


immigration enforcement in the US. The book is burgeoning with insights that will change the way that migration scholars think about the deportation powers of the federal government.

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## Democratic Resilience: Can the United States Withstand Rising Polarization?

Edited by Robert C. Lieberman, Suzanne Mettler, & Kenneth M. Roberts. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 406 pp., \$34.99 Paper.

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In the edited volume *Democratic Resilience: Can the United States Withstand Rising Polarization*, Robert Lieberman, Suzanne Mettler, and Kenneth Roberts contend not with the question “How do democracies falter”, but rather, “How do democracies prevail”? The volume’s central theme is “democratic resilience” or our political system’s ability to carry out democratic governance in the face of major disruptions. The disruption of concern here is extreme partisan polarization, which can lead to gridlock, regression of political rights, and even violence—each of which weaken democracy with increasing severity. The chapters detail both how polarization may erode our democracy and the tools within our democratic system to counteract—or “prove resilient to”—this erosion.

*Democratic Resilience* contains 15 essays, including the editors’ introduction on “How Democracies Endure”, from both institutional and behavioral perspectives. The text is organized into five sections: why partisan polarization might harm democracy; political institutions under polarization; the relationship between social polarization and partisanship; the relationship between polarized behavior and institutions; and recourses for upholding democracy under extreme partisan polarization. Although this book is primarily concerned with the United States, many of the contributors include perspectives and research on U.S. democracy from the comparative perspective (particularly McCoy and Somer in chapter 3 and Keck in chapter 6).

Several chapters offer theoretical contributions to how we think about partisan polarization in the United States, going beyond the field’s traditional distinction of institutional and behavioral approaches. Conventional understandings of the structure of American democracy revolve around Madisonian checks and balances, wherein no one branch can become too powerful because other branches provide

checks on those powers. But McCoy and Somer (chapter 3) show how partisan polarization—or “pernicious polarization”—produces incentives for political elites and the mass public to support their party over the protection of democratic institutions. Pierson and Schickler (chapter 2) use a developmental approach to show how partisan polarization can erode this system of checks and balances through *meso-institutions* (i.e., interest groups, state parties, and the media). They argue that historical changes in meso-institutions have allowed for the persistence of strong partisan polarization, which has led to the breakdown of the Madisonian system, or “pernicious polarization”. Additionally, Hertel-Fernandez (chapter 13) provides a current, in-depth analysis of the interplay between meso-institutions—or “extra-party coalitions”—and elites’ increasing partisan polarization and party control.

The volume also presents multiple frameworks for understanding mass partisanship. One main approach contends that partisanship is a social, rather than issue-based, phenomenon. McCoy and Somer (chapter 3) describe these as formative rifts or unresolved debates within the country. Others describe these as alignment of identity characteristics. For example, due to partisan realignment, partisanship tends to capture identity characteristics that are no longer cross-cutting, meaning we can distinguish one party from the other based on characteristics such as race, religion, and gender. Moreover, we are more likely to associate with people who share multiple characteristics with us, rather than with a diversity of characteristics. Lee (chapter 4) details the decrease in cross-cutting identities among parties from the late 1960s to today. The social identities which overlap with partisanship are explored in chapters on partisan racial makeup (Parker and Barreto, chapter 8), religious sorting (Margolis, chapter 9), and gun ownership (Lacombe, chapter 10).

The volume incorporates multiple methodological approaches to studying the impacts of polarization on American democracy including historical evidence, as well as quantitative analyses. Mason and Kalmoe exemplify this in their chapter (chapter 7), where they present data from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study and find partisanship is linked with support for in-party violence and view of election legitimacy. They build on these quantitative findings with historical context to show some of these phenomena echo past events, such as Southern Democrats’ refusal to accept the legitimacy of Lincoln’s 1860 election. Moreover, they describe how partisan divisions grew so strong during this time that Northern Democrats organized a violent insurrection against Republicans in the federal government.

Many of the chapters describe the tension and weak points in our democracy due to partisan polarization. But few offer hope for the future of our democracy, and their accounts are often tenuous. In fact, a central theme of this volume deals with how polarization both produces and reinforces political cleavages. Bateman (chapter 14) describes this process as it applies to elections, and Skocpol, Tervo, and Walters (chapter 15) do so with grassroots movements. Although elections are thought of as a bastion of democracy, democratic election outcomes can restrict democracy. And although grassroots movements can be important vehicles for mobilization toward democracy (Parker and Barreto, chapter 8), they can also be vehicles to mobilize those who support democratic erosion.

This collection includes an impressive range of chapters, but it is also important to mention that its sole focus is on partisan polarization, as is mentioned in the

subtitle of the volume. While the stated goal of the volume is to discuss how democracies endure, it only discusses how we can understand the functioning of our democratic institutions, their breakdowns, and the resilience of our democracy from the viewpoint of extreme partisan polarization. Although some of the chapters try to move away from mere partisan explanations, it is ultimately the focus of every chapter in the book. Future work can expand on this project by providing explanations for democratic endurance and vulnerabilities related to race, class, gender, and intersectional identities beyond the vantage point of partisanship alone.

This volume undertakes an ambitious endeavor. The chapters describe and explain how partisan polarization can harm our democratic institutions. It is not merely concerned with describing what is, but many of the essays provide much-needed historical context to understanding the legacy of partisan polarization. This context will be useful for scholarship on polarization, but also for scholarship which seeks to focus on other social dynamics in the United States, such as race, class, or gender. It is sure to be a volume that scholars across the discipline will reach for in their own work and would be assigned to both graduate and undergraduate American politics courses on understanding partisan polarization in the United States.

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