Compromise and the American Founding

Why is today’s political life so polarized? This book analyzes the ways in which the divergent apprehensions of both “compromise” and the “people” in seventeenth-century England and France became inter-twined once again during the American founding, sometimes with bloody results. Looking at key moments of the founding, from the first Puritan colonies to the beginning of the Civil War, this book offers answers of contemporary relevance. It argues that Americans unknowingly combined two understandings of the people: the early modern idea of a collection of individuals ruled by a majority of wills and the classic understanding of a corporation hierarchically structured and ruled by reason for the common good. Americans were then able to implement the paradigm of the “people’s two bodies.” Whenever the dialectic between the two has been broken, the results had a major impact on American politics. Born by accident, this American peculiarity has proven to be a long-lasting one.

Alin Fumurescu is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Houston. In 2013, he won the American Political Science Association’s Leo Strauss Award for the best doctoral dissertation in the field of political philosophy. He is the author of Compromise: A Political and Philosophical History (2013), which has been translated into Chinese and Romanian. He has written several book chapters on compromise in edited volumes, and he is regularly an invited guest speaker to international conferences on compromise.
Compromise and the American Founding  
*The Quest for the People’s Two Bodies*  

ALIN FUMURESCU  
*University of Houston*
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