

This does not mean there is no longer a legitimate and important role for member states, Verhofstadt contends. The objective and strategic framework of monetary union would be determined at EU level, but member states would have exclusive responsibility in how to achieve this: 'whether the tax system would be progressive or not, whether the labour market would encourage precarious employment or part-time jobs, whether the pension system would be based on redistribution or capitalisation and whether private or public hospitals would provide health care.' The democratic deficit, however, arises because national leaders decide issues in the European Council cocooned from public scrutiny. Democracy must be re-established by ensuring democratic control of the Council at EU level. Citizens are frustrated, Verhofstadt argues, not because the EU has too much power but because it has too little.

Guy Verhofstadt dedicates a chapter each to the UK and Greece, current objects of particular EU concern. He prescribes for Greece remedies from which Belgium would have benefited greatly had PM Verhofstadt applied them. But he lambasts the EU's failure to intervene earlier and more effectively and foresees similar problems in other countries unless safeguards (i.e. the creation of eurobonds) are applied. 'One Greek tragedy is enough', he observes.

Verhofstadt welcomes the UK's departure. Writing of the referendum, he says 'In a certain way, we should welcome the outcome and seize it with both hands by ... writing the United

Kingdom out of the treaty ...'. After all, it was the UK which torpedoed his plan for a European Defence capability at the meeting dismissed as 'the chocolate summit' in 2003, by insisting on unanimity in decision-making. The UK has too often applied the brakes to progress towards a federal Europe, Verhofstadt laments, adding that 'Brexit provides a golden opportunity to put an end to the politics of horse trading'.

Ever an optimist, Guy believes the immediate danger (from the financial crisis) has passed. But Europe now faces a choice: nationalism or integration.

If this book is intended as a manifesto for another run at the post of president of the Commission, one might ask why he had it published in America rather than in Europe. But one might also hope that on this occasion his ideas are not perceived as being ahead of their time. For he is fundamentally right: the half-hearted attitude to European integration shown by socialists and the European People's Party has screwed things up. It's time to get back to basics.

Sir Graham Watson was leader of the European Parliament's Liberal Group from 2002 to 2009. Previously he had served as chairman of the Committee on Citizens Rights, Justice and Home Affairs (1999–2002) and subsequently he was president of the ALDE Party (2011–15). He has published twelve books on Liberal politics, the most widely read being Building a Liberal Europe, published by John Harper in 2010.

1 See errc.org, Deportation of Roma from Belgium, Second Letter to Belgian Prime Minister

Andrew Duff discusses, the competing pulls of a federal versus confederal (or supranational versus intergovernmental) Europe has long been one of the key tensions behind this unique experiment in national, European and international politics. Understanding how that tension has been managed casts a light on the EU's complexity and idiosyncrasies.

The difficulties born from the EU's complexity and the political tensions over how to improve it also help explain why, as Duff points out, it has now been a generation since the last attempted reform of the EU's constitutional setup. The Lisbon Treaty, signed in 2007 and which entered into force in 2009, was in large part the product of the Convention on the Future of Europe, which ran from 2001 to 2003. It is likely to be a few more years before any major new reforms take place, with Duff referring to 2025 as the date by which the Commission has hinted at having any new constitutional exercise concluded. Throughout the book Duff touches on how the EU is still coming to terms with the tumultuous changes enacted in the twenty years before this, spanning the Single European Act of 1987 to the Lisbon Treaty of 2007. It is a reminder of how slow and difficult European integration can be, something Duff acknowledges at the start of the book as something he has long appreciated. It is also a reminder of how a book such as this plays a part in a debate that stretches back to the distant days of the post-1945 world and which will be ongoing long after 2025.

Duff provides a logical and clearly written chronological analysis of the EU's constitutional setup. Beginning with the legacy of the Second World War, he works through each of the major treaties: Paris, Rome, Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice, the European Constitution, and Lisbon. Duff uses the period between Rome and Maastricht (1957–1992), which also covers the Single European Act, to look more at the emergence of the European Council and the growth of the European Parliament. Along the way he offers a wealth of insights, which is hardly surprising given his longstanding and much respected work on this topic as former Director of the Federal Trust, a Liberal Democrat MEP for fifteen years, a member of the conventions that drew up the European Constitution and, before that, the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and now as president of the Spinelli Group. Those who know him, or have followed his work, will

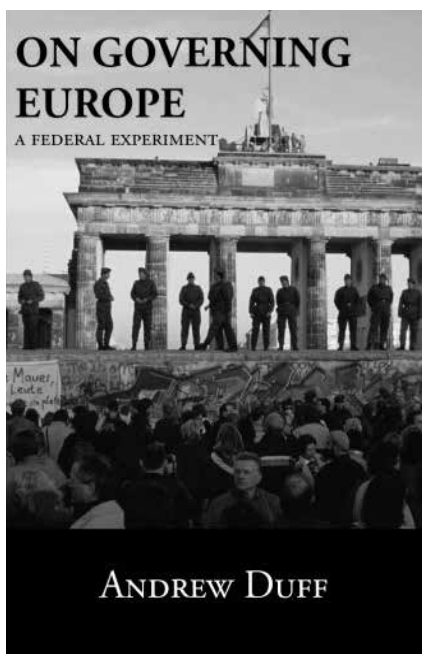
The governance of Europe

Andrew Duff, *On Governing Europe: A Federal Experiment* (Spinelli Group, 2018)

Review by **Tim Oliver**

THE MANY CRISES to have confronted the EU in recent years make it easy to forget that the European Union has rarely had an easy time. Since European integration first emerged in the 1950s, the EU, like its predecessor organisations, has been in a constant state of flux, with never-ending negotiations over its direction

and adjustment to the challenges it has faced. Whether it has been crises, the pull of political ideas, a process of spillover from one issue area to the next, or the alignment of national interests, the EU has been relentlessly driven forward, growing ever larger and more powerful. But that forward motion has never been smooth or in one direction. As



know he has never wavered in his commitment to a more centralised, coherent and federal system to European integration. *On Governing Europe* puts forward his latest case for why a federal Europe remains the most viable way to create a durable, democratic union.

The book offers much for anyone interested in European integration. For readers of this journal, the British Liberal contribution, especially in the earlier stages of European integration, is given its credit. Duff reminds us of the leading role men such as Sir William Beveridge, or Philip Kerr, the Marquess of Lothian, played in these initial phases. The broader role of Britain in European integration is, of course, covered. As we are all more than familiar, Britain's attitude to European integration has often been two-faced: an awkward partner and a quiet European. With an eye on the constitutional setup, Duff tells of Britain's almost cyclical history of detachment and engagement, which in its latest incarnation – Brexit – has succeeded, as such isolationist behaviour has before, in uniting the other member states rather than dividing them. Finding a solution to this latest stage of Europe's British question will require, he argues, a new form of associate membership, 'either as a staging post to full membership or as a long-stay parking place.' As Duff points out, this is hardly a novel idea, being first suggested in 1953.

Much like the rest of the EU, Duff does not linger on Brexit, seeing it as one of a much larger set of issues and problems facing the EU that need to be addressed. But if there is one lesson he

notes Brexit teaches the rest of the EU, it is the need for a common purpose to the Union. Seeking, as David Cameron did in the membership renegotiation that preceded the UK's referendum, to ignore or escape from such ideas as 'ever closer union' leads nowhere but out and out isolation. What that common purpose is to ultimately work towards, however, remains unclear, in large part because the need for a debate about the *finalité politique* of the Union is so often evaded. For Duff, part of the problem lies in the repeated political attempts to ensure the EU satisfies everyone's needs, not least when, as happened with the earlier phases of EMU, there are gentleman's agreements to make it work. The result, as set out so often throughout the book, has been a lack of attention to the question of governance and the constitutional machinery that make it possible for the EU to work. The result, not least with EMU, has often been to create the conditions for an inevitable political and economic mess that only weakens the EU in the longer-run.

The solution, for Duff, is the setting up of another convention to begin preparing a new set of urgently needed reforms. It is the Convention on the Future of Europe (2001–2003) that Duff especially points to and which he played a role in. Its parliamentary rather than diplomatic methods provided a more stable, transparent and democratic means for accommodating the many competing interests and demands of the then EU. While many will turn to the chapter 'What is to be done?', this would be to overlook how the whole book makes a case for such a convention. The EU, like any large political union, is not the product of a single decision maker. Nor is it simply the product of crises, a myth that so often pervades discussions of what makes European integration possible. Each chapter shows how further integration has been the product of long and hard work by various individuals, groups, institutions (especially the European Parliament, or large numbers of its members) drafting ideas, creating networks, developing reflexes to work together, setting precedents, and creating large package-deals that move forward the EU's institutional setup. It is on these foundations that much of integration is built.

Those suspicious of or opposed to such an approach to integration will seize on this as the book's weakness. A series of developments, that Duff also

points to, might have helped put treaty reform back on the agenda: the election of Macron, Merkel's search for a legacy, Brexit removing the UK veto and helping to boost support for the EU within the remaining member states, the hostile behaviour of Trump and Putin. In addition to this, the creaking state of the EU's setup, not least within the Eurozone, cannot be sustained forever. Yet nationalism and the desire to assert the national interest remains powerful. The EU still faces the problem that public support for European integration has moved, especially since Maastricht, from a permissive consensus to a constraining dissensus. That might seem strange given that, as the chapters on events before Maastricht remind us, even in the era of a permissive consensus European integration was not without controversy and real difficulties in moving forward. Nevertheless, the danger of European and national elites finding themselves divorced from their populations remains a live danger and goes beyond the UK. Indeed, it reaches beyond Europe, a reflection of wider trends in Western and global politics. At the start of the chapter on Lisbon, Duff begins with a famous quote made by Jean-Claude Juncker in 2007: 'We all know what to do. We just don't know how to get re-elected after we've done it.' Critics of calling another convention will argue that ten years on from Juncker's remark, the conundrum remains and will not be solved by more talking and constitutional change at the EU level. Duff, however, makes a case for why, without careful judgement and deliberation, the response of the EU and its member states could, as it has so often in the past, fall into the trap of seeking quick fixes that once again avoid the necessary federal solutions.

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