

## Western Europe

ANDREW MORAVCSIK

*Can Europe Survive? The Story of a Continent in a Fractured World*

BY DAVID MARSH. Yale University Press, 2025, 528 pp.

Marsh, a leading commentator on European affairs, draws on an unsurpassed store of journalistic contacts, economic insight, and knowledge of how the EU really works to analyze its responses to various crises since 1989. This meaty yet readable book is essential for anyone engaged with European politics. To be sure, no single work can cover all the dimensions of the European project. Migration, enlargement, the rise of the far right, and other transformative forces in modern EU politics receive little or no attention. Marsh's assessment of German reunification in 1990, Russian President Vladimir Putin's increasing hostility to Europe, and defense cooperation among European powers are familiar. Yet his analysis of the intricacies of monetary cooperation (and its relation to Brexit) is uniquely insightful; he shows that through managing rather than resolving internal conflicts, EU member state leaders have ensured the survival of the euro despite large underlying weaknesses in the continent's economy. The book concludes with optimism about Europe's future, a sentiment that seems to rest more on hope than on experience.

*On My Watch: Leading NATO in a Time of War*

BY JENS STOLTENBERG. Norton, 2025, 480 pp.

Stoltenberg, a former Norwegian prime minister, served as secretary-general of NATO from 2014 to 2024, longer than all but one of his predecessors. His tenure saw two Russian invasions of Ukraine, U.S. President Donald Trump's first term in office, the accession of four new members, and a steep increase in defense spending across the continent. In this honest and sober insider account, Stoltenberg sketches one critical, tense negotiation after another, describing how he helped allies reach agreement. Overall, however, his tale reveals his inability to buck geopolitical reality in an era of great-power politics. He sought to blunt Trump's hostility toward NATO allies by disingenuously crediting the president for increases in European defense spending—but that only delayed Trump's seemingly inevitable drift away from Europe. He supported more intense negotiations to avoid a war that came anyway. In the end, Western countries supported Kyiv against Moscow to defend Ukrainian democracy and, he insists, Ukraine's right to be a NATO member. Yet despite his efforts, Ukraine did not receive Western aid as quickly as it needed, and the country's future remains uncertain.

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*Blind-Spot Politics: Appeasement, Authoritarianism, and Hypocrisy in Europe*  
BY PAUL LENDVAI. Hurst, 2025, 272 pp.

In analyzing contemporary European politics, Lendvai draws on more than seven decades of journalistic experience, deep knowledge of central Europe, and the courage to call it like he sees it. Why, he asks, did national and EU leaders, specifically those in Austria and Germany, so long discount the threat posed by authoritarians, not just in Russia but among far-right EU governments? He contends that politicians willfully ignored the basic lesson of Western policy in the Balkans and, a half century before, the failure to deter Hitler (whose regime Lendvai survived as a child): authoritarian power is corrupt and violent. Yet in recent years, some European leaders have appeased authoritarians such as Russian President Vladimir Putin, some acting out of naiveté but most, Lendvai charges, out of an opportunistic desire for material gain. Among those he charges with fraud, corruption, and opportunism are recent leaders of Austria, Germany, and Hungary. Although his vignettes about politicians are engaging, readers learn little about why European publics elect and reelect such politicians.

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*Debt Trap Nation: Family Homelessness in a Failing State*  
BY KATHERINE BRICKELL AND MEL NOWICKI. Agenda Publishing, 2025, 192 pp.

Income inequality is widening in countries throughout the developed world, but the United Kingdom is among the most unequal. Rising living expenses and shrinking government assistance trap ever more people in a deteriorating quality of life. That decline is evident in unequal access to childcare, schooling, transportation, medical care, and, perhaps most important, housing. Each form of inequality renders the others more likely, further immiserating people. The statistics and stories recounted here are shocking: children shunted into mass state care facilities akin to orphanages, one-seventh of British public housing not meeting minimum government standards, and a striking correlation between substandard housing and domestic abuse. Those affected are disproportionately women, children, and racial minorities. Many individuals and organizations in the United Kingdom profit from the systems that disadvantage such people, and even those sympathetic to their plight, such as the current government, seem unable or unwilling to alleviate their misfortune.