

of a familiar history. The communist and Eastern Bloc governments that Azmanova vilifies with rhetorical flourish throughout the book were established by partisan socialists who defeated fascists in Europe. The rise in populism and appeals to nationalism today are deliberately left unexamined. As such, *Capitalism on Edge* does not consider the rise or resurgence of racism, white supremacy, and xenophobia. Although Azmanova correctly identifies the proliferation of protest politics, in the absence of an elaboration of potential institutional solutions, she leaves the potential dangers of populism unexplored.

Finally, *Capitalism on Edge* unfortunately adopts and applies a Eurocentric perspective that ignores the world outside the West. Azmanova disregards the fact that overcoming precarious capitalism may simultaneously require even further subjugation and exploitation of the Global South, where the majority of people live in even greater precarity and instability. Overcoming capitalism through reform may require further pillage of the 85% of the world beyond the United States and Europe. That would be a tragedy.

Vanguardism: Ideology and Organization in Totalitarian Politics. By Phillip W. Gray. New York: Routledge, 2020.

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Vanguardism as a distinctive form of radical politics is evidence that the left–right spectrum is not actually a straight line but is shaped more like a horseshoe. Measured in one way, the extremes are far apart, but the ends also begin to converge and often exhibit a great deal of similarity. Whether they are advocates of more equality or its enemies, vanguardist cadres have articulated ideologies and forged political movements that are eerily similar to one another. A comparative study of this brand of extremist politics that accounts for its convergence is definitely needed.

Phillip Gray's systematic analysis is a good first cut at this ambitious task: he has synthesized a vast range of material into a readable comparison of the vanguardist movements that have formed since the end of the nineteenth century. Such movements always have totalitarian aspirations, Gray argues (pp. 3–4), but many never succeed in capturing power or building totalitarian states. The focus of this study is the movement itself as the vanguard of leaders and ideologists conceive of it. Gray shows that there is a common vanguardist syndrome operating within a disparate array of revolutionary movements that have emerged since the rise of mass politics.

Gray argues that vanguardism as an ideal-type consists of six interdependent elements (p. 9). The key one is what

he calls “category-based epistemology,” according to which some distinctive social group or fraction of the whole population is said to be so positioned that it can discern “the actual dynamics influencing, shaping, and (in a sense) determining the direction of History, society, and human development” (p. 12). The self-appointed vanguard of this fraction sees more clearly than the rank and file the path forward to a beneficial reconstruction of society, because this advance guard has discovered the inner workings of historical change (the second element in the syndrome) through its development of a science of seeing (the third element), making it possible to bring about a total reconstruction of social life (the fourth element) after the enemy that prevents this emancipation (the fifth element) has been vanquished by the movement that the vanguard party leads (the sixth element). Vanguardist movements vary depending on which type of disadvantaged social grouping is thought to be “epistemologically privileged”: class, nation, race, faith, or (more generically) the subaltern of the oppressed. A chapter is devoted to the analysis of each of these variations, with Leninism, Fascism, and Nazism constituting the classical forms of vanguardism that have given way in the course of time to a welter of hybrids and new species.

The book could serve as a useful undergraduate text in a course about political ideologies, but the author's understandable hostility toward vanguardism prevents him from fully entering into the mindset of the leadership cadres that direct these movements. Each version is dissolved mechanistically into the same six elements, but that method inevitably robs these ideological families of the life force that would have made them plausible to their adherents.

To orient the reader, it might have been helpful to situate vanguardism more precisely within the larger galaxy of authoritarian ideology, past and present. A contrast is drawn with technocracy (p. 35), and vanguardism is clearly different from the divine right of kings or classical forms of paternalism and guardianship. Across its many variants, vanguardism can be described as modern, illiberal, populist, and revolutionary. It has adapted certain kinds of democratic ideas to its hierarchical purposes, but it is fundamentally hostile to pluralism and always exhibits a will to monopoly. It does not accept the philosophical legitimacy of competition.

Vanguardism, we could say, is the toxic form of identity politics. Its aspirations are always supremacist. Some part thinks (or is told) that it ought to be treated as if it were the whole. Gray describes this part as the “epistemologically privileged population,” but that seems inexact to me. In Leninist theory, for example, it is not the case that proletarians as a class can know what nobody else can know. On the contrary, Leninism (like every other form of vanguardism) is predicated on the assumption that the bulk of the identity group in whose name the vanguard claims to speak does *not* know what the vanguard knows,

because consciousness develops unevenly within the identity group, shading off as it does into the surrounding populace. It would be more accurate to say that the *vanguard* is epistemologically privileged in comparison to the mass of the identity group, because it is the advance guard that claims to have figured out what the ordinary members cannot see—*how* it has become possible for the bottom fraction of society (the oppressed identity group) to vault to the top and *why* such a reversal would be beneficial from the standpoint of the whole. This self-styled vanguard has convinced itself that a particular interest is actually the universal interest, in the name of which the avant-garde then claims the further epistemological privilege of deciding who exactly belongs to the identity group it is seeking to mobilize. Lenin gets to decide who the proletarians are in whose name he exercises power, because he is the one who figured out how the proletarians could turn themselves into the ruling class when such a result would have seemed improbable to the ordinary factory worker or Russian peasant.

Recasting the first element of the syndrome in this way would eliminate the awkwardness in Gray's analysis of some of the more recent forms of vanguardism. Religious

movements like the Islamic State, for example, would never conceive of themselves as the Vanguard of God (p. 172)—because the Creator cannot be led by His creatures—but rather as the vanguard of the faithful, whose consciousness of the way out of their oppression develops unevenly. Likewise, extremist environmentalist groups do not consider themselves the Vanguard of the Earth (p. 199)—which, as a biosphere, cannot be epistemologically privileged—but rather as the vanguard of some subaltern and disaffected populace that is only latently green for want of sufficient environmental consciousness. In ascribing an epistemological privilege to the larger mass that the vanguard claims the right to guide on the basis of its own superior insight, Gray has incorrectly specified what is surely the most essential feature of the vanguardist syndrome.

That defect notwithstanding, this book offers a useful starting point for the analysis of a whole family of authoritarian ideologies that shaped the face of the twentieth century. The golden age of vanguardism has passed, it would seem, but some of its essential ideas still grip the illiberal imagination of populist movements operating on both ends of the political spectrum.

AMERICAN POLITICS

A Century of Votes for Women: American Elections

Since Suffrage. By Christina Wolbrecht and J. Kevin Corder. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. 320p. \$79.99 cloth, \$24.99 paper.

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The pandemic, economic, and racial justice crises that have gripped the world since the beginning of 2020 have eclipsed what was, for many American feminists, poised to be an important year of reflection and debate. Although women in 15 US states enjoyed voting rights on terms equal to men before passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, and although many indigenous peoples, immigrants, and people of color were excluded from the franchise a good deal longer, the Nineteenth Amendment was a tremendous achievement—not only because millions of women were newly enfranchised after its ratification but also because it represented the culmination of the largest sustained social movement of women this country has ever witnessed.

Much has changed for American women in the hundred years since the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified. In 2019, women's rates of labor force participation surpassed men's for the first time. Today, women are much less likely to marry or have children than they were in the 1920s.

And, since the 1990s, women have formed the largest part of the US electorate both numerically and in terms of rates of turnout. Yet, 100 years of suffrage has also left many gendered inequalities intact: most legislative bodies, cabinet positions, Supreme Court seats, and spots on company boards are still held by men. Women are still paid significantly less than men even when they labor in the same occupation. And, though Hillary Clinton won a majority of the votes cast in the 2016 presidential election, the United States has still never elected a woman president. In a forceful new book, *A Century of Votes for Women: American Elections since Suffrage*, Professors Christina Wolbrecht and Kevin Corder grapple with these transformations and stagnations, revealing some surprising consistencies in the ways that women are talked about as political actors, at the same time as they reveal changing patterns of participation and vote choice in more recent years.

Beginning with the 1920 presidential election and ending with the 2018 midterms, Corder and Wolbrecht draw on a wealth of survey research, including their own estimates of participation and preferences of the first women voters, to track gendered patterns of turnout and vote choice over five periods: post-suffrage through the end of the New Deal (chapter 4), the World War II era and subsequent Baby Boom (chapter 5), the civil rights movement and the second-wave surge in feminist mobilization (chapter 6), the rise of the Christian Right and the emergence of the new democratic coalition (chapter 7),