

Goltz, Anna von der; Waldschmidt-Nelson, Britta (Hrsg.): *Inventing the Silent Majority in Western Europe and the United States. Conservatism in the 1960s and 1970s*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2017. ISBN: 978-1-107-16542-7; XIII, 412 pp.

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President Richard Nixon's coining of the „silent majority“ during a speech on 3 November 1969 calling for support of his decision to keep waging the war in Vietnam was a political masterstroke. The seventeen chapters in this collection investigate the roots and subsequent trajectory of the „silent majority“ demonstrating that it was not particularly majoritarian and certainly not silent. Taking a transnational perspective to the study of conservatism, the volume shows how conservatives across the Atlantic faced the prospect of a segment of the population remaining silent in the face of radicalism, with very different outcomes. While conservatives in the United States sought to mobilize this „silent majority“, their Western European counterparts mistrusted it. The chapters give an image of North American conservatism veering in a populist direction as early as the late 1960s, with a marked emphasis on social morality and religion, whereas Western European conservatives, on the whole, retained their belief on the welfare state and elitist view of politics.

Julian E. Zelizer traces the deep roots of the conservative revolution of the 1960s–80s in the anti-New Deal Lobby, which took advantage of the collapse of the New Deal Coalition over the issue of race in the 1960s to lure southern conservatives away from the Democratic Party. Daniel Stedman Jones shows how another set of anti-New Deal activists, neoliberal scholars, radicalized their ideology in the 1950s and 60s and attacked the premises upon which the New Deal rested, such as collective rational outcomes and public interest, and emphasized individual will and self-interest. Still, they did not resolve the paradox at the root of the marriage between neoliberal ideas and traditional conservative values, which explains the limited appeal of radical neoliberalism for European conservatives.

European conservatives were far less radical because they valued the welfare state and the need for social progress. As John Davis shows, British Tory students did not jettison the welfare state nor did they refrain from criticizing the racially explosive discourse of the British conservative firebrand Enoch Powell. Eager proponents of European integration, young Tories were left in the political lurch with the advent of Thatcherism. Anna von der Goltz's examination of West German conservative students shows that their staunch anti-communism did not preclude a certain convergence with their left-wing counterparts in protesting police violence, recognizing the need for the transformation of institutions and the democratization of society, or embracing the change in sexual mores. By the 1970s, however, the fronts hardened between an increasingly authoritarian West German left and right wing students willing to collaborate with the state.

Bernard Lachaise's rather descriptive chapter examines the embrace of the „silent majority“ terminology by French rightists after the upheavals of 1968. These conservatives assumed the role of the defenders of the „silent majority“ against a grand left-wing conspiracy in the making. The chapter is unclear about the results of their activism. After all the left retained the presidency of France from 1981 to 1995. Lachaise points out that the Communist Party continuously lost support, but does not elaborate on whether this was actually the result of right-wing activism or general disillusionment with Communism following the decline and collapse of the Soviet Union.

Donald T. Critchlow argues that the conservative triumph was the result of the failure of liberals and leftists to provide credible solutions to the crisis in 1960s America, and that fear of radicalism, and not the race baiting of rightists, ultimately enabled the conservative counterrevolution by undermining the Great Society and the New Deal. This is a contentious argument which Bill Schwarz's essay disarms, by pointing to the flaw inherent in conflating the rational fear of abuse and violence with the ideological maneuvering of these fears by conservatives who ascribed violence and subversive ideas to specific sub-

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sets of the populations, primarily people of color. Schwarz writes race back into the story of North American and British conservatism by analyzing the political careers of George Wallace and Enoch Powell and their embrace of the politics of race as a way to attract votes. The British moral activist Mary Whitehouse eschewed discussions of race or even the label 'conservative,' but her efforts to bring back social morality and religious piety to Great Britain attracted similar constituencies. All three had the „conviction that in the past all had been well and that modern times were characterized by a social collapse of biblical proportions“ (Schwarz, p. 170). Further complicating Critchlow's argument, Joshua D. Farrington's interesting chapter on African American business lobbyists shows the very limited gains that African Americans made in the conservative revolution.

Mark J. Rozell and Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson's chapter traces the turn towards politics by North American pastors in the wake of the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973 that legalized abortion. Challenged by religious zealots, established conservative politicians began invoking their faith in political campaigns. Whereas Jimmy Carter was able to ride this religious mobilization to victory in 1976, the GOP (Grand Old Party = Republican Party) was able to garner the support of evangelicals for Ronald Reagan in 1981. Thenceforward, religion became a way to mobilize the „silent majority.“ The strength of the religious right in the United States is one of the great differences between North American and European conservatism. As Thomas Großbölting and Marjet Derks show, a Christian right did not develop in either West Germany or the Netherlands because of conservative churchmen's elitism and failure to adapt to modernity or to rapid secularization.

Martin H. Geyer's examination of the West German pollster and consultant of the CDU/CSU Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann demonstrates a similar apprehension by Western European conservatives towards the „silent majority.“ Noelle-Neumann argued that the majority tended to keep silent if it felt the immediate environment was not friendly to their ideas and argued that conservatives needed to modernize, attune themselves

better to the changing times, and increase their public visibility. Frank Bösch's chapter shows just how West German conservatives followed her recommendations. CDU/CSU politicians advocated for the deregulation of television to allow commercial television arguing that 'leftist' public TV was inefficient and biased towards the left. Bösch claims that conservatives did not derive political capital because commercial TV created a depoliticized viewership, but does not broach the question of whether depoliticization itself was not a conservative recipe for political victory in the wake of 1968. Martina Steber's chapter brings a much-needed European perspective on conservatism, finding that the differences amongst „northern“ conservatives from Great Britain and West Germany, and „southern“ conservatives from Italy of the Benelux countries could not be overcome by an inflationary discourse of freedom.

Stacie Taranto and Whitney Strub examine the roots for the success of social conservatism in the United States. Taranto shows how a coterie of grassroots Catholic antifeminists helped shift the New York State GOP to the right. By casting their views as a patriotic defense of domesticity, antifeminist republican women were remarkably successful at defeating pro-feminist moderate conservatives and partnered with right-wing conservatives to create a Republican Party in New York State firmly ensconced in the New Right. As Strub points out, conservatives forced to withdraw from overtly racist rhetoric in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement turned to homophobia instead. The New Right linked gays to pornography and vilified them in the wake of the HIV/AIDS crisis. The reason for their success rested also on the fact that liberals „never offered a robust, affirmative sexual politics that [...] questioned the structuring institutions of American sexuality“ (Strub, p. 354). While the New Right in the United States stood firmly on social conservatism, Lawrence Black shows that the British New Right may have won on the economic front but it could not reverse the cultural transformation that the 1960s had ushered. In his short comprehensive afterword, Michael Kazin concurs: In Western Europe, but also in the United States, the New Right's economic

success could not match its failure to roll back the cultural transformation of the postwar era.

The volume reveals a bias towards Anglo-American and West German topics (only two chapters do not deal primarily with these three countries), which ought to have narrowed the claims espoused in the introduction. Chapters on Italy and Austria are particularly startling omissions. This reviewer was left wishing for a theoretical framework for the volume, which neither the introduction nor the afterword provide. Which analytical contributions or goals for future research does this volume envision? Lastly, did the right have a monopoly on the terminology of the „silent majority“? Kazin puts this into doubt by alluding to the utilization of the term by „rebels both on the right and the left“ but he does not elaborate further (Kazin, p. 383). These faults notwithstanding, the breadth of themes and case studies, and accessible style make this volume an invaluable resource for scholars of conservatism, and for use in the classroom.

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