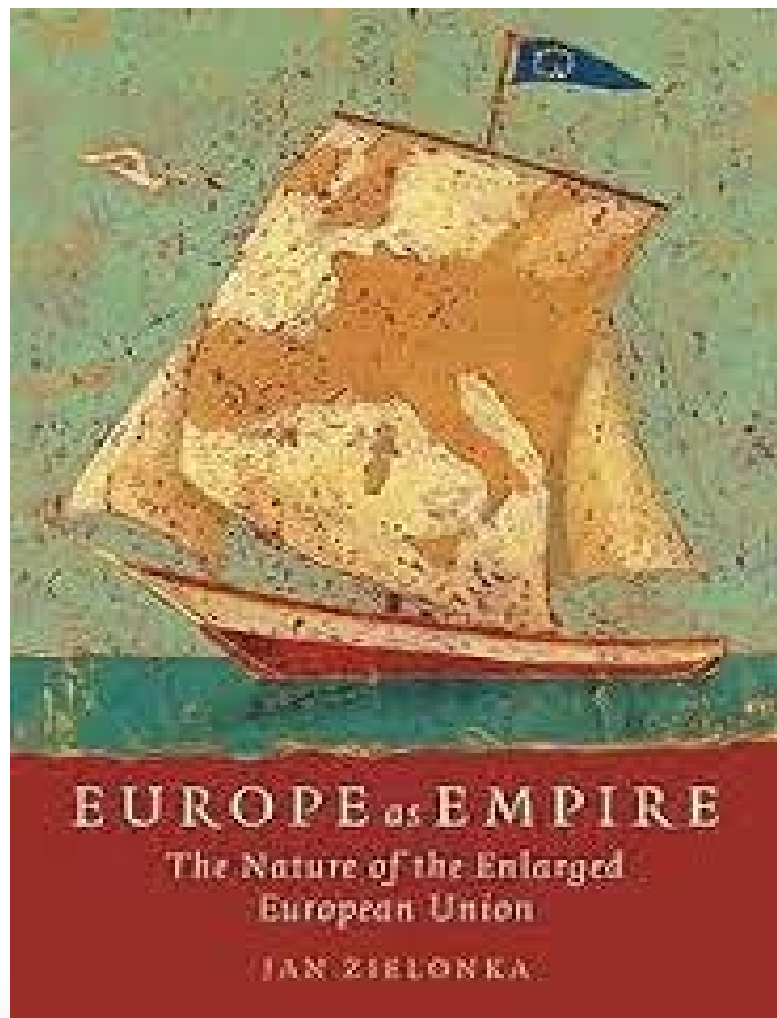
Aggravated by ideas of
'postnationalism', 'post-
sovereignty', 'post-
politics'

+ 'third-way' politics

= Post-democracy

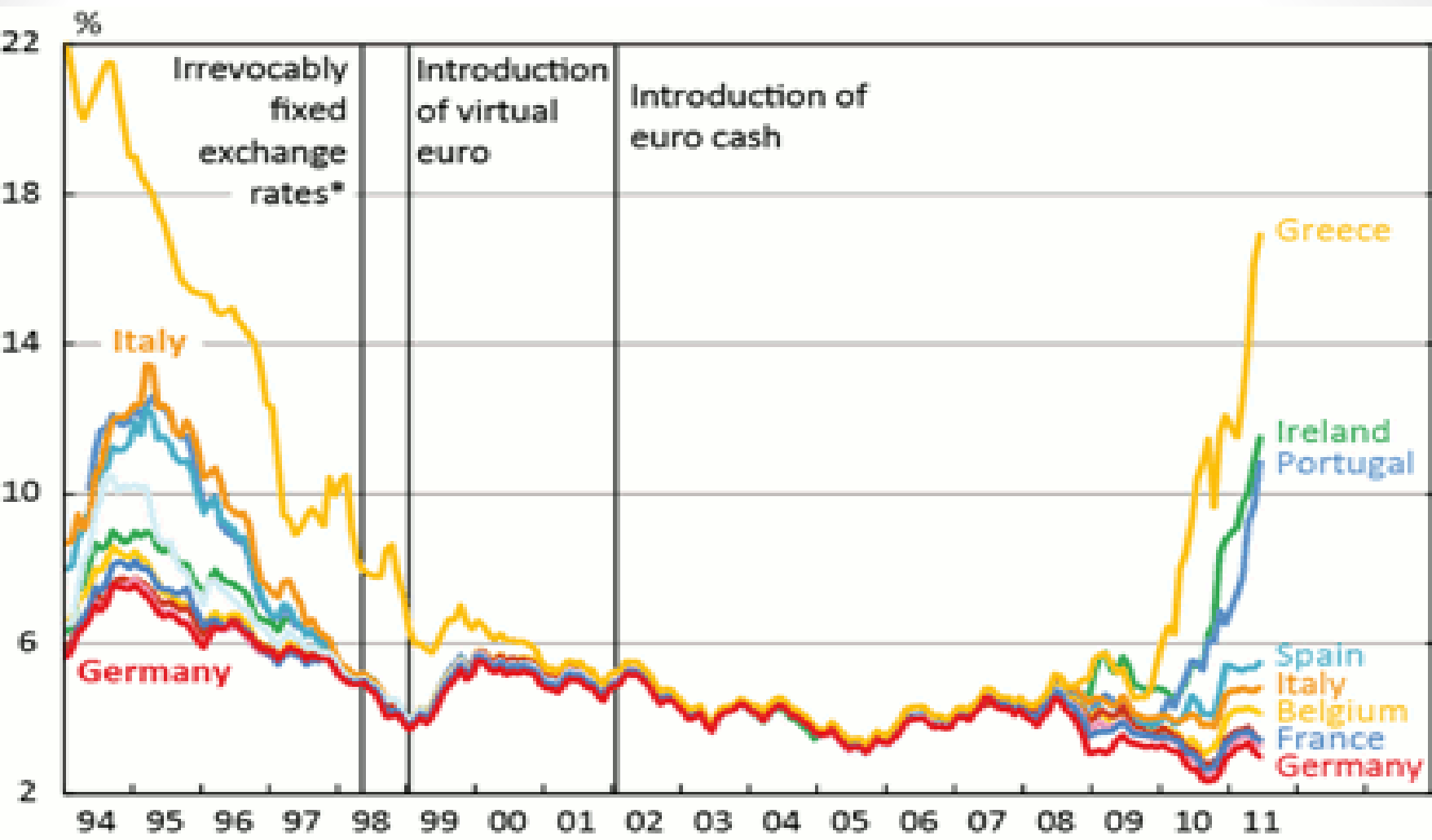


Neo-liberal shock therapy + Low intensity democracy

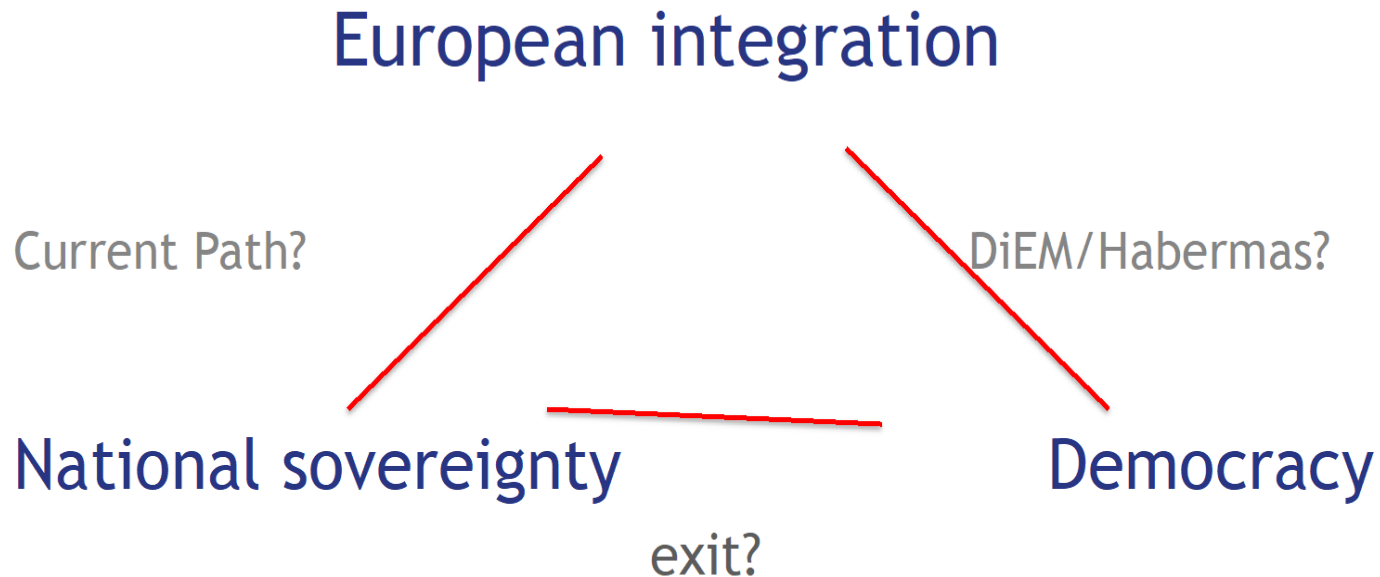


Enlargement was a means to 'assert political and economic control over the unstable and impoverished eastern part of the continent.'
[Zielonka, 44]

Legal transitions and roundtables;
democracy as a set of formal norms to be transplanted
(Article 2 TEU)



Rodrik's Trilemma Applied?



A weak hegemony



Donald Tusk @eucopresident · Feb 6

I've been wondering what that special place in hell looks like, for those who promoted #Brexit, without even a sketch of a plan how to carry it out safely.

15K 26K 90K

Yanis Varoufakis @yanisvaroufakis

Follow

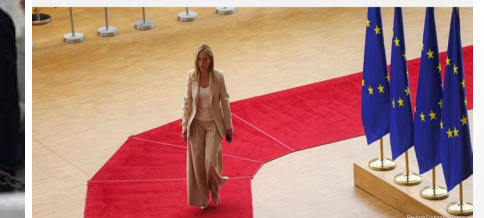
Replying to @eucopresident

Probably very similar to the place reserved for those who designed a monetary union without a proper banking union and, once the banking crisis hit, transferred cynically the bankers' gigantic losses onto the shoulders of the weakest taxpayers.



A far-right EU?

For a long time, a far-right European Union seemed inconceivable. Today, however, things look rather different





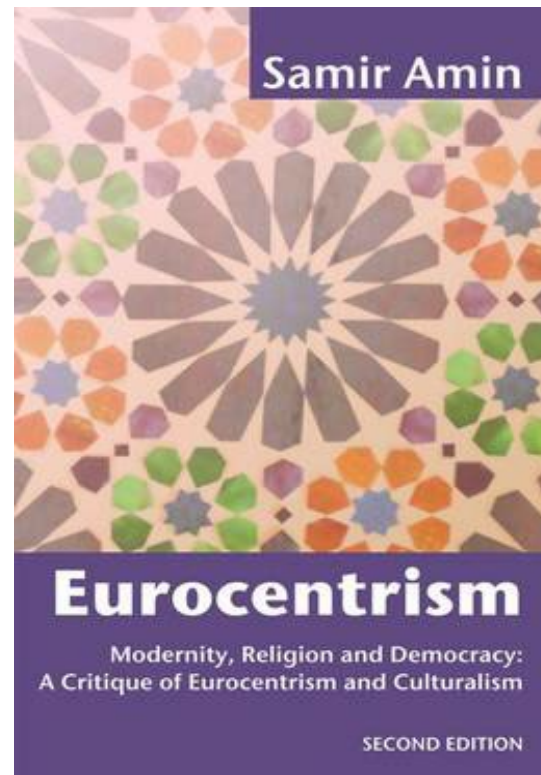
Hegemonic Stabilizer?



‘The militaristic response of the EU to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has reduced the probability of a truly reformist path in the EU to almost nil.’ [Raul Sanchez Cedillo, *Jacobin* 2023]

De-mobilization of the *demos* based on ideological-civilizational Europeanism

Antidote: Re-politicization through projects of democratic sovereignty



International not euro-centric

Concluding thoughts

- Authoritarian populism is inflection of authoritarian liberalism
- System enjoys weak hegemony
 - passivity and soft repression more than active support or violence/domination ('fetishism' of EU membership)
- Exit/rupture necessary but not sufficient for restoration of democracy
- No return to 'golden age' of postwar social democracy