

CfP Special Issue PVS/GPSQ 2023

A Conservative (R)Evolution? Constitutional-political crises, Trumpism and long-standing trends of conservative transformations in the United States and beyond

A tumultuous attempt to sabotage the peaceful transfer of power after the 2020 presidential election, conspiracy theories raging among the electorate and even elected officials, dramatic shifts in and even overruling of long-standing precedents in the jurisprudence of the Supreme Court, not to mention further growing tensions between parties as well as branches and levels of government – in short, multiple examples point toward a compound set of challenges: The longest-standing democracy in the world is in a profound crisis that threatens the stability of the political, societal and constitutional system. It is surely unfolding in a particular institutional context and also derives from longer-standing historical developments. However, this crisis and its ramifications clearly transcend the United States. Indeed, especially during the past decade, other Western democracies like Germany are experiencing comparable trends such as the growing political relevance of social media and new patterns of political engagement, rising societal polarization, the erosion of norms within democratic institutions, the diminishing common ground of factual information and expert knowledge, and a decline in trust. Growing disaffection as expressed in populist movements and (extra-parliamentary) anti-system opposition has been most saliently observable during the SarsCov2-pandemic. This recent phase seems to have reinforced one particular parallel developing across most Western democracies: an asymmetric polarization and growing societal, political and economic influence stemming from the conservative to (radical) right-wing side of the political spectrum.

At the same time, the US poses an especially powerful example in which these trends have exacerbated in fast motion. This underlines the importance and relevance to undertake a concerted analytical effort examining the US example and this in comparative perspective. Taking the US case of focus, moreover, provides an especially appropriate approach to inquire into the overarching challenges *of* and *to* advanced liberal democracy and its social, economic, institutional and epistemic bases.

Our special issue (SI) thus seeks to bring together research from diverse theoretical, method(ological) and empirical perspectives to tackle the following aspects:

- As one guiding premise to the SI, we submit that the deeper and more complex causes need to be at the heart of our investigations of today's developments, conditions and conflicts as well as of the actors that have been relevant in shaping them.
- This calls for analyses that raise specific inquiries, but embed them in longitudinal and comparative perspectives. These considerations likewise co-frame the analyses, be they geared more toward individual (e.g. presidents, party leaders) or collective actors (e.g. parties, interest and civil societal groups), institutions (executives, legislatures, courts) and (federal, state) levels of government, the electorate, media landscape, or policy fields including foreign policy, or the arena of international politics.
- More specifically of concern and interest for the SI are contributions addressing the questions of what are significant features of the US constitution and federal political system, the American political culture, the party system and its meso-institutional environment that impact (and are impacted by) the current state of crisis in American political life.

- Finally, to which extent are the issues to be analyzed here and the respective findings paralleled in or transferrable to other contexts, especially to contemporary liberal democracies in Europe and beyond?

Thus, again, while the US polity and various policy- and politics-related questions are at the center of focus, the SI is particularly concerned with relevance, insights and comparability as well as potential transferabilities with regard to Germany and other established democracies. This joint endeavor seeks, accordingly, to provide substantial potential for analytical cross-fertilization for political science research and further theory-building. In turn, this may also help to gain insights on potential challenges to and responses for societal and systemic stability and adaptation.

We welcome papers from all (sub)disciplines as well as a variety of approaches (e.g. empirical, conceptual, normative) that focus on the US case, but include comparative perspectives. We also especially encourage early career researchers to submit their proposals.

Abstracts (max. 250 words) should be send to simonj@hsu-hh.de and sonnicksen@ipw.rwth-aachen.de by Fri., 29 July 2022. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions!