

Introduction

Silent Majorities and Conservative Mobilization in the 1960s and 1970s in Transatlantic Perspective

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With his televised “Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam” on November 3, 1969, asking “the great silent majority of . . . [his] fellow Americans” for their support, President Richard Nixon popularized a label that would help to reshape American politics in powerful ways in the years to come. The voices of ordinary Americans, Nixon warned, had been drowned out by a vocal, antiwar minority responsible for “mounting demonstration in the street” that sought to impose its view on the majority and threatened the future of the nation.¹

Although such an appeal to the “forgotten” “real Americans” was not new – it had long been a staple of populist politics in the United States² – there was something about the notion of belonging to the silent majority that seemed to capture the imagination of vast swathes of the American public at that time of political and cultural upheaval. An estimated seventy million television viewers watched the carefully crafted speech, and tens of thousands of letters from self-declared members of the silent majority poured into the White House in the weeks that followed. Even the president’s opponents conceded that the phrase had been “one of the most brilliant political inventions of recent years,” and it entered common political discourse with astonishing speed.³

¹ “Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam,” November 3, 1969: http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/forkids/speechesforkids/silentmajority/silentmajority_transcript.pdf (accessed February 2, 2016).

² Michael Kazin, “Democracy Betrayed and Redeemed: Populist Traditions in the United States,” *Constellations* 5, 1 (1998): 75–84; idem, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (Ithaca, NY, 1998).

³ Bill Schwarz, “The Silent Majority: How the Private Becomes Political,” chapter 7 in this volume; Matthew Lassiter, “Who Speaks for the Silent Majority?” *The New York Times*,

The idea of a silent majority did not just strike a chord with U.S. citizens who felt alienated by antiwar protesters and urban rioters or were unnerved by the acceleration of cultural change. The term was quickly taken up on the other side of the Atlantic to describe political realignments then underway in several Western European countries. Soon after the European press had covered Nixon's speech, an array of groups in Western Europe claimed to speak on behalf of this evocatively named group, often appropriating the label in an explicit attempt to mobilize forces on the center-right and to counter a resurgent and highly visible left.⁴ In France, President Georges Pompidou appealed to the silent majority in speeches after the Gaullist *Comités de Défense de la République* had rallied in May 1968 to defend the republic against a left-wing insurgency.⁵ In the United Kingdom, the self-styled housewife and Christian moralist Mary Whitehouse campaigned against sex, violence, and blasphemy on British television through her National Viewers' and Listeners' Association, and evangelicals sought to mobilize the silent majority of British Christians at the Nationwide Festival of Light.⁶ In West Germany, center-right students deployed the label in their university election campaigns, calling on their peers to raise their voices against "small group[s] of revolutionary idiots" whose protests had deeply alienated much of the public.⁷ The remarkable traction of the silent majority label on both sides of the Atlantic in the late 1960s and 1970s suggests that it managed to give shape to and to crystallize common perceptions of marginalization in the

November 2, 2011; Milton J. Rosenberg, Sidney Verba, and Philip E. Converse, *Vietnam and the Silent Majority: The Dove's Guide* (New York, 1970), 19. For an example of how the label was appropriated by U.S. college students on the right, see Mark Evans, *Will the Real Young Americans Please Stand Up? The Until-Now Silent, Youthful Majority's Call For a Return to the Traditional Principles That Made This Country Great* (Harrisburg, PA, 1973).

- ⁴ On the press coverage of Nixon's "silent majority" in a European context, see Martin H. Geyer's contribution to this volume (chapter 12).
- ⁵ Frédéric Bas, "La majorité silencieuse ou la bataille de l'opinion en mai-juin 1968," in Philippe Artières and Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, eds., 68. *Une histoire collective (1962–1981)* (Paris, 2008), 359–366; François Audigier, "Le Gaullisme d'ordre des années 68," *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 116 (2012): 53–68; see also Bernard Lachaise's chapter in this volume (chapter 5).
- ⁶ See essays by Bill Schwarz (chapter 7) and Lawrence Black (chapter 17) in this volume; Amy Whipple, "Speaking for Whom? The 1971 Festival of Light and the Search for the 'Silent Majority,'" *Contemporary British History* 24:3 (2010): 319–339.
- ⁷ See Anna von der Goltz's essay in this volume (chapter 4); on the similar rhetorical strategies of right-wing students in France and Italy, see Andrea Mammona, "The Transnational Reaction to 1968: Neo-Fascist Fronts and Political Cultures in France and Italy," *Contemporary European History* 17:2 (2008): 220 and 223.

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public realm. Those it spoke to in both Western Europe and the United States felt that significant political, social, and cultural shifts were underway in their societies that had given “noisy minorities” the chance to set the agenda and thereby hasten the pace of change.

Like most successful political concepts and labels, the silent majority was anything but clearly defined. It was first and foremost a rhetorical and political construct that captured genuinely felt anxieties and produced new political allegiances. At the same time, it was amorphous and open enough to appeal to a diverse set of actors, not all of whom, as Matthew D. Lassiter shows in his study of politics in the American sunbelt, were committed political activists or identified as conservative.⁸ As a rhetorical weapon and symbolic home, however, the label was particularly attractive to a wide array of conservative and center-right groups, policymakers, pollsters, and activists – the actors who are the focus of this volume. Taking the remarkable transatlantic career of the silent majority as their point of departure, the contributors seek to shed light on the reasons for its strong international appeal and ask what this phenomenon tells us more generally about the 1960s and 1970s, a pivotal period in the histories of both the United States and Western Europe. In doing so, we seek to make a contribution to the broader historiography of these transformative decades and to foster the comparative and transnational study of conservative and center-right mobilization.

Historiography

The scholarship on conservative movements has grown exponentially in recent years. In the time since Alan Brinkley described conservatism as an “orphan” in the study of twentieth-century U.S. history in 1994, the topic has become a lively and widely researched subfield.⁹ Many of the pioneering studies of conservative mobilization took the 1960s as their starting point and explained the ascendancy of the New Right from the 1970s onward as the result of a backlash against the radicalism of the civil rights movement, New Left protesters, feminists, and Democratic

⁸ Lassiter demonstrates that the “Silent Majority” overlapped with Republican conservatism but extended beyond the right-wing base, representing the “vitality and volatility” of the political center. See his *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, 2007), 8.

⁹ Alan Brinkley, “The Problem of American Conservatism,” *The American Historical Review* 99 (1994): 409; cf. Kim Phillips-Fein, “Conservatism: A State of the Field,” *Journal of American History* 98:3 (2011): 723.

social policies stretching from the New Deal to the Great Society.¹⁰ More recent research, by contrast, has not only expanded the chronological frame to include the entire postwar period; it has also highlighted the extent to which the movements of the left and right developed in tandem. Moreover, the right, often dismissed as hopelessly old-fashioned or out of step with the times, could in fact be strikingly modern when it came to political organization, showing considerable initiative and imagination in mobilizing working-class, female, and non-white activists.¹¹ What has emerged from this scholarship is an image of conservative movements that is less reactionary and more hybrid and diverse than the “backlash” school originally suggested, and many of the essays gathered here build on these more recent findings. Although the 1960s and 1970s are thus no longer seen as the cradle of conservative mobilization, these two decades remain pivotal in that the political and cultural crises that accompanied them did much to coalesce conservative forces into clearly recognizable movements and to shape their future trajectories.¹²

While the strong polarization of the political landscape in the United States in recent years and the concurrent vitality of grassroots groups on the right, such as the Tea Party, have arguably lent greater intellectual urgency to historical investigations of the phenomenon in the United States, research on the mobilization of conservative and center-right movements has also flourished in European scholarship. Attention has been devoted not least to conservatives’ responses to and

¹⁰ See Michael Kimmage, “The Historiography of Twentieth-Century American Conservatism,” in *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Political Science*, <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756223/obo-9780199756223-0080.xml> (accessed April 4, 2014). Examples of the “backlash” school include Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York, 1991); Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill, 1991); Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (New York, 1995); Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930–1980* (Princeton, 1989).

¹¹ The literature on this is vast. Important examples include: Rebecca E. Klatch, *A Generation Divided: The New Left, the New Right, and the 1960s* (Berkeley, 1997); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, 2001); Angela Dillard, *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner Now? Multicultural Conservatism in America* (New York, 2001); Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman’s Crusade* (Princeton, 2005); Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA, 2009).

¹² Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, eds., *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA, 2008); see also Zelizer’s contribution to this volume (chapter 1).

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involvement in the political and cultural upheaval associated with the symbolic shorthand “1968.” As is increasingly clear from a growing body of scholarship, the political and cultural shifts that fostered the rise of the New Left also spurred the reorientation and revitalization of the center-right in many Western European countries.¹³

Even though U.S. scholarship may be ahead in terms of the sheer number of histories of conservative movements produced in recent years, European and American historians of conservatism alike have tended to focus on individual national case studies. Michael Kazin called for internationalist perspectives on the study of conservatism as early as 1992, and more recently Kim Phillips-Fein identified transnational investigations as a persistent gap in the scholarship.¹⁴ Despite such calls to greater scholarly internationalism, however, relatively few historians have tried to place either American or European conservatism into an international context or trace the movement of ideas and actors across national borders.¹⁵ This dearth is particularly surprising given the embrace of the transnational turn by historians of the New Left and associated movements of

¹³ Jerry Z. Muller, “German Neoconservatism and the History of the Bonn Republic, 1968 to 1985,” *German Politics & Society* 18:1 (2000): 1–32; Axel Schildt, “‘Die Kräfte der Gegenreform sind auf breiter Front angetreten.’ Zur konservativen Tendenzwende in den siebziger Jahren,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 44 (2004): 449–478; Damir Skenderovic and Christina Späti, eds., *1968 – Revolution und Gegenrevolution. Neue Linke und Neue Rechte in Frankreich, der BRD und der Schweiz* (Basel, 2008); Marcus Collins, ed., *The Permissive Society and its Enemies* (London, 2007); Frank Bösch, “Die Krise als Chance: Die Neuformierung der Christdemokraten in den siebziger Jahren,” in Konrad Jarausch, ed., *Das Ende der Zuversicht? Die Strukturkrise der 1970er Jahre als zeithistorische Zäsur* (Göttingen, 2008), 288–301; Massimiliano Livi, Daniel Schmidt, and Michael Sturm, eds., *Die 70er Jahre als schwarzes Jahrzehnt: Politisierungs- und Mobilisierungsprozesse zwischen rechter Mitte und extremer Rechter in Italien und der Bundesrepublik 1967–1982* (Bielefeld, 2010); Lawrence Black, *Redefining British Politics: Consumerism, Culture and Participation, 1954–70* (London, 2010); Audigier, “Le Gaullisme d’ordre des années 68.”

¹⁴ Michael Kazin, “The Grass-Roots Right: New Histories of U.S. Conservatism in the Twentieth Century,” *The American Historical Review* 97 (1992): 136–155; Phillips-Fein, “Conservatism,” 742–743.

¹⁵ Most existing studies with a transnational or comparative framework focus on economic thought and trace the rise of neoliberalism and the economic counterrevolution that spelt the end of the Keynesian consensus in the 1970s: Richard Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-Tanks and the Economic Counter-Revolution, 1931–83* (London, 1995); Juan Gabriel Valdes, *Pinochet’s Economists: The Chicago School of Economics in Chile* (Cambridge, 1995); Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe, eds., *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of a Neoliberal Thought Collective* (Cambridge, MA, 2009); Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton, 2012); Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets since the Great Depression* (Cambridge, MA, 2012).

the 1960s and 1970s. Studies of the “global 1960s” abound, but conservative and center-right movements are rarely made part of the story.¹⁶ As Martin Durham and Margaret Power pointed out in a recent volume, it is the very interconnectedness of transnationalism with the study of social movements such as feminism or environmentalism, along with the assumption that the right is by definition nationalistic, that has stunted transnational research on conservatism.¹⁷ By placing scholarly investigations of conservative and center-right mobilization in a variety of social settings in Western Europe and the United States side by side and by tracing some of the transnational links that did exist, this volume seeks to offer new perspectives and to contribute to the closing of this historiographical gap.

Divergent Traditions and Common Challenges in the 1960s and 1970s

In emphasizing comparative and transnational perspectives, we do not seek to gloss over the palpable philosophical and political differences that existed – and continue to exist – between conservative thought and movements in the different countries of Western Europe and across the Atlantic. Continental Christian Democrats and France’s Gaullists both wedded a social and cultural conservatism with support for state intervention in the economy and a strong welfare state. The latter also championed a populist politics that was largely discredited in postwar Germany as a result of the Nazi dictatorship. In contrast to their French and West German peers, who often felt uneasy with the term, British Conservatives

¹⁶ See, e.g., the special issue on “The International 1960s,” *The American Historical Review* 114:1 & 2 (2009); Gerd Rainer Horn, *The Spirit of ’68: Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956–1976* (Oxford, 2007); Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), which includes great power diplomacy and responses to global protest but sees protest as an exclusively left-wing affair. The newer studies that place a specific national case in a global context also tend to exclude activists of the right, e.g.: Martin Klimke, *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties* (Princeton, 2010); Grzegorz Kosci, Clara Juncker, Sharon Monteith, and Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson, eds., *The Transatlantic Sixties: Europe and the United States in the Counterculture Decade* (Bielefeld, 2013); Timothy Scott Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties* (Cambridge, 2013). Thomas Borstelmann’s U.S.-centric global history of the 1970s, by contrast, pays close attention to the conservative ascendancy. See his *The 1970s: A New Global History From Civil Rights to Economic Inequality* (Princeton, 2012).

¹⁷ Martin Durham and Margaret Power, “Introduction,” in idem, eds., *New Perspectives on the Transnational Right* (London, 2010); 1–10, here 1; see also Jerry Z. Muller, ed., *Conservatism: An Anthology of Social and Political Thought from David Hume to the Present* (Princeton, 1997), 23.

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embraced the “conservative” label readily and explicitly. Although still pro-European in the 1960s and 1970s, they also became more receptive to libertarian and Eurosceptic ideas that eventually began to influence policy in the era of Margaret Thatcher. U.S. conservatism has also always been made up of highly divergent strands, including anticommunism, libertarianism, and traditionalism.¹⁸ As this collection illustrates, in the 1960s and 1970s the ideological differences between the different national conservative movements were particularly palpable when it came to the salience of social morality in the political debate, attitudes toward the welfare state and enthusiasm for small government, and the public role of religion, which became a much more formidable political force in the United States than it ever did in Western Europe.

Conservative and center-right parties enjoyed varying electoral fortunes in this period. In 1969, the West German Christian Democrats found themselves in opposition for the very first time since the founding of the Federal Republic – just shortly after the Republican Richard Nixon won the American presidency and was reaping the benefits of the dismantling of the New Deal coalition. While the 1980s saw the ascendancy of Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, and Helmut Kohl – developments that were closely connected to, if by no means overdetermined by, the mobilization of conservative forces in the preceding decades – French citizens elected François Mitterrand the Fifth Republic’s first Socialist president in 1981. Without simply reading the success of some of the major conservative parties in the 1980s backward, the aim of this collection is to tease out not just what was similar but also what was nationally specific about conservatism and conservative movements in the 1960s and 1970s.

The different political trajectories and ideological characters of conservative and center-right parties and groups notwithstanding, the broader historical context in which they operated and mobilized adherents was remarkably similar on the two sides of the Atlantic. The 1960s and 1970s were decades of significant upheaval and transformation in both Western Europe and the United States; they were marked by far-reaching political, social, and cultural change, and, in the 1970s, by varying degrees of political and economic crisis. The 1960s gave rise to significant popular

¹⁸ First described in the classic study by George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945* (New York, 1976; 3rd ed. 2006). On the intellectual varieties of European and American conservatism, see Muller, *Conservatism*; and the essay by Martina Steber in this volume (chapter 14). On Christian Democracy, see Michael Gehler and Wolfram Kaiser, *Christian Democracy in Europe since 1945* (London, 2004).

insurgencies (“1968”) by youth movements, students, workers, and feminists who challenged traditional notions of deference, authority, and patriarchy.¹⁹ Their quest to broaden the definition of the “political” changed the ground on which politics was conducted fundamentally and dislodged longstanding social foundations, which proved deeply unsettling to many conservatives and even some older liberals. As a result, gender roles, the family, and sexuality became sites of heavy political contestation.²⁰

The ground of politics shifted in other ways, too. The questioning of traditional social norms did not just touch gender and generational relations but extended to racial hierarchies as well. The civil rights movement is a well-established part of the storyline of these years in the United States, but even in the absence of officially sanctioned racial segregation, race also surfaced in Western European discourses in powerful new ways in the 1960s and 1970s. Mass migration in the wake of the breakup of European colonial empires left a deep mark on European societies, and the presence of extra-European “others” became a source of recurring controversy.²¹

Moreover, the U.S.-led war in Vietnam, which seemed to signify the hypocrisy and imperialist character of liberal democracy at a time when it was pitted against Soviet-style communism in the confrontation of the Cold War, became the focal point uniting disparate protest movements. It had a significant impact on both sides of the Atlantic (and indeed globally), lasting well into the 1970s.²² All these conflicts played out on television, a still relatively young medium. The extensive television coverage of the most tumultuous events of these years fueled conservative perceptions of crisis and political marginalization by the allegedly

¹⁹ Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (Oxford, 2000); Norbert Frei, *1968: Jugendrevolte und Globaler Protest* (Berlin, 2008).

²⁰ Janice Irvine, *Talk About Sex: The Battles Over Sex Education in the United States* (Berkeley, 2002). See also the contributions by Lawrence Black (chapter 17), Whitney Strub (chapter 16), and Stacie Taranto (chapter 15) to this volume.

²¹ See Geoff Eley’s round table contribution, Philippe Chassaigne, Geoff Eley, Hartmut Kaelble, Göran Therborn, and Andreas Wirsching, “The 1970s and 1980s as a Turning Point in European History?” *Journal of Modern European History* 9:1 (2011): 8–26; Camilla Schofield, *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (Cambridge, 2013); see also Bill Schwarz’s essay in this volume (chapter 7).

²² Lien-Hang T. Nguyen, “The Vietnam Decade: The Global Shock of the War,” in Niall Ferguson, ed., *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge, MA, 2010), 159–172; Wilfried Mausbach, Andreas W. Daum, and Lloyd C. Gardner, eds., *America, the Vietnam War, and the World: Comparative and International Perspectives* (Cambridge, 2003).

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“liberal” media. This turned the silent majority into a particularly attractive symbolic home and lent special urgency to media strategies aimed at overcoming conservatives’ alleged silence and lack of public visibility.²³

On both sides of the Atlantic, some of the most palpable shifts were economic. The seemingly endless boom of the postwar “golden years” – the *trente glorieuses* – came to an end in the 1970s, triggering widespread perceptions of economic “malaise,” an “end of optimism,” and the breakup of the Keynesian consensus on interventionist economic policies. The economic slowdown and discontent it provoked opened a window of opportunity for advocates of the free market and a turn toward a radical neoliberal austerity politics.²⁴ The 1970s are associated in popular memory in some countries first and foremost with mounting economic crisis. In Britain, especially hard hit, the crisis reached its apex during the fabled “Winter of Discontent” of 1978–1979, the backdrop to the electoral victory of Margaret Thatcher and the Conservatives the following spring.²⁵ The 1970s witnessed significant economic turmoil in the United States as well (as evidenced, for instance, by New York City’s near-bankruptcy in 1975), while the Watergate scandal and Nixon’s resignation provoked a deep sense of political crisis.

This period thus saw the unraveling of the postwar economic and social settlement, and the conservative and center-right movements investigated here gained their vibrancy at least in part from the powerful sense of disorientation and uncertainty engendered by these manifold shifts.²⁶ In

²³ David Greenberg, “The Idea of ‘the Liberal Media’ and Its Roots in the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture* 1:2 (2008): 167–186; Christina von Hodenberg, “Mass Media and the Generation of Conflict: West Germany’s Long Sixties and the Formation of a Critical Public Sphere,” *Contemporary European History* 1 (2006): 367–395. See also the essays by Frank Bösch (chapter 13) and Martin H. Geyer (chapter 12) in this volume.

²⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914–1991* (London, 1994), 257–286; Jarausch, *Das Ende der Zuversicht?*; Charles S. Maier, “‘Malaise’: The Crisis of Capitalism in the 1970s,” in Ferguson, *The Shock of the Global*, 25–48; Chassaigne et al., “The 1970s and 1980s as a Turning Point in European History?”; and the essay by Daniel Stedman Jones in this volume (chapter 2).

²⁵ See Lawrence Black, “An Enlightening Decade? New Histories of 1970s’ Britain,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 82 (2012): 174–186; Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders, eds., *Making Thatcher’s Britain* (Cambridge, 2012); Niall Ferguson provides some useful figures to put the notion of the 1970s as especially crisis-prone into perspective, showing that this decade seemed particularly disastrous only in comparison with what came before, not after. He notes that there was nevertheless a strong *perception* of crisis in the 1970s. See his “Introduction: Crisis, What Crisis? The 1970s and the Shock of the Global,” in Ferguson, *The Shock of the Global*, 1–23, here 14.

²⁶ See Borstelmann, *The 1970s*, 3.

fact, as several authors in this collection show, the commonality of the challenges they faced could strengthen the ties between otherwise ideologically dissimilar conservative and center-right movements and diminish the temptations of sectarianism.²⁷

The Structure of this Collection

The thematic structure of this collection pays tribute to some of the larger historical shifts outlined above and illustrates the various ways in which conservative and center-right movements dealt with these mounting challenges on both sides of the Atlantic. The six parts of the book are organized in a way that intends to foster discussion of differences, similarities, and linkages across the transatlantic divide and to provide an impetus for future research.

Part I, *Origins and Ideas*, looks at the development and substance of conservatism and neoliberalism in the postwar period. Julian E. Zelizer's chapter challenges the widely accepted notion that twentieth-century liberalism was deeply rooted and stable in the American polity while conservatism was a relatively insignificant force before the 1970s. Instead, he argues, there were strong conservative political, economic, and social forces within American society throughout the twentieth century and he attributes much of the fragility of the New Deal coalition to the fact that a key constituency, Southern Democrats, were deeply conservative and put a brake on liberal initiatives.

Daniel Stedman Jones traces the transformation of neoliberalism from a Depression-era critique of Keynesianism into a defense of market mechanisms that, when taken up by conservative activists and politicians, had profound political and social implications. By the 1970s, neoliberal radicals had prepared the ground for a new era of belief in the free market, deregulation, and limited government that was to climax in the Reagan and Thatcher years. As Zelizer and Stedman Jones demonstrate, the era between the 1930s and 1970s was less a period dominated by the New Deal order than a time when conservatism, liberalism, and neoliberalism were all vibrant forces in American and Western European life, contributing to a new political, economic, and cultural infrastructure that would last for generations to come.

Part II of the book, *Political Mobilization and Responses to Left-wing Protest*, looks at some of the ways in which conservative and

²⁷ See the contributions by John Davis (chapter 3), Martina Steber (chapter 14), and Anna von der Goltz (chapter 4) to this volume.

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center-right groups responded to the challenge posed by the manifold protest movements associated with the New Left. John Davis's chapter takes an in-depth look at how conservative students began to organize at universities across the United Kingdom. He shows that the young Tories active in campus politics in the late 1960s were often quite liberal on social issues and distinctly Europhile. In sharp contrast to the Conservative Party's subsequent Eurosceptic turn under Thatcher, the young British conservatives of the 1960s eagerly sought to make common cause with their counterparts in Western Europe, especially in Scandinavia and West Germany.

Picking up on the theme of student mobilization, Anna von der Goltz's chapter shows that center-right students in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1960s overlapped with their counterparts on the left when it came to identifying political, economic, and social problems. Both sides, for example, called for educational reform and criticized the authoritarianism of German political culture. However, the political landscape became more polarized in the 1970s. Left-wing and center-right students lost much of their common ground and began to view each other as intolerable extremists.

Bernard Lachaise examines the context of conservative mobilization in the nation to Germany's west. As his chapter demonstrates, despite the impressive Gaullist victory in the elections of June 1968, the massive protest wave of May 1968 had frightened French conservatives and motivated them to mobilize the *majorité silencieuse* in the early 1970s. By increasing media attention to the "left-wing threat" and mobilizing public support – especially by using martial rhetoric that drew on past moments of national danger and invoked memories of wartime resistance – the right wing's "Gaullism of Order" was quite successful and established a new conservative discourse that is still present in France today.

Donald T. Critchlow's chapter hones in on how similar concerns for "law and order" played out on the other side of the Atlantic in the 1960s and early 1970s. While many scholars have identified race as the most important issue to undermine the New Deal coalition, Critchlow maintains that it was left-wing politics – in its various forms from Great Society liberalism to New Left radicalism – that set off a chain reaction within the American polity and led to the conservative ascendancy of the 1970s and 1980s. The civil rights movement, student protests, urban riots, rising crime rates, and other social disturbances conflated in the perceptions of many concerned voters, who became convinced that the world was coming apart and blamed Democrats for the social disequilibrium. Without dismissing the importance of race entirely, Critchlow

contends that voter anxieties about “law and order” were key to explaining the Republicans’ electoral victories. The chapters in Part II show that, despite much animosity between the right and left, the 1960s and 1970s were decades in which these two forces often developed and mobilized in tandem, challenging, reinforcing, and transforming each other in the process.

The opening chapter of Part III, *Conservatism and the Issue of Race*, departs from Critchlow’s emphasis on conservatives’ desire for social discipline and throws the deep racial anxieties that fueled conservative mobilization on the two sides of the Atlantic into sharp relief. Focusing on one American and two British conservative icons, Bill Schwarz teases out the similarities that existed between conservative discourses on race in Britain and the United States despite the two countries’ divergent histories of colonialism and segregation. He contends that Governor George Wallace’s open support for white supremacy in the U.S. South was key to his success among Southern white voters during the 1960s and 1970s. Racial tension also surfaced in Western Europe during this period, not least in Britain, a country that had recently lost its empire and witnessed the mass immigration of people of color for the first time. As Schwarz shows, British conservatives such as Enoch Powell and Mary Whitehouse were motivated by and used racial (and sexual) fears to their advantage.

The following chapter focuses more closely on the role of the black freedom struggle in conservative mobilization and party politics in the United States. As Joshua D. Farrington demonstrates, some conservative African Americans enthusiastically embraced the concept of black capitalism. Although Nixon had opposed the civil rights legislation of the 1960s and continued to express his sympathy with white opponents of integration as president, his administration was keen to cooperate with black conservatives, for example by giving financial aid to black-owned businesses and black colleges. While most African Americans remained distrustful of Nixon, his racial policies, Farrington argues, were much more multifaceted and diverse than generally depicted. The chapters in Part III thus provide important new perspectives on the complex and substantial role that the issue of race played in conservative mobilization.

Part IV of our volume, *Religious Mobilization*, examines the role of religion in public life and within conservative party politics in the United States and in Western Europe. After giving a brief survey of the different histories and public roles of religion and religious institutions in Europe and the United States, Mark J. Rozell and Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson’s chapter illustrates that the origins of the present-day American Christian

right movement can be found in the reaction of social conservatives to the legalization of abortion, other liberal social policies, and the counterculture. Previously, most Christian conservatives had kept a strict separation between their faith and political activity, but discontent with what they perceived as an indulgence of sexual promiscuity and a rejection of traditional values brought Christian and secular conservatives together in a powerful alliance. As the authors show, the success of this self-proclaimed “Moral Majority” in mobilizing voters was an important factor in Reagan’s victory at the polls in 1980.

The influence of Christian conservatives on politics in West Germany, in contrast, has remained rather insignificant. Thomas Großbölting argues that while the two major German churches sometimes participated in public debate, Christian fundamentalists were never able to obtain broad popular support. Internal efforts at conservative “revitalization” within the churches largely failed, and most Germans regard religious convictions as a private matter to this day. Compared to American Christian conservatives, Großbölting notes, even the center-right Christian Democratic Party is rather moderate when it comes to issues of social morality, such as abortion.

Conservative Christians in the Netherlands faced similar challenges, as Marjet Derks emphasizes in her chapter. By criticizing the progressive liturgical interpretations of the Second Vatican Council and proclaiming themselves the defenders of the true faith, conservative Dutch Catholics tried to stem the tide of secular liberalism in their society. Pointing out the important role of gender and generation in this dispute, Derks observes that the Christian right’s failure to gain any real political influence can be attributed at least in part to the tendency of the Dutch press to focus on young, media-savvy progressive clergymen and theologians. As these chapters illustrate, the difference in the scope of the Christian right’s social and political influence continues to be one of the most striking divergences between American and Western European conservatism, and the 1960s and 1970s are crucial for understanding this discrepancy.

Part V, *Languages and Media Strategies of Conservatism*, is most directly connected to our book’s title and the notion of “silence.” Rallying the silent majority meant making an allegedly “silenced” group more visible and vocal. Martin H. Geyer’s chapter demonstrates the close proximity of social theory and media strategies. The idea of a “spiral of silence” put forward by the conservative German pollster Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann was remarkably close to Nixon’s concept of the silent

majority. Both were based on the conviction that people were unwilling to state their views openly for fear of appearing at odds with the majority view. As Geyer shows, Noelle-Neumann and her theories played an important role in new West German conservative strategies to “occupy terms” and thus regain control over language and public opinion.

Conservatives in America as well as Europe tend to believe that the public media favor the left. Frank Bösch examines why and how West German conservatives championed the introduction of private commercial broadcasting. Remarkably, in doing so, they drew on themes traditionally advocated by the political left, such as the promotion of diversity, while the Social Democrats used arguments more commonly associated with the right, for example the potential threat unregulated broadcasting allegedly posed to traditional family values. In the end, Bösch argues, conservatives won this battle, but the rise of private broadcasting led not to an increase of conservative votes but rather to a depoliticization of the television audience.

Martina Steber sheds light on the difficulties conservative parties encountered when they tried to form transnational alliances within Western Europe. Her research suggests that the problems were often more a matter of terminology than of substance because the diversity of national traditions and multilingualism made finding a common political language difficult. While British and German conservatives cooperated rather well in this regard, other center-right national parties did not. The ensuing linguistic battle about the core concept of “conservatism” in Western Europe, Steber concludes, was an integral part of the complicated and not always linear process of European integration. The use of language and control of the media proved to be significant tools inside and across national lines for the effort to raise the voice of the silent majority.

Finally, Part VI, *Cultures of Conservatism*, looks at the various ways in which conservatives dealt with social and cultural change, including shifting gender and sexual norms, and the wider challenges of modernity in the 1960s and 1970s. Stacie Taranto’s chapter examines the Republican Party’s stance on women’s issues. After the more liberal “Rockefeller Republicans” had long supported feminist reforms such as New York’s abortion reform law of 1970, hundreds of previously apolitical women, mostly from the suburbs of New York City, rose up in protest. They organized a viable political base to protect “traditional family values” and heteronormative gender roles. With the help of other anti-abortion groups, Taranto contends, these conservative female Republicans were able to triumph over the party’s liberal wing and significantly change

state politics in New York, foreshadowing some of the powerful ways in which female activists and the issue of gender would shape Republican politics in the years to come.

Tracing conservative discourse on pornography and obscenity from the 1960s through the 1980s, Whitney Strub shows that the Republican Party was much more reactionary when it came to gay rights. When many of the once-useful tropes of the right fell into disrepute as a result of the civil rights revolution and the rise of feminism, anti-gay moralism provided an effective new rallying ground for conservatives. Using legislative and judiciary venues, Strub argues, conservatives thus succeeded in establishing procreative heterosexuality as the norm of “sexual citizenship” until the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Focusing on the Conservative Party’s youth organization, on activist Mary Whitehouse and party leader Margaret Thatcher, Lawrence Black examines the transformation of Britain’s broader conservative culture in the late 1960s and 1970s. By taking a close look at particular aspects of the new British conservatism, such as its members’ rather modern disposition and lifestyle, Black shows the complexity of political culture and stresses that Thatcherism altered conservative culture in Britain less than is generally assumed. In contrast to their American counterparts, British and other Western European conservatives seem to have gained less ground in the moral and cultural arena than in the economic one. As this part as well as others in this volume show, conservative mobilization in the 1960s and 1970s, on the two sides of the Atlantic, was not always a clear-cut “backlash” story, but rather a hybrid undertaking with many different goals and strategies, often relying on left-wing methods and grassroots participation to give the so-called silent majority a voice.

While some of the chapters gathered here will no doubt be of particular value to area specialists, we hope that the collection in its entirety will make its readers think further about comparisons and connections between different parts of Europe and the United States. In an effort to foster further comparative and transnational research on conservative mobilization, Michael Kazin’s concluding afterword teases out some of the common threads of the collection and examines some of conservatism’s major victories and failures since the 1960s.