

ABSTRACTS*

Kolkmann, Michael: „Return to a unified government“: On the composition of the U.S.-Congress after the Congressional election on November 8, 2016.

In the 2016 Congressional elections in the USA, the Republican Party succeeded in confirming its majorities in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. Although they lost two seats in the Senate and six seats in the House they managed to win a majority of the decisive battleground states. The Republicans managed to retain an advantage in the House for the foreseeable future thanks to gerrymandered seats and a shrinking number of competitive seats in this chamber. The results can be interpreted as an endorsement of the status quo on Capitol Hill. The re-election rates of 97 percent (House) and 93 percent (Senate) are among the highest numbers in recent years. The 2016 elections turned out to be a successful year for incumbents both Republican and Democratic. President *Donald Trump* enjoys therefore a unified government, at least until the midterm elections of 2018. It will be interesting to see whether he will succeed in implementing his legislative agenda within the U.S. system of checks and balances with a Republican party that offers internal divisions, as could be seen in his (first) attempt to abolish the Affordable Care Act (ObamaCare) in March 2017. [ZParl, vol. 48 (2017), no. 2, pp. 249 – 270]

Lütjen, Torben: Revolutionary road: Party outsiders on the rise during the U.S. presidential primary campaigns in 2016.

The events of 2016 challenged several well-established theories about the nature of U.S. presidential primary campaigns: that the party itself would ultimately control the nomination process; that an efficient campaign organization on the ground is extremely important; and, finally, that candidates need to adhere to the ideological orthodoxies of both parties, which, over time, had become increasingly ideological. The primary campaigns in 2016 show how some of these assumptions have become questionable. However, it is mostly the Republican primary of 2016 that signals a departure from the traditional ways of candidate selection. Finally, it is asked if both the campaign of *Donald Trump* and *Bernie Sanders* can be interpreted as examples of genuine populist movements. The record is, again, mixed: Whereas *Trump* truly deserves the populism label, *Bernie Sanders'* campaign needs to be interpreted in a slightly different light. [ZParl, vol. 48 (2017), no. 2, pp. 271 – 286]

Kornelius, Bernhard: The U.S.-presidential election on November 8, 2016: Trumps triumph.

Republican *Donald Trump* was elected 45th President of the United States on November 8, 2016 after a campaign run on domestic issues, a lot of “post-truth” populism and fear-mongering about social and economic decline. The shift from *Barack Obama* to *Donald*

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Trump amounts to a serious break in White House politics and policies. *Trump* was supported primarily by people who feel that things in the U.S. are generally on the wrong track, who hold pessimistic outlooks on the future and who complain about their diminishing financial resources. Fuelled by massive discontent over the *Obama* Administration, *Trump* was considered as person who would “bring needed change” to “make America great again”. *Trump*’s opponent, Democratic presidential nominee *Hillary Clinton*, was not convincing as a person and issues covered by her also failed. As a typical representative of the Beltway machine, *Clinton* amounted to the perfect symbol of a failing political class. Campaigning aggressively, *Trump* served, enhanced and absorbed the existing discontent about established politics and maximized his reach in an already polarized and ideologically radicalized country. *Clinton* outpaced *Trump* by almost three million popular votes, but after Republican pickups in six swing states, *Trump* gained a majority of electoral votes and finally the Electoral College. [ZParl, vol. 48 (2017), no. 2, pp. 287 – 310]

Franz, Manuel and Florian Gawebs: Third party candidates at U.S.-presidential elections: Without a chance, but decisive?

The outcome of the 2016 presidential election once again maintained the coherence of the American two-party system. Strong institutional barriers prevent third parties from breaking the political duopoly of Democrats and Republicans. Though historical evidence shows that on rare occasions third party candidates have polled fairly successfully in past elections, the 2016 political landscape did not offer particularly favorable conditions for them. A relative lack of name recognition and the distinct polarization between *Clinton* and *Trump* did not leave much room for *Gary Johnson* (Libertarian Party), *Jill Stein* (Green Party), or Independent *Evan McMullin* to gain momentum. Without institutional reforms, it is unlikely that third party candidates will play a more competitive role in future presidential elections. [ZParl, vol. 48 (2017), no. 2, pp. 311 – 328]

Böller, Florian and Markus B. Siewert: 100 days Donald J. Trump. An early evaluation of an (extra-)ordinary presidency.

Comparing *Donald J. Trump*’s achievements in his first hundred days with those of his predecessors in the White House, the picture regarding the realm of domestic policies looks ambivalent. The political agenda of the *Trump*-administration has seen failures (e.g. executive orders stopped by court ruling on immigration, a failed attempt to repeal and replace Obamacare), but also some successes such as the nomination of *Neil Gorsuch* for the Supreme Court. In all this, the structural constraints of the presidency in separated institutions sharing powers are clearly visible. The hyperpolarisation of parties in Congress is just one element. Moreover, President *Trump*’s use of unilateral tools fits into the general trend of presidents trying to increase their political leverage over the last decades. In these regards, the *Trump* presidency looks very similar to others. Uncommon, on the other side, are the usage of new communication strategies by the White House to present “alternative facts”, an extremely polarized public perception of the presidency right from the start of his term, and the massive conflicts between the administration and representatives of the mainstream media. Both aspects will clearly shape the *Trump* presidency beyond the hundred days’ margin. [ZParl, vol. 48 (2017), no. 2, pp. 329 – 349]

Pyschny, Anastasia and Daniel Hellmann: How safe is “safe”? A comparison of different criteria for measuring safe seats.

Under which conditions can a constituency be counted as safe? This question is especially important for parties and candidates, yet has found different answers among scholars. Based on results since the 1998 Bundestag election the article investigates which of several indicators proves best to predict the constituency-winner in Germany. Empirically, winning by a margin of 17 percentage points of the personal vote turns out to be a valid criterion. With regard to differences between the electoral performances of parties represented in the Bundestag it becomes clear that party specific criteria are, however, more vulnerable in case of party system change. Especially the Alternative for Germany (AfD) remains an unknown factor for the forthcoming federal election. Due to the success in Landtag elections, it seems possible, that the AfD could win direct seats not only at the state level, but also at the federal level. For SPD candidates only four constituencies are safe wins. Predictions for the CDU/CSU are much better: numerous candidates can be certain to win the constituency seat. [ZParl, vol. 48 (2017), no. 2, pp. 350 – 369]

Horst, Patrick: Assessing Barack Obama’s presidency: Not a transformational, but an effective and courageous leader.

Barack Obama wanted to be a transformational president in the mould of Franklin D. Roosevelt – he was not. According to Stephen Skowronek’s leadership types, Obama was a “preemptive” president who had to make political concessions to the dominant conservative regime. Obama also failed in getting over the intense political polarization in Washington. His room for manoeuvre was especially limited in foreign policy where he continued to carry main elements of his predecessor’s anti-terror strategy. Measured against a less heroic standard of transactional and incremental leadership, Obama still was a courageous, adaptive and effective president who knew how to use his administrative tools and personal resources. Obama’s greatest political success was his handling of the Great Recession; his health care reform was a historic achievement, which will define his political legacy. Due to his outstanding rhetorical talent, the first black president of the United States was also an inspirational leader. In the long term, his personal integrity and moral example will probably increase the appreciation the 44th president enjoys in public and in political science. [ZParl, vol. 48 (2017), no. 2, pp. 397 – 422]

Braml, Josef: The party is over: On the condition of U.S. political parties and the political system.

Unlike in parliamentary systems, policy-making in the United States is not driven by political parties. Their roles have been assumed by “issue networks” or “advocacy coalitions”, whose like-minded participants – members of the administration and Congress, campaign managers, lobbyists, experts and journalists – try to implement their ideas and interests. Structural changes, in particular the Supreme Court’s campaign finance rulings, have weakened political parties further and offered political entrepreneurs even more room to manoeuvre. PACs and interest-driven advocacy think tanks have emulated interest groups’ lobbying und grass roots strategies. Their positioning for deregulation and small government gives them a leg up in fundraising activities, because laissez-faire interested donors

assume that think tanks not only influence policy-making directly, but also via the media by setting the agenda. Commercialized and politicized media also contribute to the polarization, which paralyzes the political system and undermines its legitimization. Contrary to many German observers' expectations after *Donald Trump's* victory in the presidential elections and "his" Republican "party" in Congressional elections, the alleged "most powerful man in the world" will not be able to implement his policy goals and "make America great again" to improve the output-legitimacy of the U.S. democracy. [ZParl, vol. 48 (2017), no. 2, pp. 423 – 439]

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