

Epilogue: The Lingering Cold War

Jeremi Suri

The end of the Cold War was not the end of the post-1945 era. If anything, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the diminishment of the communist threat inspired a renewal of social energies that had lingered beneath the surface of superpower politics. Transnational public demands for equality, justice, and much more radical reform—often voiced through protests and other dissident movements—framed the new politics of human rights, ethnic identity, and religious revival around the late twentieth-century world. The fundamental spark for protests in the 1960s remained alive and well: the demand among educated and ambitious citizens for a more beneficial allocation of resources within societies. Protest groups differed in their precise programs, but they all argued that international threats and commitments had misdirected domestic programs. Dissidents on the left and the right demanded a retreat from endless conflict and its costs at home.

Transnational activists after the Cold War, like those during the 1960s, were self-consciously internationalist. They saw themselves as part of a broader cross-cultural New Left, New Right, or even New Faith. They did not reject globalization. The real targets of protests were the managers (or mis-managers) of globalization. The government, business, and other institutional leaders who defined the rules of the markets, allocated public resources, and deployed military force—they were the real targets of criticism across the late twentieth century globe. From continent to continent, public trust in leaders continued to plummet. Public skepticism toward “Establishment” projects—including international regulation, economic development, and centralized reform—grew to a point where traditional progressive dreams about “one world” became almost unthinkable. The fragmentation and decentralization of the early twenty-first century was, in part, a revolt against cosmopolitan elites. The discord of the post-Cold War world was a continuation (and expansion) of earlier unresolved debates about political purpose, legitimacy, and leadership.¹

How did the “Establishment” respond to these challenges? How did the leaders and institutions most empowered by globalization react to the pressures all around them? That is the fundamental question that historians have begun to examine in depth. If a prior generation of writers pioneered the social and cultural history of dissent, a new cohort of scholars has cut its teeth on the interactions between public activism and political authority—power and protest. The work of social and cultural historians of dissent was necessarily

local and focused on repressed voices. The work of more recent scholars tends to look for patterns across societies and analyze the hidden dimensions of government authority.²

The history of the Establishment is a history of contention, adjustment, and repression. It is domestic and foreign, local and global. It encompasses the social history of politics and the political history of society.³

A Complex Narrative

There are numerous strands in this complex narrative—many of which are nicely traced in the essays contained within this volume. First, how did the language of *human rights* emerge from the post-1945 world into the present? Scholars have focused on a defining moment at the end of World War II, especially with the creation of the United Nations, but they have also emphasized the role of savvy transnational actors in the aftermath of the 1960s.⁴ The opening created by the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, as Sarah Snyder and others explain, empowered and legitimized human rights monitoring, even in the most repressive communist countries.⁵ Human rights, in this context, are more than enlightened policymaking or courageous dissent (although there was some of both.) In the last decades of the Cold War, human rights emerged as a contested space shared by both policymakers and protesters, each seeking to manufacture new power from claims about improving the human condition. American President Ronald Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev both appealed to human rights, as did critics from Amnesty International to the young people, who tore down the Berlin Wall. Human rights continue to tie together members of the Establishment and its detractors in ways that produce unexpected outcomes.⁶

Second, what role have *nongovernmental organizations* (NGOs) played in remaking policy? Akira Irye has reminded us that one of the most consistent modern trends, particularly in the period after the 1960s, is the growth of organizations composed of issue-focused citizens across societies. The NGOs of the late twentieth century—ranging from Human Rights Watch and Greenpeace on the political left to the Heritage Foundation and the Moral Majority on the political right—exert influence by circulating information, mobilizing citizens, and raising money for causes. They are agenda-setters and lobbyists that push and pull at government policies. They challenge the Establishment, but they are also an alternative Establishment in their own right. That point, once again, takes us back to the intersection between the politically powerful and their challengers, the traditional government leaders and the new non-state actors. The divisions between the two became less obvious and more permeable in the last decades of the twentieth century.⁷

Third, and perhaps most significant, *how has the Establishment changed* over the course of the twentieth century? Who are the new members of the Establishment and what do they believe? What are the new ideas that influence Establishment activities? One of the deficiencies of this excellent essay collection, and other studies of the subject, is that they continue to treat the makers of policy and the leaders of institutions as a static group. Members of the Establishment might adjust their actions, but they still appear in many

studies as the same faceless bureaucrats, the same generic wielders of power for inherited and self-serving aims. The very term “Establishment” encourages this kind of ahistorical thinking.⁸

Despite initial impressions to the contrary, one of the striking features of the years after 1968 is how significantly the background and outlook of elites has shifted across the globe. Figures as unprecedented as Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and Nelson Mandela have replaced the Roosevelts, the Churchills, and the Kennedys. Old royalty and colonial-trained rulers are mostly gone. The leaders who control global economic, cultural, and military power in the early twenty-first century are a mix of technocrats, populists, and savvy opportunists. They remain well connected to powerful institutions, but they bring ideas and experiences from the larger global society into their work.

Most of the members of the Establishment in the early twenty-first century were, in fact, a part of the social activism from the 1960s and 1970s. Their views of colonialism, race, and gender reflect this experience. Even the most conservative figures accept basic tenets of national self-determination, civil rights, and feminism that their predecessors would reject. Establishment views of centralized government and national planning also grow out of a consciousness of failed policies from American inner cities to the Cultural Revolution in China. Even the most leftist figures in the elite now assume that small governments and vibrant markets are better than the rigid systems supported in nearly every society a generation ago.

The protests and dissent of the 1960s did not overturn the Establishment, but they changed its composition and prevailing worldview in enduring ways. When scholars discuss how the Establishment “responded” to pressures, they must also examine how the Establishment “changed” to encompass the influences around it. That is what a true social history of politics, and a political history of society, should look like.⁹

The secret of the Establishment’s continuity—and why the term still has legitimate meaning—is its constant adaptation. Powerful institutions and individuals found ways to remake themselves in the late Cold War. They preserved (and sometimes expanded) their leverage over the money, machines, and manpower that shape national policies. They strengthened core institutions centered on the military, business, and intellectual life. Most of all, they trained a new set of leaders and managers to carry their legacy into the future. The Establishment endures because it does much more than just respond. It learns.

Legacies

We should ask ourselves, who learned more from the Cold War and the social activism of the period—the people in the streets or those in the fancy offices? What were the lessons learned that affect society most directly in the twenty-first century? The answers are unexpected and often disturbing for scholars who naturally sympathize with the streets rather than with the offices.

Protesters adapted new strategies of direct action, public satire, and even targeted violence to challenge entrenched power. They turned their weaknesses into strengths. The leaders of society, however, found new ways to co-opt calls

for change by adopting limited reforms, mixed with some repression. They used their resources to promise their citizens better lives with less sacrifice, and less political contention. Despite all the wars of the early twenty-first century, young men in wealthy societies now spend less time in the military than before, and they consume more food and entertainment than before. Elites did not buy-off protesters as much as they turned the energies of youth unrest to other purposes.

Moments of global protest reappear intermittently, but rarely with the force of the 1960s. These moments reflect continued reservoirs of social activism and unresolved limits on the ability of the Establishment to serve the interests of its diverse constituents. Inequality and injustice remain potent motivators for dissent across societies.

In the contemporary Middle East the pervasive corruption and incompetence of leaders, combined with the rise of a new set of excluded elites, has contributed to some of the most promising participatory movements in the region since the 1960s. As in North America and Europe four decades earlier, the future of politics in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and other countries will depend on the ability of the people in the streets to become part of the Establishment. If the leaders continue to resist change, and if the protesters reject productive compromises, then the politics of the region will descend into warfare. Successful reform requires persuasion, adjustment, and changes in people, who in turn change institutions. The push and pull on politics must find a stable point of consensus among elites and their challengers.

The end of the Cold War was not the end of the post-1945 era because the dynamics of activism and power are largely unchanged. The rhetoric and technology are different, but the questions of consent, resistance, and compromise remain the same. In an era with few legitimate traditional authorities, the Establishment makes and remakes itself, often mediated now through debates about human rights and projects influenced by nongovernmental organizations. In an era of global power projection, the Establishment is stronger and more vulnerable than ever before.

The protesters around the White House in 1968 recognized the simultaneous strengths and weaknesses of national leaders. So have their successors, tweeting dissident messages around Iran, Syria, China, and other repressive societies. The Establishment remains at the center of contemporary social and political contention.

Notes

1. See, among others, Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995).
2. For some examples of this new work, see, among others, Martin Klimke, *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Gerd-Rainer Horn, *The Spirit of '68: Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956–1976* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

3. For more of my thoughts on this topic, see Jeremi Suri, "Hamilton Fish Armstrong, the 'American Establishment,' and Cosmopolitan Nationalism," *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 63 (Spring 2002): 438–465; "Conflict and Cooperation in the Cold War: New Directions in Research," *Journal of Contemporary History* 46 (January 2011): 5–9.
4. For two representative works, see Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision of Human Rights* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005); and Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010).
5. See Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). See also chapter six in this volume.
6. For more of my thoughts on this topic, see Jeremi Suri, "Détente and Human Rights: American and West European Perspectives on International Change," *Cold War History* 8 (November 2008): 527–545.
7. See, among others, Akira Irye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Michael N. Barnett and Martha Finnemore, "The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations," *International Organization* 53 (Fall 1999): 699–732; Jeremi Suri, "Non-Governmental Organizations and Non-State Actors," Patrick Finnerty, ed., *Palgrave Advances in International History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 223–246.
8. The introduction to this volume acknowledges this point.
9. This is argument is at the core of my book: *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007). For a different approach, beginning with the same premise that Establishment views reflect social changes within the United States, see Jim Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

Jeremy Suri

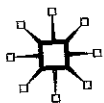
The Establishment Responds

Power, Politics, and Protest
since 1945

Edited by

Kathrin Fahlenbrach, Martin Klimke,
Joachim Scharloth, and Laura Wong

palgrave
macmillan



THE ESTABLISHMENT RESPONDS
Copyright © Kathrin Fahlenbrach, Martin Klimke, Joachim Scharloth, and
Laura Wong, 2012.

All rights reserved.

First published in 2012 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®
in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Where this book is distributed in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world,
this is by Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited,
registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills,
Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies
and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the
United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN: 978-0-230-11498-2 (hardcover)
978-0-230-11499-9 (paperback)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The "establishment" responds : power, politics, and protest since
1945 / edited by Kathrin Fahlenbrach... [et al].
p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-230-11498-2 (hardback)—
ISBN 978-0-230-11499-9 (paperback)

1. Protest movements—History. 2. Social movements—History.
3. Demonstrations—History. 4. Political participation—History.
I. Fahlenbrach, Kathrin.

HM881.E87 2012
303.48'409045—dc23

2011031577

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Newgen Imaging Systems (P) Ltd., Chennai, India.

First edition: January 2012

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America.