

the effects that would have on South Korea, Taiwan, and Ukraine and on Europe more broadly. Even close allies such as Israel and Japan would have to reassess their dependence on the United States, and more and more states would have to hedge their bets. Eventually, the appearance of the United States in retreat would also weaken the country's economic influence. Other articles give comparable treatment to specific issues, including threats to the military, to Democratic cities and states, the Department of Justice, abortion, women's rights, efforts to address climate change, and immigration, to name just a few. Even the most well-informed reader can count on learning a great deal from this important contribution.

## Western Europe

ANDREW MORAVCSIK

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*The Abuse of Power: Confronting Injustice in Public Life*

BY THERESA MAY. Headline, 2023, 352 pp.

**T**he author, who served as British prime minister from 2016 to 2019, is remembered as a stodgy and ineffective "one nation" conservative who failed to secure a parliamentary majority in 2017, forge an agreement on Brexit, and block the rise of her erratic successor, Boris Johnson. Surprisingly, her memoir is a passionate call to defend society from privileged elites who have elevated personal over public interest—a

damning and unsentimental indictment that seems almost socialist in its zeal. Narrow opportunism, she says, explains why the speaker of the House of Commons, hard-core Brexiteers, and Northern Irish politicians scotched a reasonable compromise deal on Brexit, why EU negotiators pressed their advantage, and why Johnson ultimately signed a deal that was worse for the United Kingdom. She also lambastes private-sector entities, including social media outlets and pharmaceutical companies, for failing to uphold their end of the social contract. No self-criticism follows. Instead, in the final chapter, May professes a naive faith that all this can only be solved if careerist politicians and state officials adopt an ethic of public service. This position ignores the deeper material and institutional sources of elite power and thus evades the central irony: most of the elite bad actors May criticizes in this book are core constituents of the Conservative Party that she has supported for decades.

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*Beyond the Wall: A History of East Germany*

BY KATJA HOYER. Basic Books, 2023, 496 pp.

In this engaging book, a journalist and historian born in East Germany re-creates the ambivalence of life in the German Democratic Republic. Thirty-five years after East Germany collapsed, the vanished country continues to inspire in Germans a curious combination of loathing and longing. Today, few defend the GDR's use of torture, incarceration, and constant

surveillance to keep a Stalinist police state in power or its decision in 1961 to maintain its viability by walling in its own citizens. Yet many former residents of the GDR nonetheless feel nostalgia for its less stressful lifestyle, lack of commercialism, full employment, gender equality, low cost of living, sense of collective identity, social stability, and, interestingly, upward mobility. They also resent what they perceive as their second-class status in a reunited Germany—a sentiment that may be fueling support for right-wing populism. Although this book has inspired widespread criticism for hinting at a moral equivalence between the shortcomings of East Germany and West Germany during the Cold War era, it nonetheless vividly evokes the ethos of a state and society that have disappeared from the pages of history.

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*The Rise and Fall of the People's Parties: A History of Democracy in Western Europe Since 1918*  
BY PEPIJN CORDUWENER. Oxford University Press, 2023, 272 pp.

Contemporary threats to democracies from populist far-right parties, this book argues, are simply the effects of a deeper problem: the decline of the mass centrist parties of the center-right and center-left. In post-war Europe, Christian Democratic and Socialist parties moderated their ideologies to win support outside their traditional political bases—the church and organized labor, respectively. This practice created a broad and stable consensus that upheld liberal democracy, the welfare state, and private

ownership of the means of production. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, environmentalism, human rights advocacy, and gender-based activism began to erode this consensus. Today, the rise of a conservative identitarian backlash among older, more religious, and more rural voters threatens to shatter what is left of the consensus. This book adds little to a half century of sophisticated and detailed historiography and social science grappling with the causes of this change, and it offers no distinctive explanation of its own. But it does provide a readable summary of critical late-twentieth-century political trends up to the edge of the current crisis.

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*Financialization and Local Statecraft*  
BY ANDY PIKE. Oxford University Press, 2023, 288 pp.

On average, cities and towns account for over 20 percent of public spending in developed countries. In most places, much of the ordinary person's quality of life depends on investments in schools, police, fire departments, health care, and other services, as well as roads, public spaces, and other local infrastructure. In recent years, many countries have decentralized further, and studies generally show that the more decentralized countries are, the more satisfied their citizens are. Yet the United Kingdom seems an anomaly. Traditionally a very centralized country, it radically slashed subsidies in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, leaving localities to fund themselves through spending cuts, tax increases, privatization, or

financial manipulation. The results of British decentralization have been at best uneven, and at worst harmful. Funding gaps widened, services declined, and speculative financial schemes rushed to fill the breach. Inequality, both within and across jurisdictions, has grown markedly. Today, the British government faces a difficult dilemma: allow urban bankruptcies or reverse policy once again.

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*Fixing France: How to Repair a Broken Republic*

BY NABILA RAMDANI.

PublicAffairs, 2023, 352 pp.

Ramdani, a French journalist who specializes in explaining her country to Anglo-Saxons, offers a lurid litany of well-known complaints about how the contemporary reality fails to match the country's revolutionary ideals of "liberty, equality, and fraternity." French politics has become an elitist preserve of white men from the best schools. French economy and society are unequal and self-dealing. Cities institutionalize neocolonial segregation, with those of immigrant origin banished to dreary suburbs, hemmed in by brutal police and overseen by corrupt officials. Upward mobility is all but impossible, and access to education uneven. France can save itself only by setting aside its commitment to republican ideals and by adopting an explicitly Anglo-Saxon identity-based view and, with it, affirmative action. Perhaps. Yet one wonders if Ramdani would have reached a different conclusion had this screed been leavened by statistical data, which shows that

the 20 percent of the French with the lowest income enjoy more upward mobility than their counterparts in the United Kingdom or the United States (especially if they live in cities), the children of immigrants to France have greater chances to rise than their nonimmigrant counterparts, and France offers a level of universal social support exceeded only by a few of its neighbors.

## Western Hemisphere

RICHARD FEINBERG

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*Contemporary Cuba: The Post-Castro Era*

EDITED BY HOPE BASTIAN, PHILIP BRENNER, JOHN M. KIRK, AND WILLIAM M. LEOGRANDE. Rowman & Littlefield, 2023, 388 pp.

Pounded mercilessly by U.S. sanctions and grappling with a contracting economy, severe shortages of food and fuel, and massive emigration, Cuban society is unraveling. In this indispensable compendium, 29 leading experts, including many young Cuban scholars, delve deeply into this precipitous disintegration. They blame the wizened, out-of-touch leadership of the Cuban Communist Party and an inefficient, self-serving bureaucracy for slow-walking structural reforms. Economists point to the inherent flaws of central planning and the government's reluctance to partner with an ambitious if incipient private sector. U.S. sanctions have also impeded independent entrepreneurship. Various chapters underscore the