

JOURNAL OF DEMOCRACY

April 2017, Volume 28, Number 2 \$14.00



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Longtime readers will be aware that this is the first time the *Journal of Democracy* has ever devoted a set of articles to the situation of democracy in the United States. Our traditional focus has been on the problems and prospects of democracy in developing and postcommunist countries. In the introduction to the group of essays in our October 2016 issue entitled “The Specter Haunting Europe,” we explained why we felt we had to redirect some of our attention to the growing vulnerability of democracy in the West, and promised that we would not refrain from examining the United States as well. This is an especially delicate task for us because our parent organization, the National Endowment for Democracy, is a resolutely bipartisan institution that seeks to steer clear of the controversies of U.S. domestic politics. We hope we have succeeded in avoiding the pitfalls of partisanship; but in an era when the trends that are weakening liberal democracy are increasingly global, an editorial version of “American isolationism” no longer seemed a defensible policy.

The 2016 election was one of the more remarkable events in the history of U.S. politics. It brought to the presidency, in Donald J. Trump, a true “outsider,” a figure who had never before held public office and whose campaign was explicitly directed against the political establishment. As we go to press, there remains great uncertainty about how the eight-week-old Trump administration will evolve in the months and years to come. The articles that follow seek not to speculate about what that future might be, but rather to examine some of the developments that led to President Trump’s election.

The opening essay, by William A. Galston, describes four phases that politics on both sides of the Atlantic have gone through since the Second World War, culminating today in “The Populist Moment.” Next, John Sides, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck examine the voting patterns that gave Trump an Electoral College victory despite a loss in the popular vote. There follows an analysis by James W. Ceaser of the nomination process that enabled Trump’s ascension, as well as an authoritative appraisal by Charles Stewart III of the widely expressed concerns about the integrity of the U.S. electoral process. The section concludes with an essay by Nathaniel Persily exploring the impact of online communications on the U.S. election and on democracy more broadly.

We believe these essays will help illuminate for non-American readers some of the peculiarities of the U.S. political system, as well as the many common features it shares with other democracies. And we think even American readers may find that they have learned something new from these analyses.

—The Editors