

identity as opposed to that of other racial minorities in the United States. It is worth mentioning that as much as such an assumption provides a practical way to deal with such a wide phenomenon with a simple explanation, it is nevertheless important to have in mind that the so-called "Hispanic" group is quite heterogeneous and that, as American citizens, Latinos may sometimes find more common ground with other American minorities with the same lifestyle and economic situation than with other members of the Hispanic group. Furthermore, after reading the book, the audience is unequivocally led to ask why only a small share of the Hispanic voting-age population participates in elections. But although the authors mention the differences in Hispanic turnout as compared to that of the Anglo and the Black groups, they do not deal comprehensively with the reasons for this phenomenon, as well as with the structural barriers to a higher Hispanic political participation.

Despite the general problem of lack of quality data on Hispanic political behavior, the authors utilize the few available data sources, such as surveys and exit polls, to provide a good quantitative analysis. Nevertheless, the quality of the research would have improved significantly if the authors had gathered their own quantitative or qualitative data, since this would have led to more significant results.

Because of the quality of the research presented in this book, it can be recommended as an innovative approach to studying Hispanic voting behavior in the United States. It also sheds light on the complexity of this issue and on new ways of studying ethnic political behavior. As one of the authors' main conclusions state, "the established theories of American political behavior (...) need to be revisited when we think about the new politics of Hispanic political behavior." (p. 14), thus leaving the answers to many questions for future researchers on the subject.

**Bonnie Honig, *Emergency Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009)**

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A wide debate about emergency politics in democracy is particularly welcome in a period in which long-lasting concern about security in the Western world is now coupled with an economic crisis whose effects are still not clear and whose development are unforeseeable. This new contribution, written by Bonnie Honig, is hence highly interesting as it tries to disclose the links between the normal democratic politics and the discretionary politics which occurs in emergency situations.

The book is divided into five chapters, with a long introduction in which the author presents the main theoretical elements of the book. In chapter 1, Bonnie Honing discusses the paradox of politics – defined as the necessary dichotomy between the heterogeneous nature of citizens as multitude of single human being and their unitary nature as deliberating body. This paradox is the main analytical tool used throughout the book to describe democracy. Chapter 2 presents the author's position about rights: in sum, these are elements which change within a polity, and cannot be derived from natural or transcendental characteristics of men. Chapter 3 is a detailed discussion about the blurred borders between the rule of laws (rights) and the rule of men (discretionary power). Chapter 4 presents a specific case study, in which rights emerged as an act of will of the political power. Chapter 5 presents the crucial question of the relevance of boundaries; the core of this chapter is the morality of boundaries and national belongings. The most relevant conclusion of this chapter, in our opinion, is that in this frame, the state of emergency (by suppressing in some cases national boundaries) has been a way to extend rights, not to reduce the enjoyment of them. This last chapter is likely to be the most interesting for a European audience: it can help us to understand theoretically more in depth the nature of the Schengen process, its worth and its possible development.

Despite the title of this publication referring only to emergency, the book has a wide view over crucial issue of contemporary debate, as we have seen: rights, power, and the origin of political power are all crucial topics covered by this book. In our opinion, a particular strength of this publication is its consideration of Rousseau's paradox of politics as relevant not only to the foundation of a polity, as it is usually intended, but as an unsolvable dilemma common to every democratic community. "The paradox of politics is not soluble by law or legal institutions, [...] the paradox teaches us the limits of laws and call us to responsibility for it" (p. 3).

The author suggests us that democracy builds better men, while at the same time better men build a better democracy. As is clear, this is a circular relationship amid the two elements. In the end, this challenging use of paradox of politics (as well as other paradoxes) gives to the reader a peculiar conception of democracy: the latter is intended as a process, not as a set of rules, and this process is pretty much deprived of any prescriptive meaning. Democracy is nothing more than an institutional structure in which the people express a vote: as the extent to which liberal principles are embedded in democratic practice vary heavily among different political settings and policy arenas, a democratic politics of emergency is possible – although emergency can be intended as a moment in which democratic safeguards are suspended.

This conclusion is not new, but here it is used with a particular meaning: acquired standards - in human rights, for example - do not depend upon any kind of natural

law, or natural quality of men, but derive instead from conscious institutional decisions. In sum, democracy has no particular contents, which can be identified *a priori*. On the contrary the author seems to suggest that it is always possible and legitimate to step back and tear apart rights previously acquired. This does not necessarily violate the democratic nature of a polity: in fact, “emergency politics occasions the creation of new administrative powers and the redistribution of existing powers of governance from proceduralized processes to discretionary decisions” (p. 121).

The starting point of this position is *contra* the opposite visions of Carl Schmitt – who sees in emergency situation the maximum extent of state sovereignty - and Giorgio Agamben, who consider emergency as the death of any politics. In our opinion, re-building the discourse about politics on the ground of less definitive statements is absolutely legitimate and useful. In this framework, the author tries to demonstrate that emergency shall not be seen as a moment completely detached from the normal democratic life; emergency, instead, can be seen as one of the phenomenon of democracy: this is true not because emergency shall follow strict procedures and shall be a temporary and controlled, but because democracy is in itself an imperfect construction. Emergency shall not be considered an exception to rules, but shall be seen as a part of the democratic life, or, at least, is possible to find a rhetoric of democracy also in emergency situation.

In our opinion it is quite problematic to define democracy in such broad terms. Considering the suppression of the normal civil liberties, as is common in emergency situations, and the rise of a discretionary power as simply possibilities open to the government, can be misleading: rights protection and clear procedures are, in fact, elements which are necessary in order to define a democracy. This is in our opinion the main critical point of the Author reasoning.

This book, in sum, is particularly remarkable when it shows some of the main weaknesses of democratic polities, and tries to understand the political life of a democracy as the continuous balancing of unsolvable dilemmas. Moreover, the language of paradoxes used throughout the book is particularly attractive and challenging. But it is far less convincing when it comes to conclusions: although a degree of discretionary power shall be considered necessary in any human community, we can argue that the extension of this *rule of men* shall be highly controlled and subject to strict laws, otherwise the democratic nature of a polity is necessarily at risk.

As a final remark, we can note that the prose is sometimes obscure. At the same time, the structure of the book is not always clear. This is probably due to the fact that the chapter are a collection of previously written articles, although heavily modified.