

back than Ermakoff's narrative, rendering their calculus very different from the Center Party's. Similarly, there was room for miscalculation, given that German parties had voted for enabling acts in the past. Even though the March 1933 act went beyond any prior ones, it looks different as part of a longer, gradual process than it does when considered in isolation.

These two cases are very dissimilar—in addition to the obvious difference of the German occupation of France, for example, it is important to note that Pétain is not a challenger in the same sense as Hitler. They are also exceptional in more ways than one. As a class of actions, parliamentary votes in favor of emergency powers are peculiar in that they are one-shot legitimizing acts that pave the way toward conditions that go against the very essence of the regime that made them possible. Their symbolic significance, therefore, is great, even if the cases themselves are unusual. As examples of hopeful parliamentary democracies gone horribly wrong, interwar Germany and France stand as grave reminders of the perils of wishful thinking, and *Ruling Oneself Out* offers an unsettling view of how deep down the responsibility for them extends.

Response to Ioannis D. Evrigenis's review of *Ruling Oneself Out: A Theory of Collective Abdications*

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— Ivan Ermakoff

In a book written more than four hundred years ago (*Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*, 1548), La Boétie conveyed his astonishment about people “acquiescing to their own servitude.” *Ruling Oneself Out* restates the problem: why do groups legitimize the prospect of their political incapacity and, by way of consequence, the possibility of their servitude? I address this question by considering two parliamentary decisions of crucial historical significance: the parliamentary surrenders of constitutional authority in Germany (March 1933) and in France (July 1940). These events have paradigmatic value because they are clear-cut cases of collective abdications and because they lend themselves to explanations that seem as obvious as they are commonsensical. People abdicate because they face coercive pressures. They abdicate because they misjudge the consequences of their action. Or they abdicate because their ideology predisposes them to do so.

Depending on the event under consideration, these claims have different variants. Evrigenis lists several of them. As *Ruling Oneself Out* demonstrates, their factual validity is dubious. For instance, the Germans' occupying the northern part of France appears to have no significant and clear-cut impact on the July 1940 vote whether we take into account indicators of direct exposure to German rule (pp. 80–83, 172–173, Tables 9 & 17) or whether we consider how often parliamentarians mention this factor in their accounts (pp. 290, 292). Similarly, the claim that in

March 1933 “there was room for miscalculation, given that German parties had voted for enabling acts in the past”—a fact to which I refer on p. 41—loses its substance when we start investigating actors' strategic assessments at the time (pp. 39–41, 96–99, 256–260).

The broader problem here is one of specificity. These generic explanations remain incomplete. The coercion argument does not account for groups resisting coercive pressures. The miscalculation argument obfuscates actors' awareness of the stakes. As for the argument in terms of ideological predispositions, it ignores the extent of actors' uncertainty. The way out of these limitations lies in a detailed analysis of how, in these highly challenging situations, actors relate to those whom they define as peers, how they form their beliefs regarding these peers, and how these beliefs affect their own behaviors. This requires delving into the subjective make-up of the processes at play. In doing so, *Ruling Oneself Out* specifies the conditions of possibility of different explanatory scenarios, and elaborates the micro analytics of this class of decisions.

This analytical inquiry, which combines quantitative analyses and game theoretical insights, builds on a close attention to primary historical sources. Clearly, as Evrigenis observes, actors have an incentive to justify themselves. The point of this research, however, is to systematically sift cues revealing—often without actors' awareness—subjective assessments of the situation as well as rules of decision. For this purpose, I reconstruct the temporality of collective processes and elaborate the hermeneutics of these decisions (Part IV). Further, I assess motivational claims in light of the timing of personal accounts (contemporary versus retrospective), their formal structures (narratives versus “synchronic” accounts) as well as the behavioral stance of their authors (pp. 126–128, 256–270, 286–293, Appendix A). Informed by these validity checks, the argument about collective alignment draws on observations that prove congruent irrespective of actors' vested interest in self-justification.

As these few remarks make clear, the units of analysis in this framework are individuals and groups, not historical cases. By definition, March 1933 and July 1940 are exceptional and “irreducibly singular” (xviii) events. In their exceptional character lies their heuristic significance. These events magnify processes that have broad relevance for understanding the dynamics of situations in which a group of people faces a critical decision—a decision which they know will impact their collective fate and bind the future.

Fear of Enemies and Collective Action. By Ioannis D. Evrigenis. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 256p. \$85.00. doi:10.1017/S1537592709090276

— Ivan Ermakoff, *University of Wisconsin at Madison*

This book may be read from two complementary and enlightening perspectives: as a history of political thought

centered on the role played by fear in group formation, and as a theoretical treatise on “negative association,” that is, collective action based on a principle of identification in opposition to others. Both perspectives sustain each other. The first draws attention to a rich and insightful reinterpretation of classical and lesser-known texts. The peculiarity of this history of political thought is that it records not inflection points but continuity and resilience. The second perspective is intended to bring about positive knowledge. This conflation of genres is an appealing facet of the book. In tracing a continuity of thought, Ioannis Evrigenis purports to demonstrate the validity of a theoretical claim about the centrality of negative association. By the same token, the historical exposé lays bare the set of premises that sustains the claim.

The first contribution of this insightful inquiry is to document a common thread running from Thucydides, Aristotle, and Sallust to Carl Schmitt and Hans Morgenthau, with Machiavelli and Hobbes as major moments. Through the lens of a rich, careful, and original analysis, Evrigenis shows that the perception of external threats as crucial to group and state preservation is not the exclusive domain of modern political thought (i.e., starting with Machiavelli and Hobbes). This theme underlies Thucydides’s analysis of the rise of Athens in response to the Persian threat. Aristotle acknowledges that the fear of external enemies preserves and reinvigorates the state. Sallust draws the negative implication of this point when he concludes that the destruction of Carthage was the beginning of Rome’s decay.

Aristotle and Sallust at times do adopt a moral standpoint and, in this regard, they distinguish themselves from their modern counterparts (p. 43). The important point is that authors writing in different epochal times, in different settings, and under various circumstances acknowledge the element of fear in the constitution of groups. This fact alone testifies to the validity of the claim. Thus, the truth of the *metus hostilis* (fear of enemy) argument is atemporal. It is independent of time and space. Its content is “universal” (pp. xix, 18, 45). From this perspective, the history of political thought has the value of a theoretical claim. Even critics contribute to the credentials of the claim since in laying out their refutations, they borrow from the arguments that they seek to undermine. Evrigenis’s textual exegesis here is illuminating. For instance, he persuasively demonstrates that Gentillet, Bodin, and Botero indirectly confirm the relevance of Machiavelli’s insights. Similarly, the “range of reactions to Hobbes’s political theory, from Rousseau’s vociferous disagreement, through Kant’s respectful departure, to Hegel’s acceptance” underscores the “potency” of claims regarding the force of negative association (p. 162).

Correlatively, Evrigenis casts his reading of *metus hostilis* as an argument about the essence of politics. The defining feature of the political lies in an “antagonistic

relationship to other entities” (p. 3). Groups “become” political when they develop this relationship (p. 3). It is through the experience of antagonism that individuals identify with others and develop their political identity (p. 2). Hence, the processes at play with regard to negative association are foundational. We are bound to encounter *metus hostilis* from the moment we enter the realm of politics.

How different is this from Schmitt? Evrigenis takes pains to suggest that Schmitt refers only to extreme cases (p. 4, fn. 4). For Schmitt, according to Evrigenis, the underlying dimension of a conflict becomes political when it involves the notion of an “existential threat.” Yet the parallels are striking. For one thing, both are concerned with a foundational approach aiming at the essence of the phenomenon. Second, the constellations of terms and referents that they set forth have overlapping cardinal points: “enemies,” “threats,” and “fears.” Third—and related to the previous observation—in endorsing the *metus hostilis* argument, Evrigenis also lends credence to the premises that form the core of Schmitt’s anthropology.

This last point deserves close attention. Evrigenis clearly underscores that the *metus hostilis* argument rests on a conception of human nature marked by the ever-present possibility of conflict and the pervasiveness of fear. Conflict is the regulative horizon of human relations. It is inscribed in the limits of the human condition. It is because others always represent a threat that fear is pervasive (p. 5). Hence, regarding human nature, the theorists of negative association bring us “bad news.” They see human beings in terms best summarized by Schmitt, whom Evrigenis quotes several times to this effect: “All genuine political theories presuppose man to be evil, i.e., by no means an unproblematic but a dangerous and dynamic being” (pp. viii, 11, and 165).

A salient characteristic of this anthropology is that it has no place and time: It is atemporal. In laying bare this close connection between negative association and a substantialist conception of human nature, *Fear of Enemies* indirectly sheds light on the structural logic of the argument. An essentialist approach to politics implies truth claims that elude the vagaries of time and space. The referent needs to be irrevocable. For this purpose, the reference to a human nature defined in terms of inalterable propensities (“dangerous and dynamic being”) is not only apt but required.

Clearly, this book captures a powerful motivation underlying rallying effects, various processes of group emergence in the realm of domestic politics, and alliance formation in the realm of international relations. Precisely because it reveals the significance of this theme with considerable vigor and insight, the book is also an invitation to question further the anthropological premises underpinning the apparent universality of the claim. What grounds the postulate that analyzing the power of negative association implies a conception of human nature defined by reference to definite and irrevocable traits?

Groups vary in their response to external threats. In some cases, they stand firm and restate their collective capacity. In other cases, they yield, collapse, or even legitimize their own subversion. The challenge is to account for this variation. Contra substantialist representations, I would argue that the anthropological conception that best fits the record displayed by such variation is one that hypothesizes malleability within relational and historical contexts. If so, the thrust of the matter is to figure out, and explore, how this malleability gets shaped. Recall Robert Musil who, witnessing the cataclysms of the twentieth century, conceived human beings as fundamentally lacking any “shape” (*Gestalt*) in the form of essential attributes, and who proposed to view this absence of shape as the only theorem of the human condition (*das Theorem der Gestaltlosigkeit*).

Response to Ivan Ermakoff's review of *Fear of Enemies and Collective Action*

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— Ioannis D. Evrigenis

I would like to thank Ivan Ermakoff for his comments and Jeff Isaac for inviting us to participate in this critical exchange about our work. As Ermakoff points out, the continuity of negative association in the history of political thought is striking, and this continuity is an important part of my argument about the role of negative association in collective action and the lessons that ought to be drawn from this. The precise nature, extent, and limits of this continuity, however, are indispensable parts of my story, ones that Ermakoff leaves out. As I note in *Fear of Enemies and Collective Action*, when one looks more closely, one realizes that the genealogy of negative association consists of episodes of action and reaction. The thinkers I study agree about much, but they also disagree quite strongly. Taken together, the continuity and disagreement show that it is a mistake to consider the discourse, as Ermakoff does, to be simply atemporal and represented by any single thinker.

The continuity, for instance, makes it clear that an examination of the antagonistic nature of politics is not a Schmittian exercise, and that Schmitt has no special claim to enmity, threat, and fear, terms that can be assigned more

plausibly, and more profitably, to Thucydides, Sallust, or Machiavelli. This may seem a merely antiquarian concern, but its significance is great, because it shows how it is possible for thinkers with different conceptions of human nature and very different aims to chart radically divergent paths from a common point of departure. Here, therefore, it is the disagreement that becomes important. There is an entire range of activity that is not captured by Schmitt's limit—and limited—cases but is nevertheless fundamentally political, and includes the strategies and compromises that allow antagonisms of all sorts to be channeled, regulated, and checked, before they escalate into mortal combat. Moreover, how one structures an adversarial relationship makes all the difference. As Machiavelli shows, marrying the *metus hostilis* with different sets of principles can yield offspring as diverse as principalities, republics, and sects. The choice of enemy, then, is crucial and formative. Liberals, for instance, pit themselves against tyranny, domination, and injustice, and, as Shklar points out, the recognition of fear and harm forms the basis of the struggle to establish political institutions and defend rights. I am interested in the full extent of negative association, and Schmitt's concept of the political is insufficient for the task.

Realizing that one can choose how to view and react to negative association also bears on the issue of how the fundamental and unchanging aspects of human nature interact with the environment, and how one shapes the other. There is no question that human beings are shaped by their environments, but to recognize this is not to deny the existence of fixed properties, and indeed, even Musil warns against going that far. To understand how what is malleable can be shaped, therefore, it is necessary to know both the environment and the constraints imposed by those fixed properties. Otherwise, it is hard to understand what Ermakoff means when he declares that his own theory of collective abdications “has no time and space” (xix). Negative association provides important insight into the formation and preservation of groups precisely because it draws attention to the point at which the environment (the threats, outgroups, potential allies, and enemies) shapes individuals and makes collective action possible. By paying attention to who is identified as an outsider and why, we learn something crucial about a group and the individuals that make it up.