

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

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