

# Europe Undivided

W.H. Roobol\*

MILADA ANNA VACHUDOVA, *Europe Undivided. Democracy, Leverage, and Integration After Communism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 2005) 341p., ISBN 019924118X (hbk)

In this book, which grew out of a D.Phil. dissertation at St. Antony's College at the University of Oxford, the author explicitly argues 'against scholars who attribute the trajectories of new democracies chiefly to the design of new institutions – to how they write their constitution, or whether they adopt a presidential or a parliamentary system' (p. 23). In a footnote, she mentions in this respect the political scientists Beverly Crawford, Arend Lijphart, Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner, no constitutionalists as far as I know. Perhaps, your reviewer supposes a bit malignantly, lawyers are somewhat less naive. However this may be, this line of argument seemingly relieves the author in her view of the burden to analyse the new constitutions and institutions of the countries involved and the way in which those came into being. Although she analyses in some detail the political evolution of six former communist states, i.e., Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia, towards a liberal democratic political system and a market economy, the new or revised constitutions and institutions of these countries are hardly mentioned at all. Nevertheless, the constitutionalist also may benefit to a certain extent from what the author has to say, and therefore a brief review of the book in this journal is appropriate.

As Vachudova states, post-communist countries did not come from the same circumstances and were certainly not headed in the same direction. The two main problems she tackles are firstly, whether and in what way certain traits of the pre-communist and communist past can explain the diverging trajectories towards liberal democracy, and secondly, what has been the influence of the policy and attraction of the European Union on these trajectories? To shed light on the problems, she uses the concepts of *liberal* and *illiberal democracy*. Liberal democracy is defined as 'a political system where state institutions and democratically elected rulers respect juridical limits on their powers and the political liberties of all citi-

\* The author is a member of the EuConst Advisory Board.

zens (...) Important for our cases, they do not violate the limits on their powers or the political liberties of citizens in order to suppress rival political parties or groups' (p. 3). On illiberal democracy, she is less clear. It can be inferred, however, that illiberal democracy, while adopting the formal traits of democracy, retains the substance of authoritarian rule, tends to quell political pluralism and makes a mockery of citizens' rights. Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary are put into the first category, while Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia belong to the second.

As far as the influence of the European Union is concerned, two concepts are used, *passive leverage* and *active leverage*. Passive leverage is defined as the attraction of its markets and institutions on candidate members, while active leverage, alas not clearly defined, seems to mean the influence of the conditions for accession to the European Union on the peoples and politicians of the countries involved.

It is plausibly argued on the bases of an extensive literature and more than a hundred interviews with scholars and politicians that in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, semi-legally or illegally existing opposition groups under communism that fostered democratic ideals took power after the demise of communism and subsequently eased the trajectory to liberal democracy, while in Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia, former communists came to power who were mainly interested in rent-seeking and not in democracy or a market economy. After a while, however, active leverage of the European Union influenced the political and informational environment of the latter countries in such a way that what they were missing at the time of transition, that is, 'a coherent and moderate opposition and an open and pluralistic political arena' (p. 258), gradually came into being so that accession to the European Union became possible. Not surprisingly, the book ends with a warm plea for enlargement, because 'the most powerful and successful tool of EU foreign policy has turned out to be EU enlargement – and this book has helped us understand why, and how, it works' (p. 259). The claim is to a degree justified, but let us hope that another study that pays more attention to the creation and working of formal institutions and constitutions fills in the gap that is left open by Vachudova.

