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America's decade of confusion

Alasdair Roberts

23 October 2018

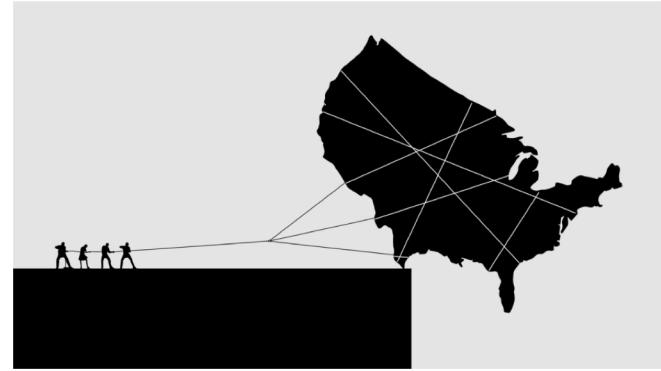
FOUR CRISES OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY
REPRESENTATION, MASTERY, DISCIPLINE, ANTICIPATION
ALASDAIR ROBERTS

CAN GOVERNMENT DO ANYTHING RIGHT?

Alasdair Roberts

I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration

I work for the president but like-minded colleagues and I have vowed to thwart parts of his agenda and his worst inclinations.



A legitimacy crisis for our democracy

The crisis in Anglo-American democracy

America: the failed state
Francis Fukuyama

The Week Democracy Died

Is There Something Wrong with Democracy?

The End of the Anglo-American Order

Liberal World Order, R.I.P.

Is this how democracy ends?

How Republics End

Is America a Failing State?

Trump and the End of the West?

Are Western Values Losing Their Sway?



The West is suddenly suffused with self-doubt ... The rise of authoritarian capitalism has been a blow to assumptions, made popular by Francis Fukuyama, that liberal democracy has proved to be the most reliable and lasting political system.

— Steven Erlanger, *New York Times*, September 2015

HOW DEMOCRACIES DIE

Chinese state media: US government shutdown exposes 'chronic flaws'

— THE GLOBAL BESTSELLER —
GREATLY EXPANDED AND FULLY UPDATED

WHEN CHINA RULES THE WORLD
THE END OF THE WESTERN WORLD AND THE BIRTH OF A NEW GLOBAL ORDER



"Provocative... a fascinating account." — MICHIO KAKUTANI, THE NEW YORK TIMES

MARTIN JACQUES

Donald Trump + Add to myFT

Donald Trump vindicates those sick of the west's lectures

THE CHINA MODEL

Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy

DANIEL A. BELL

THE END OF HISTORY

We are fortunate to be alive at this moment in history. Never before has our nation enjoyed so much prosperity and social progress with so little internal crisis and so few external threats. -- Bill Clinton, 2000

The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom -- and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise. -- George W. Bush, September 2002

American Democracy Is in Trouble

Inflation rate nears 13%

Running Amok With Your Money

THE TERRORIST PLAGUE

U.S. crime rate soars

New Soviet power threat seen

Japan: Partner or Rival?

The Crisis of Democracy

REPORT ON THE GOVERNABILITY OF DEMOCRACIES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

MICHAEL J. CRUTTER
SAMUEL P. HUNTINGTON
JOJI IATANI





The Crisis of Democracy

By James Reston

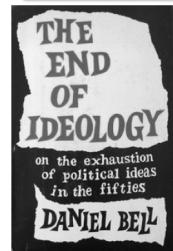
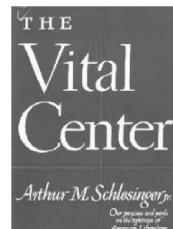
WASHINGTON, June 28—It is hard to travel in Europe these days, or even to live in Washington, without recognizing that liberal democracy is now in serious trouble in the world. We Americans, too, are experiencing a deepened doubt about the capacity of free societies to deal with the economic, political and philosophical problems of the age.

THE AGE OF CONSENSUS

The old sweeping issues very largely have disappeared. The central domestic issues of our time ... relate not to basic clashes of philosophy or ideology but to ways and means of reaching common goals ...

What is at stake in our economic decisions today is not some grand warfare of rival ideologies which will sweep the country with passion but the practical management of a modern economy. --

John F. Kennedy, 1962

DEMOCRACY
IN CRISIS

by

HAROLD J. LASKI
PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
IN THE UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON

more positive outlook to be

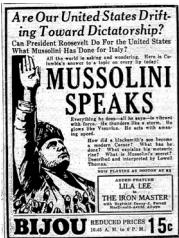
of time. There is in America

a wider disillusionment with democracy, a greater scepticism about popular institutions, than at any period in its history.

One other point about America is worth making.

*American Dictatorship Seriously
Considered in Official Quarters*

By CHARLES P. STEWART
(Central Press Staff Writer)



HEADLINES!

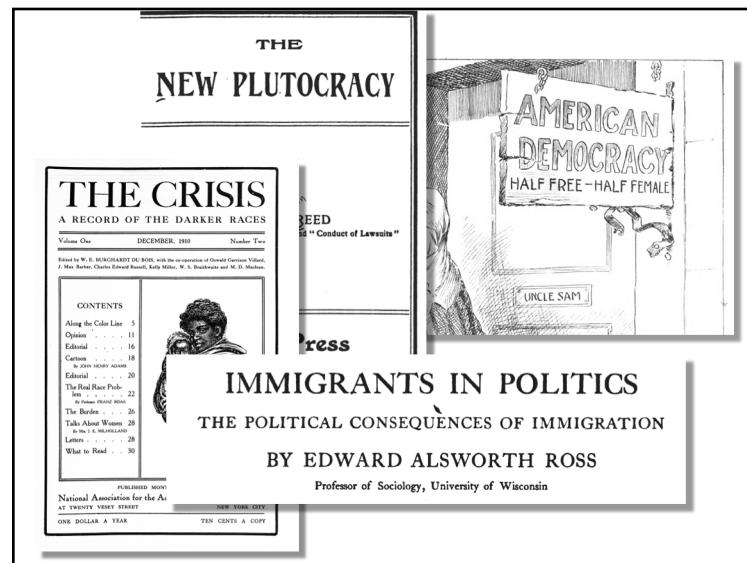
(from "Gabriel Over the White House," the most amazing picture ever made)

- ★ Two million men on the march!
- ★ President made dictator
- ★ President demands cabinet resign
- ★ Gangsters turn guns on White House
- ★ The woman behind a dictator
- ★ Dramatic scenes in congress!
- ★ Gangsters executed at statue of Liberty
- ★ Prohibition thrown out by dictator
- ★ A new hero joins Washington and Lincoln!



THE AGE OF NORMALCY

No Congress of the United States ever assembled ... has met with a more pleasing prospect than that which appears at the present time. In the domestic field there is tranquility and contentment, harmonious relations between management and wage earner, freedom from industrial strife, and the highest record of years of prosperity. In the foreign field there is peace [and] the good will which comes from mutual understanding. -- Calvin Coolidge, 1928



The slums are here; they cannot be conjured away by any spell of our old democracy. Disenchanted with the glorious large promises of '76, we are even, like our early European visitors, beginning to ascribe all evils to political institutions, and occasionally the unacknowledged thought arises: "Is democracy after all a failure? Is not the bureaucratic efficiency of Prussia as good as the democratic laxness and corruption of Pennsylvania? Are not progress, honesty, security better than the deceptive 'unalienable rights'? Does democracy pay?"

Walter Weyl, 1914





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ARGUMENT

Grand Strategy Isn't Grand Enough

Government leaders craft strategies to pursue national objectives given the circumstances that confront them at a particular moment. Leaders want to believe that they have crafted an overall strategy that will work forever, a durable way of managing national problems. But leaders are always disappointed. Circumstances change and strategies have to be reconsidered and overhauled. This process of self-scrutiny and adaptation is unpleasant but unavoidable.

MOMENTS OF STRATEGIC SHIFT

- Changed circumstances
- The toppling of an old paradigm
- Political and social "unfreezing"
- Political entrepreneurship:
 - Framing, experimentation, false starts
- Consolidation of a new paradigm
- Dismantling and construction of institutions

A New Age of Uncertainty

DAVID COEN* and ALASDAIR ROBERTS**

Although we cannot anticipate the new orthodoxy, it is possible to say something about the period of transition itself. We know from prior experience that is likely to be prolonged and marked by the intensification of political conflict. This will be true in conference rooms, as experts disagree more sharply about the content of policy; in voting booths; and on the streets, as protests become larger and more strident. The economic crisis will therefore mutate into a political and social crisis, distinguished by concerns about the dysfunctionality of political processes and the decay of public order.

Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions, Vol. 25, No. 1, January 2012 (pp. 5-9).
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WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- Changed circumstances
 - Frustration with inequality
 - Economic destabilization and insecurity
 - Reaction against technocracy
 - Resurgence of sectionalism
 - Revival of great power rivalries
 - Technological changes
- The collapse of a governing strategy
- Ideational and institutional deconsolidation
- Search for a new strategy and supporting coalition

