

# Who Gets What?

*The New Politics of Insecurity*

Edited by

FRANCES MCCALL ROSENBLUTH

*Yale University*

MARGARET WEIR

*Brown University*

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## Introduction

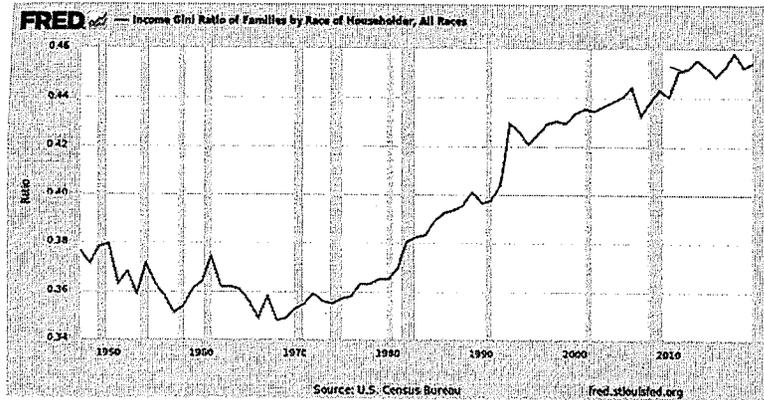
### *The New Politics of Insecurity*

Frances McCall Rosenbluth and Margaret Weir

Income inequality in the United States, after declining in the postwar years, has climbed steadily in recent decades (Figure 1.1). The pain caused by the 2020 pandemic only intensified fissures already deeply etched into American life. Communities of color suffered the most devastating health consequences and bore the brunt of the economic pain. Women found themselves pushed out of the labor force as they sought to combine work and family amid shuttered schools and minimal child care. Communities across America, long blighted by a loss of manufacturing jobs and the attending “deaths of despair” from suicides and opioid overdoses (Case and Deaton 2020), watched death tolls rise. In prosperous cities, the poor and the newly unemployed were little better off, confronted with eviction notices and bleak job prospects. Yet, even as lower income Americans found their lives upended, the wealth of America’s billionaire class soared.

When Donald Trump strode onto the political stage boasting that he alone could fix the economic and social troubles confronting America, he threw down a challenge to politics-as-usual. His promise to “Make America Great Again,” fortified by his rebuke of an elite-dominated political system, fell on receptive ears. For decades, as the American economy delivered volatility, not security, politics seemed to offer little help. On the contrary, government action seemed to reward the very people and institutions that had caused the economic turmoil so harmful to ordinary Americans. Indeed, long after the Great Recession had officially ended, millions of Americans had not regained lost ground.

Such political disquiet has not been confined to the United States. The world’s liberal democracies have all experienced economic change and



U.S. Census Bureau, Income Gini Ratio of Families by Race of Householder, All Races [GINIALLRF], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis;  
<https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/GINIALLRF>, October 6, 2020.

FIGURE 1.1 Income Gini Ratio of Householder in the United States, 1947-2019

significant challenges to long-entrenched political alliances and public norms. The shift away from manufacturing toward a service economy, the new rigors introduced by the open global economy, and the freer movement of people across national boundaries have stripped away the certainties of an earlier era. As confidence eroded in the capacity of representative government and political parties to alleviate the new insecurity, the field opened for a new kind of politics. Politicians who openly embraced racism, nationalism, and unilateral executive action now presented themselves as the alternative to the failures of liberal representative democracy and global connection.

Justifiably, much of the public attention has fixated on the bombast of racist and proto-authoritarian leaders. But the underlying fractures that gave rise to these troubling political developments run much deeper than a single leader: they have been decades in the making. The rifts that have pushed many liberal democracies onto perilous political terrain will not disappear quickly, even if future elections repudiate individual politicians or sideline some political parties.

This book harnesses the expertise of scholars from across the disciplines of history and the social sciences to probe how the economic and social transformations of the past forty years have introduced new risks and insecurities that fractured the solidarities of the postwar era. Focusing on the United States and European liberal democracies, the chapters show how the stable identities and alliances of the past have given way to a jumble of social cleavages and political rifts that now set the menu for politics. They

reveal that the trend toward disaggregation in the late twentieth century, which historian Daniel Rogers (2011) called “the age of fracture,” has continued apace. Instead of sweeping away class divides, however, political fragmentation has, if anything, deepened inequalities and rendered them more multifaceted. Fueled by fear and energized by the appeal of narrowly defined protections, the politics of fracture makes it difficult to address economic and social insecurity in broad and inclusive ways. Instead, a pervasive sense of insecurity has created fertile ground for populist politicians pushing politics toward ugly extremes once thought banished from public life.

Faced with these strains, can the democratic center hold? Can liberal democracies address insecurity in ways that maintain or rebuild broad solidarities? The chapters address these core questions from two perspectives. The first depicts how economic transformations and established institutions interacted over time to introduce new economic, social, and political cleavages. The chapters show that while these strains reverberated across Western democracies, they hit the United States with special ferocity. The second major question animating the volume considers how and in what ways the United States remains distinctive. The volume probes the role of America’s deep racial divide and its meager forms of risk protection in aggravating fracture. They also show how new insecurities in Europe and America took different political expression in countries with proportional representation compared to those, like the United States, with majoritarian political institutions. In each, the end result weakened the hold of the political center on politics.

The social and political divisions that now slice through liberal democracies in Western Europe and the United States appear under many guises. To parse this complexity, we emphasize three core lines of fracture: people, places, and politics. These categories capture (1) the ideologies and attitudes linked to individual social position, (2) the spatial divisions that have become a hallmark of the new economy, and (3) the political institutions that segment the experience of insecurity and the political responses to it. In this Introduction, we first situate this volume with a review of research about the new economy and the divisions it has fostered. We then flesh out our analysis of people, places, and politics, showing how the chapters in each section build on and depart from existing research.

#### ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATIONS AND THE NEW POLITICS OF FRACTURE

Democracy and capitalism coexisted harmoniously when rapid industrialization after World War II brought untold prosperity to middle-class

workers who formed the basis for stable social democratic politics in Europe and New Deal liberalism in the United States. Ambitious postwar plans for social insurance and full employment offered roadmaps for achieving these ideals. But by the 1970s, the postwar trajectory of economic growth stalled, as once reliable prescriptions failed to deliver prosperity (Stein 2010; Rogers 2011). Political leaders in the United States, and to a lesser degree those in Western Europe, exposed workers to alarming new insecurities as they sought to reboot economic growth under the banner of free markets and global trade. Unregulated technological change magnified insecurity by reducing the supply of good jobs. But decisions about how technology is used and the terms on which countries engage the global economy are deeply political. Governments can combat the dolorous effects of growing insecurities by offering compensation from losses with a menu of policies that includes education and training, increased social protection, public employment, and wage increases. But can governments chosen by increasingly divided electorates offer these policies?

The record to date is not encouraging and it is especially bleak in the United States. Across liberal democracies, many low-skilled but previously secure manufacturing jobs continue to disappear on account of capital-intensive production, in which technology increasingly substitutes for skilled labor, and because of greater dependence on trade and offshore outsourcing. These twin trends of technology and trade have swollen the ranks of citizens in the United States and Europe alike who get by on multiple part-time jobs, usually in the service economy and often without pension and health benefits (Neumark 2000; Standing 2011; Autor, Dorn, Hanson, Majlesi 2017). This includes the relatively high-skilled self-employed participants in the “gig economy” who work only as much and as often as they can line up customers on their own (Perez 2015; Sundararajan 2016).

Economic stress has not been shouldered equally. For those at the very top of the income spectrum in the United States – the top 1 percent – things have never been better. Over the forty years that incomes for most Americans have languished, the United States has become the most unequal among the advanced democracies. Between 1980 and 2018, the share of national income going to the top 1 percent rose from 11 percent to 20 percent, while the share of the bottom 50 percent dropped from 20 percent to 13 percent (Alvaredo et al. 2018, p. 81). In other liberal democracies, inequality grew but much less dramatically. In Western Europe, the share of national income going to the top 1 percent rose from 10 percent to 12 percent between 1980 and 2018, while the share

going to the bottom 50 percent fell from 24 percent to 22 percent (Alvaredo et al. 2018, p. 70). Yet, the experience of insecurity has also grown in Western Europe as the share of workers on temporary contracts has risen and industrial jobs have declined markedly (Hall 2019).

Growing inequality poses a special problem in the United States. No longer can extreme levels of inequality in the United States be excused on the ground that high rates of social mobility compensate. As the cross-national comparison in economist Alan Krueger’s “Great Gatsby Curve” shows, economic inequality is associated with declining intergenerational social mobility (Krueger 2015). Moreover, substantial evidence suggests that economic inequality restricts growth. In a sweeping analysis of growth and inequality in the United States since 1700, Lindert and Williamson (2016) show that the high rates of American inequality have not produced greater growth than in other liberal democracies. Heather Boushey (2019) goes further to argue that economic inequality restricts growth by distorting the flow of talent into the economy, limiting fair competition and reducing consumer demand.

The political stakes of insecurity and inequality are high: growing economic insecurity undermines democracy everywhere, as the electoral basis for moderation disappears. Why have the political systems across the liberal democracies found it so difficult to enact policy interventions that deliver prosperity and economic security for their citizens? Why instead have political strong men like Trump dominated politics and silver bullet solutions like Brexit won support? Why have political parties on the right and left grown at the expense of the center in Europe where the inequality has remained relatively low but insecurity has grown?

Existing research has sought to understand these fractures in different ways. Some analyses draw a direct line from economic dislocation to eroding solidarities. There is some evidence for this analysis. The decline of manufacturing across liberal democracies not only engendered discontent among former industrial workers; it also weakened unions, one of the central institutions anchoring postwar stability (Boix 2019). New forms of work in the gig economy have made it more difficult for workers to act on a shared interest (Thelen 2019). Likewise, industrial workers harmed by globalization and the decline of manufacturing jobs have provided important constituencies for the fringe parties that are hollowing out the center in European politics (Mair 2013). The splintering of the working class finds a counterpoint in the coalescence of wealth. As the fortunes of workers declined, the new concentrations of wealth vied to define the political agenda.

In addition to considering the economic causes of insecurity, the chapters in this book also probe the role of the social divisions, political institutions, and political actors in creating the specific fractures that now characterize politics in liberal democracies. These include the symbols, deeply embedded ideals, social identities, and political institutions that have long served as touchstones for interpreting and acting on economic and social challenges. But the unsettled nature of contemporary politics means that entrepreneurial politicians and parties have more freedom to wield these tools in new ways as they seek political advantage (Hall 2019; Iversen and Soskice 2019). Political and social fractures provide inroads for politicians and parties that cannot hope to win majorities or become part of governing majorities. Social divisions that blame the poor for their difficulties reduce pressure for raising taxes to fund more generous social programs. Spatial divisions drive new wedges between urban and rural areas and set up walls within metropolitan boundaries. Clearly, the new politics of insecurity is a multidimensional process that is played out in many different arenas.

#### BROKEN SOLIDARITIES AND THE NEW POLITICS OF INSECURITY

Analysts of advanced democracies note the exceptionally unsettled nature of contemporary politics as well as the complexity of interests and alliances vying for power (Beramendi et al. 2015; Hall 2019). We slice into this complexity by identifying three arenas of fracture: people: the social lenses through which people perceive and experience insecurity; place: which separates the winners and losers of globalization and, in the United States, divides the population by race and ethnicity, deepening social differences in the process; and policy and politics: which shape the social risks that different groups face and organize voters into bundles with distinctive appeals. The chapters explore the independent logics that create and sustain fractures in each arena. As we introduce the chapters, we consider the open questions in each of these domains, showing how the analyses in the chapters illuminate the divisions that contribute to unsettled politics and the implications for the politics of insecurity.

#### People

The social lenses through which people interpret rising inequality and insecurity produce distinct interpretations of what has been lost, if anything, why, and what should be done about it. Traditional class analysis

drew a line from class position to support for redistribution: the economically less secure could be expected to form the core of support for redistribution. Instead, deepening divisions surrounding who or what is to blame for economic insecurity have boosted receptivity to new, more extreme political messages and limited the appeal of older more moderate politics. Research on political attitudes has highlighted intersecting lines of cleavage around social status, racial and ethnic divisions, and education. Each has been identified as a force in directing politics away from concerns about inequality and redistribution and bolstering support for right-wing populism.

In both Europe and the United States, research has documented the impact of declining social status as a crucial and powerful influence on attitudes supportive of populism. Examining twenty European democracies, Gidron and Hall (2017) argue that a sense of lost social status – measured by subjective feelings – is a powerful predictor of support for populism. Economic changes – especially the decline in occupations that require less education and the greater exposure to globalization – matter, but the sense of feeling shoved aside and disrespected by elites is on its own a powerful trigger for support for populism. Similarly, in the United States, Diana Mutz (2018) has traced support for Donald Trump to fears of lost status. She identifies the intertwined threats that underlie support for Trump as lost racial status and lost global status. Both particularly affect white Christian males, who long sat at the top of America's status hierarchy.

Andra Gillespie (Chapter 2, this volume) takes this analysis a step further by showing how nostalgia for a lost past drives support for Trump. Longing for a lost “golden age” has infused other historical periods when Americans confronted the anxieties associated with change and uncertainty (Cowie 2016, p. 227). Gillespie demonstrates that Trump took full advantage of this powerful social and political tool in his call to “make America great again.” But nostalgia, she shows, reflects a tunnel vision of the past, incorporating only the perspective of those who believe their social dominance challenged. At the heart of that challenge lie perceived shifts in the racial hierarchy. Nostalgia is closely linked to racial resentment and to backlash against the election of America's first black president.

Of course, racist appeals, coded or not, are nothing new in American politics. The era that many remember with nostalgia featured bitter struggles over basic civil rights in the South and the openly racist candidacy of George Wallace, who won votes across the country with his vow to

preserve segregation “forever.” Gillespie’s analysis shows the power of a savvy marketer to prime racist attitudes by combining open attacks on immigrants with gauzy references to a misremembered past.

Education level offers another source of anxiety related to social status and economic well-being. Because it bestows exceptional rewards on those with university degrees and imposes new deprivations on those with less education, the knowledge economy has amplified the significance of education. Analyses show the strong association between lower levels of education and support for Trump, Brexit, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany, and Marine Le Pen in France (Gidron and Hall 2017, p. 558). But the meaning of the educational divide is subject to debate. As Hall notes, education separates the winners and losers of the global economy, but it also marks off those with cosmopolitan values and those with more traditional values (Hall 2019). In her analysis of the 2016 election in the United States, Mutz (2018) shows that when perceived status threat is taken into account, education level has no impact on support for Trump.

Ben Ansell and Jane Gingrich (Chapter 3, this volume) bring a new lens to studying the impact of education on satisfaction with politics. Drawing on European data, they confirm the widely documented political dissatisfaction among those without a university education. But their work goes further to demonstrate distinctive attitudes among those with similar levels of education. They demonstrate divisions among graduates based on occupation, with public sector workers in health care and education more supportive of redistribution than those in the private finance, insurance, and real estate industries. Moreover, they show that a significant segment of college graduates holds jobs that are poorly matched with their qualifications. These mismatched workers are more likely to express dissatisfaction with the status quo than are people whose jobs better match their skills.

This analysis has stark implications. Economists studying skill-based technological change look to higher education as a solution to the problems confronting the less educated (Goldin and Katz 2010). But, as Ansell and Gingrich show, access to higher education has expanded greatly since the 1960s, but the economic benefits of a degree vary significantly. The mismatch in education and occupation that they identify suggests that the constituency for populist appeals extends more widely than most research would suggest.

As inequality has grown in many of the liberal democracies, a wealth of new research has sought to account for its impact on

attitudes about policy and politics. Kris-Stella Trump (Chapter 4, this volume) provides a guide through this literature, focusing on attitudes toward rising top-level incomes. Research has shown that there is little relationship between the growth of inequality and support for redistribution: countries with more inequality do not exhibit greater support for redistribution, neither does support for redistribution rise when inequality grows worse (McCall and Kenworthy, 2009; McCall 2013). Seeking to understand why inequality has such limited effect on support for redistribution, studies have examined whether inadequate information – people underestimating the extent of inequality – is the problem. However, as Trump shows, experimental research reveals that the impact of more accurate information is mixed and depends greatly on the type of information and the conditions under which it is given.

Instead, Trump argues that attitudes about the deservingness of the poor are more important in shaping views about redistribution. In the United States, a large literature on the undeserving poor shows that racial stereotypes lie at the heart of harsh assessments of deservingness (Gilens 1999; Katz 2013). Yet, Trump shows that the United States is not alone in this regard: ethnic and racial divisions lower support for redistribution in Europe as well. Even so, in the United States, long-standing racial stereotypes and strong beliefs in meritocracy combine in unique ways to limit support for redistribution. If growing inequality challenges racial stereotypes or undermines faith in meritocracy, Trump concludes, American views may shift to support more redistribution.

Gender looms large in the experience and politics of inequality, for even though the gender wage gap has shrunk, opportunities and authority remain male-skewed even today. Alice Kessler-Harris (Chapter 5, this volume) situates the problem of gender solidarity in a trenchant analysis of the development of democracy and capitalism in the postwar America. She shows that even though the United States fell far short of the solidaristic policies of postwar European social democracies, New Deal social policies expanded in the decades after World War II. By the 1960s, federal action designed to temper capitalism and to lodge ideals of freedom within a system of social protection were gaining wide support. In this context, the emerging women’s movement embraced broadly solidaristic goals, including a universal right to childcare.

Kessler-Harris documents the underlying tensions in the movement between those seeking freedom to function in a male-dominated society and those embracing social justice and wider social change. In the 1970s,

she argues, gender solidarities evaporated in the context of newly dominant ideas about market freedom and individual responsibility. Similar to Kris-Stella Trump, Kessler-Harris finds that racialized ideas about individual responsibility and belief in meritocracy undermined support for broad redistributive policies. As unprecedented opportunities opened for privileged women at the top of the educational and income ladders, well-off women embraced individual rights in place of gender solidarity across economic lines. Broad class and gender alliances dissolved into fragmented identity politics and women became “just another interest group.”

Together the chapters in this part document the challenges of preserving old solidarities and crafting new ones in the face of rising insecurity. The least controversial solution to insecurity – education – may not only be ineffective but may also actually expand the ranks of the discontented as cohorts of university graduates languish in jobs below their skill levels. Likewise, the social lenses through which people interpret insecurity fail to mobilize broadly based public responses to insecurity and lead away from robust public action. Political entrepreneurs such as Donald Trump in the United States and the Brexiteers in England direct public attention away from redistribution by promising a return to an idealized past where the sense of lost status can be restored. Despite concern about inequality, entrenched norms about deservingness, hard work, and meritocracy block support for redistribution. They also divide social groups, such as women, that might be expected to unite around a re-energized public role. These ideas are especially salient in the United States where racial stereotypes have long permeated debates about merit and redistribution. However, given the growing prominence of ethnic divisions linked to immigration in Europe, the United States may not be so different in this regard.

### Place

Geographic diversity is an enduring fact of political life. Over the past two decades, however, economic and social divisions across place have attained an outsized significance. Rural voters backed the election of Donald Trump in large numbers, the majority of Brexit supporters reside in the economically stressed north of England, France’s “yellow vest” protesters hail from the countryside, and support for the far right has grown sharply in economically distressed eastern Germany. The fracture of politics along rural-urban lines raises many questions. Why has the split become especially fierce in American politics? Are the central concerns of “left behind places” economic or status driven? In the United States, rural-urban divisions are

accompanied by a second axis of spatial differentiation centered within metropolitan areas. The sharp division of US metropolitan areas into distinct enclaves defined by race, ethnicity, and income has existed for nearly a century. But new questions emerge about the impact of rising inequality on these divisions and about how the increasingly stark divisions across metros have affected the divisions within them.

The intensity of the rural-urban divide in the United States took many analysts by surprise after the 2016 election: rural and small-town America had played a central role in delivering the vote to Trump. Such regional divisions were a regular feature of nineteenth-century America when party politics pitted largely rural native Protestants against Catholic and Jewish immigrants concentrated in cities. The economic policies of the New Deal and the Great Society tempered these cultural divisions with broadly gauged economic benefits that assisted the poor and powerless everywhere. But demographic movements, along with political gerrymandering, accentuated regional differences well before Donald Trump entered the political arena. Voters in cities, beginning in the 1960s, had a greater affinity with “post-materialist” values: concerns with the environment, women’s rights, gay rights, and immigration. Urban areas also benefitted disproportionately from the knowledge economy, leaving behind many “landscapes of despair” in rural areas (Moretti 2012; Monnat and Brown 2017). Katherine Cramer’s (2016) study of Wisconsin depicts the development of “rural consciousness” infused with resentment of cities. Rural impoverishment generates a distinct “gradient of social conservatism” in blighted areas (Scala and Johnson 2017; Rodden 2019). Regional divisions, in turn, further weaken the capacity of political parties to offer national solutions to national problems.

Jonathan Rodden (Chapter 6, this volume) argues that, over time, two-party systems are increasingly impotent in the face of these regional differences. Already rooted in cities since the New Deal, Democrats readily responded to the new concerns of urban-based supporters of women’s rights, environmentalism, civil rights, and immigration. Similarly, with the winners of the knowledge economy rooted in cities, the Democratic leadership embraced free trade. As a result, cities came to anchor a racially and ethnically diverse Democratic coalition that joined low-income service workers with high-income beneficiaries of the global economy. Republicans, by contrast, became entrenched in predominantly white rural areas left behind by the global economy and in exurban areas that rejected the cosmopolitan values embraced by Democrats. The two American parties, geographically rooted in rural and urban districts,

respectively, have come to emphasize cultural differences at the expense of shared economic concerns.

The urban-rural division is one way that “place” influences the politics of insecurity. Given America’s long history of legalized racial segregation, spatial divisions *within* metropolitan areas have also served as a powerful mechanism for creating and enforcing inequality across racial lines. A broad literature has documented that even after segregation became illegal, spatial separation across racial lines has persisted (Massey and Denton 1998; Rothstein 2017). These divisions have a profound impact on life opportunities, as Chetty and collaborators (Chetty, Hendren, Kline, Saez 2014) have shown in a series of important studies that tracks the impact of residence on long term-prospects for advancement. Research has also shown that economic segregation has risen as inequality has grown, and that the affluent increasingly cluster into their own neighborhoods (Reardon and Bischoff 2011; Jargowsky 2018).

Douglas Massey and Jacob Rugh (Chapter 7, this volume) add new dimensions to this work by examining the intertwined impact of growing inequality, the emergence of regional winners and losers in the knowledge economy, and the persistence racial segregation. Over the past forty years, they show, the United States has divided more sharply into pockets of wealth and concentrations of great need. The segregation of the affluent, they demonstrate, has become especially pronounced. These patterns are intensified by the persistence of racial segregation. The residential isolation of affluent whites and Asians and their spatial segregation from the poor are linked to racial segregation, which also exacerbates the concentration of poverty for African Americans and Hispanics. Massey and Rugh show that the geography of the global economy influences patterns of segregation. Metropolitan areas that are well connected to the global economy exhibit the greatest concentrations of affluence, while areas left behind by the global economy display the most extreme concentrations of poverty.

Margaret Weir and Desmond King (Chapter 8, this volume) show how citizens who have benefited from geographically specific wealth have used politics to lock in their advantages. Wealthier communities not only block entry to less affluent residents; they also attempt to secede from larger political jurisdictions if they feel their tax burdens are not commensurate with their services. Because budgets for schools and local public goods draw from local property taxes, the well off can save their tax dollars for their own children and withhold them from their needier neighbors. By contrast, a very different approach to redistribution is emerging in big

diverse cities that benefit from agglomeration economies. These cities have spearheaded a host of new measures that expand the public sector and support low-wage workers, including minimum wage increases, work-family policies, and community benefit agreements, which require developers to provide employment, housing, or neighborhood amenities to benefit low-income residents. Although formidable political barriers limit the reach of these policies – and state governments have indeed blocked many – they offer a new vision for government’s role in assisting workers and their families.

Economic and social divisions now appear across liberal democracies, but they are especially acute in American politics. The two-party system, entrenched patterns of racial segregation, and the rules for creating local political jurisdictions promote sharper divisions in political identities and access to public goods. These forces have produced dramatically different life chances depending on residential location. They also lead to very different assessments of appropriate political action, making it difficult to build broad solidarities across geographic lines. However, in cities benefitting from agglomeration economies, advocates have been able to use their power to implement a range of new policies designed to address insecurity. Whether and how these policy entrepreneurs can extend the geographical reach of these policies remains to be seen.

### Politics and Policies

The economic transformations of the past four decades reverberated through the politics and policy landscapes of Western Europe and the United States. In the process, they created widespread new insecurities and robbed the political center of once reliable voters. In Western Europe, industrial workers cut loose from their earlier political moorings lent support to parties on the far right and far left. In the United States, the old New Deal coalition that brought white industrial workers into the same party as African Americans collapsed, as many white workers with less education deserted the Democratic Party. The blame for and proposed solutions to insecurity range widely, but calls for protection from global trade and pressures to block immigration signaled that a new politics was afoot. But disaffected industrial workers were not the only new force in politics. At the top of the economic spectrum, concentrations of great wealth – especially in the United States – have accelerated the flow of big money into political campaigns, amplifying the voice of those at the top. The chapters by Boix; Salas, Rosenbluth, and Shapiro; and Hacker and

Pierson examine the political processes that hollow out centrist politics in the face of rising economic and status insecurities.

Carles Boix (Chapter 9, this volume) examines how economic transformations linked to global trade and automation set the stage for political realignment in Europe and the United States. His chapter shows how the economic foundations of the old political order crumbled under the weight of trade and technical change. As well-paying manufacturing jobs disappeared, sharp income inequalities arose in the United States and employment levels stagnated in Western Europe. Although dissatisfaction mounted and trust in government fell as the economy failed to deliver the security it once had, the initial political response was muted. Instead, the disaffected simply dropped out of politics; the center held but lacked the firm foundation it once enjoyed. It was not until after the 2008 recession, Boix argues, that a new brand of political entrepreneur gained traction. In place of the broad social policies supplied by the welfare state, populist politicians promised to enhance security with protection from globalization and strong national borders to block immigration. Boix concludes his analysis with a grim prognosis. If policies such as expanded education and universal basic income fail to win support, some form of oligarchical capitalism that offers little to those affected by technical change may define the future.

Underscoring Boix's warning that a shrinking industrial workforce poses new challenges for democratic politics, Christian Salas, Frances McCall Rosenbluth, and Ian Shapiro (Chapter 10, this volume) provide evidence that fewer industrial jobs translate into party fragmentation in proportional electoral systems, thereby weakening the left even in the traditionally social democratic countries of Europe. Proportional representation has worked well in postwar Europe in providing broad coalitions of support for free trade with compensation and for growth with welfare. Businesses and labor were both well represented in parliaments, and sometimes, as in Germany's Grand Coalitions, within the ruling legislative coalition. However, fewer industrial jobs have weakened unions and the left political party representing them, leaving insecure citizens to vote for more radical parties including those on the far right. This finding puts the spotlight on institutional structures, including electoral rules, that shape the incentives of politicians and the choices offered to voters. It also cautions against a view, common among American academics, that proportional representation (PR) is necessarily a way to create political consensus. If PR's successes rested on a structure of organized labor that is on the wane, it may not offer the promise of welfare improvements for the United States that its proponents desire.

That is not to say, however, that single member district systems have insulated themselves against the dangers of populism either. In both the United States and Britain, voters unhappy with their economic lots have blamed political parties for their woes, demanding more decentralized control of party leadership and candidate selection. In Britain, London's prosperity has not been shared in the rest of the country, creating wide rifts within both parties. In the United States, meanwhile, a growing number of electoral districts are "safe" for one party or the other, because of demographic patterns and partisan gerrymandering as Rodden (Chapter 6, this volume) describes. In districts in which primary battles are the principal form of electoral competition and accountability, politicians who fail to cater to the more extreme interests within their districts can be challenged only by more extreme co-partisans. Moreover, political parties in America are susceptible to capture by extremists and can rely on a range of institutional tools to block majority-supported policy. Thus have money and cultural mobilization pushed aside debate over economic policy in American politics.

Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson (Chapter 11, this volume) describe this process in the United States, showing how the Republican Party has been able to win power with an agenda supportive of highly inegalitarian policies and to use its power to block redistributive proposals. They document the rise of insecurity in the United States, asking why it has not produced stronger political support for a robust set of measures designed to buffer insecurity. The answer, they posit, lies in both the demand and the supply sides of policy. Republicans, Hacker and Pierson argue, have packaged together increasingly open racist appeals with inegalitarian economic policies, combining a coalition of lower-income whites and high-income elites. Emphasizing racialized group identities helps to dampen demand for new redistributive policies from voters while the capture of the party's economic agenda by extreme elites supplies the party with an agenda that actively fosters inequality. Hacker and Pierson show that the bar for challengers proposing more extensive redistribution remains high. Not only are Republicans assisted by a political geography and media world that isolate their supporters, they have also successfully weakened unions, the main organized force for solidarity on which the Democratic Party historically relied.

Kathleen Thelen and Andreas Wiedemann (Chapter 12, this volume) document a variety of policy responses to socioeconomic risk across the developed democracies, suggesting that a race to the bottom is not inevitable or uniform. To be sure, weaker workplace protections have amplified

the risks borne by individuals across these countries. New sources of risk associated with credit markets augment these burdens further in the United States and Britain. But to different degrees, countries combine increased risks in labor markets with policies designed to buffer their impact. Neoliberal reforms in the labor market do not, they argue, necessarily translate into increased individual risk. Comparing liberal democracies across policy domains, they measure levels of risk exposure in the labor market as well as collective coverage of those risks in policy. They show that European social democracies, especially in Scandinavia, have survived relatively well and manage to protect their citizens from risks far better than countries like the United States. Thelen and Wiedemann acknowledge that workers everywhere are now more likely to face the loss or downgrading of their jobs, but they point out that countries with strong traditions of social democracy such as Denmark offer social insurance of various kinds including job retraining, unemployment insurance, single-payer health care, and universal retirement pensions.

Thelen and Wiedemann show that the United States is an outlier, with individuals exposed to very high levels of labor market risk and weak collective coverage. As a result, they argue, Americans face what they call "risk contagion," where risks in one domain spill over to create more risk in other areas. Because so few buffers are built into American social and economic policies, risks are likely to compound, leaving people with no footholds for climbing out of economic distress.

Nowhere are these dynamics more visible than in America's low-wage labor market. Elizabeth Ananat, Anna Gassman-Pines, and Yulya Truskinovsky (Chapter 13, this volume) zero in on the distinctive problems of low-skilled Americans. They show that the decline of manufacturing and the rise of service sector employment have increased income volatility for low-skilled workers over the past thirty years. Compounding this economic insecurity, employers in the low-wage sector have introduced new scheduling practices that made work hours unpredictable. As Alice Kessler-Harris (Chapter 5, this volume) documents, the divided women's movement meant the loss of a potentially powerful force supporting robust childcare policies. As a consequence, American public policy has historically offered only weak support for workers juggling care responsibilities. At a time when most caregivers are also workers and when the need for care associated with an aging population is increasing, Ananat, Gassman-Pines, and Truskinovsky show, the burden on low-wage workers has become untenable. They discuss a range of initiatives, including minimum wage increases, advance scheduling regulations, and paid family leave, that are forging new

strategies to address the challenges these workers face. Policies designed to assist low-wage workers face less ideological resistance because the questions about deservingness discussed by Kris-Stella Trump (Chapter 4, this volume) are much less salient. Although these initiatives are mainly confined to politically sympathetic, relatively affluent localities, their focus on workers may help them gain broader support.

As exposure to risk has shifted, so too has politics. The anxieties engendered by social and economic strains have eroded centrist coalitions in Europe and have allowed more extreme voices new prominence in both Europe and the United States. But what drives these shifts? How do majoritarian vs. proportional representation systems affect the prospects of entrepreneurial politicians from the fringes to build political support?

The United States, as these chapters document, remains distinctive. Across the board, labor market, social, and financial policies expose Americans to considerably greater risk than is common in European countries. The New Deal and some past successes notwithstanding, America's two-party system has failed in the past few decades to produce a centrism capable of crafting stable support to those suffering from economic risks. The United States is unique in the ability of elites with an extreme economic agenda to capture the Republican Party, to perpetuate the racist nostalgia described by Gillespie (Chapter 2, this volume), and to use the levers of government to block or undermine broadly gauged policies directed at insecurity. But European countries are also not immune to extremism, as new parties eat away at the center. With protectionism from trade and immigrants at the core of their appeal, these parties have paid less attention to crafting new policies to address the economic strains that confront displaced industrial workers.

#### CONCLUSION

In the postwar decades, it was easy to think that democracy and capitalism were a natural pair, a golden formula. Constitutional democracies commanded world power, prosperity, and universal admiration. At the close of the war, the British sociologist T. H. Marshall divined a natural historical progression that led from civil rights, to political rights, to social rights. Citizens would now be able to use the power of democracy to break down entrenched class inequalities, and the world would be a better place. Although Marshall's hope for an end to inequality remained elusive, the agenda of expanding economic security drove postwar politics in liberal democracies.

The world today, however, appears radically different: growing wealth disparities have fueled political extremism, economic protectionism, and anti-immigrant xenophobia. Missing have been the heroic responses of the New Deal or the Marshall Plan.

The fragile economic foundations of representative democracy have long been understood: if tolerance, moderation, and generosity follow more easily from comfort and security, the reverse is also true. The wars that consumed the Western world in the first half of the twentieth century taught us those lessons, and the global economic institutions forged after the war were meant to guarantee against the repeat of bare-knuckle capitalism at home or beggar-thy-neighbor protectionism toward other nations (Polanyi 1944; Ruggie 1982). Have those lessons been forgotten? Is the genie out of the bottle, never to return?

Egalitarian politics, without a doubt, sit less steadily on an economy of capital-intensive production and global integration. It is in the perversity of things that the politics of redistribution is easiest for uniformly well-off voters, and hardest when the need is dire (Moene and Wallerstein 2001). The chapters of this book provide ample evidence of the challenges of creating political consensus when interests have become so disparate, and no political system is immune from the temptation of cheap, symbolic appeals. Both the American-style majoritarian systems and European proportional representation systems provide openings for politicians who thrive on division.

In the United States, the takeover of the Republican Party by extremist elements defied the long-standing nostrum that two-party systems converge in the center. Pulled to the right by business mobilization, a political geography that magnified divisions, and new media spouting extremist views, Republicans placed their political bets on alliances with well-organized groups including Christian conservatives and the National Rifle Association. With Trump at the helm and no credible plan to address insecurity, the party unapologetically embraced an ugly ethnonationalism designed to arouse and divide. Europe democracies have experienced no full-scale party takeovers; however, systems of proportional representation have allowed challenges from the fringes to eat away at the center. These include openly fascist parties peddling racist themes banished from European politics since the 1930s.

The hard-won lesson of the past decades underscores the fact that solidarity must be actively built, nurtured, and updated if it is to endure (Banting and Kymlicka 2017). Political actors hoping to fashion and sustain broader solidarities face a daunting task. The solutions they offer for alleviating insecurity will not yield quick results and their

political appeals remain less emotionally arousing than the poisonous mix of scapegoating, nostalgia, and fear concocted by political extremists. But in neither European democracies nor United States does the strategy of fear and hate command majorities. The longer-term strategy for recovering a broad political center dedicated to finding solutions to insecurity will need to build civil society groups that can support solidarity, most importantly labor unions. This task is particularly urgent in the United States, where unions face direct attacks. In addition, features of the political system that amplify extremes need to be reformed where possible. The challenge for single member district systems such as the United States and Britain is to redraw district lines to force parties to compete on broadly appealing policies (Rosenbluth and Shapiro 2018). This is no easy task in a world with agglomeration economies that crowd some people into successful local economies and leave others behind. Even in a system of politically lopsided districts, however, political parties can begin to challenge partisan isolation by actively fielding candidates and competing in districts where they face significant disadvantages.

Efforts to reconstitute a stable political center must prevent the erosion of policies that yield widespread benefits, and they must introduce new security-enhancing initiatives that can command broad public support. Barak Obama's health care expansion and his Consumer Financial Protection Bureau both represented steps in this direction, even though both weakened under Trump. Initiatives in American states and in local governments demonstrate, albeit in small ways, that government can respond to growing economic insecurity. Western European democracies have the advantage of entrenched expectations of and widespread appreciation for redistributive policies. Those policies are needed now, to maintain democratic stability, as never before. Even as the left fragments with the decline of industrial jobs, and the far-right preys on the newly insecure, inclusive postwar policies have been weakened but not yet dismantled. The world holds its breath and hopes that the center holds.

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## PART I

## PEOPLE