

THE DEATH OF THE TRANSFORMATIONAL PRESIDENCY?

Laura Ellyn Smith
University of Mississippi

ABSTRACT

Political scientist Stephen Skowronek defines transformational presidents as those who altered the political system and the nation. Voters' dissatisfaction with Barack Obama, the backlash evident in the election of Donald Trump and analysis of his presidency thus far raises two important questions. Firstly, can there be a transformational presidency in the twenty-first century? Secondly, have transformational presidential elections replaced the transformational presidency? Utilizing news media sources, this article demonstrates that the twenty-first century can best be described as the era of post-nationalism, with globalization providing a check on presidential power. It is now nearly impossible for a transformational candidate to become a transformational president.

Keywords: Presidency, Elections, Globalization

INTRODUCTION

The Harvard forum entitled "War Stories: Inside Campaign 2016," between Donald Trump campaign manager Kellyanne Conway and Hillary Clinton campaign manager Robby Mook, was especially controversial (Harvard 2016). In reference to Trump's tweet that claimed the existence of mass illegal voting Conway stated: "Well he's President-elect so that's presidential behavior" (Diaz 2016). At the crux of her statement was the belief that the man makes the office of president, as opposed to the office making the man. While the role of the individual is significant in determining presidential success or failure, equally important is the impact of context.

Political scientist Stephen Skowronek emphasizes context through his theory concerning presidential authority, leadership and a cycle of political time. Skowronek has identified distinct types of presidential authority that have occurred cyclically throughout American presidential history (Skowronek 1997, 34). Written during the 2010 midterm elections, Skowronek sought to ascertain whether Barack Obama will eventually be

classified as a transformational, or in his terms “reconstructive or preemptive” president (Skowronek 2011, 167). Skowronek defines how “Transformational leaders reconstruct American government and politics; they set it operating on (to use the Obama locution) ‘a new foundation’” (Skowronek 2011, 171). Conversely, Skowronek defines a preemptive presidency as identifiable by “Hyphenated party labels, hybrid agendas, personal leadership, independent appeals” (Skowronek 2011, 107-108). While Obama’s 2008 campaign and rhetoric emphasized transformation and change, his presidency was comparatively lackluster and did not meet Skowronek’s definition of a transformational president who changed “the playing field of national politics, durably, substantially, and on his own terms” (171). Skowronek identifies Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR), and Ronald Reagan as transformational presidents (171). Skowronek explains that “while it is difficult to imagine a more disparate group of personalities, it is evident that these men shared the most promising of all situations for the exercise of political leadership” (36-37). The five presidents Skowronek identifies altered the political system and the nation within the political context of their terms in office, which, while diverse, similarly proffered an opportunity for transformation. With debate increasing among political scientists and historians alike over the Obama legacy, the time has come to reassess presidential leadership and power. In the twenty-first century, the forces of globalization and the technology revolution spurred by fast-paced changes in global communication have converged to create innumerable crises and issues demanding immediate attention on a daily basis, thereby placing intense pressure on presidential leadership and limiting presidential power.

The commentary of news media sources provides insight for analyzing various perceptions of modern presidential power and leadership. Despite Trump’s recent and ongoing attacks on “media bias,” credible news media sources that base their stories on facts and expert analysis, including newspapers such as *The Washington Post*, news magazines like *The Atlantic*, and television news network websites such as *CNN*, retain their importance as worthy sources for academic analysis (Stelter 2016; Hughes 2017, 691-719). Indeed, perhaps it is even more pertinent to emphasize analysis of news media sources

considering the impact of “fake news” during the 2016 election and the increasingly insular nature in which new technology is utilized to identify an individual’s political preference and continuously reinforce that same viewpoint (Dougherty 2016). Regardless of “media bias” to the left or right of the political spectrum, news media sources provide a deeper understanding of the public perception of the modern presidency and presidential elections through their reporting. Writing on the front lines of history, journalists and political commentators provide indications of the trajectory of American history by reporting stories that will become part of future historical research. The first section of this article will therefore examine the potential for a transformational presidency in the twenty-first century. The second section will analyze whether transformational elections have replaced the transformational presidency.

A TRANSFORMATIONAL PRESIDENCY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY?

Following Trump’s election, some media outlets emphasized the significance of Obama’s presidency to American history. The most convincing part of this argument is the emphasis on the fact that Obama, as an African American, was elected at all. However, while Obama’s election may have been transformational, his presidency hardly fits Skowronek’s definition of a “reconstructive” president that “reconstruct[ed] American government and politics” (Skowronek 2011, 171). Arguably “American government itself is understood differently” as a result of the election of Trump, instead of the Obama legacy (171). While cause and effect exists between Obama’s presidency and Trump’s election, Obama did not fundamentally alter government or politics in any durable fashion.

Although Obama cannot be classified as a transformational president under Skowronek’s definition, did Obama ever have the opportunity to become transformational? Undoubtedly, Obama’s ability to bring about change was severely hindered by the rise of domestic opposition. The 2010 midterm elections established Republican dominance in the House of Representatives and national disunity was reflected through political disunity (Best 2016). The creation of the Tea Party strengthened the crescendo of conservative rhetoric. Published in the cover story of the January/February 2017 issue of *The Atlantic*,

Ta-Nehisi Coates focuses on Obama's legacy and rightly states that "Much ink has been spilled in an attempt to understand the Tea Party protests, and the 2016 presidential candidacy of Donald Trump, which ultimately emerged out of them" (Coates 2017, 63). Coates criticizes the generalization that the Tea Party "was largely the discontented rumblings of a white working class threatened by the menace of globalization and crony capitalism" (63). Coates accurately emphasizes the role of racism in the Tea Party movement, while accepting that "Deindustrialization, globalization, and broad income inequality are real" and had an impact (63).

Constrained by new global threats that have accompanied modern globalization, Obama demonstrated how presidents are now inhibited from becoming transformational by having to work within a global narrative and respond to struggles that are international in scale. The concept of globalization as a constraint on presidential power is controversial. Prior to the 2010 midterm elections, Saskia Sassen, a professor of sociology, wrote a column in *The Huffington Post* that argued that the expansion of the globalized economy has had an enduring effect on increasing presidential power (Sassen 2010). Through emphasizing economics in her discussion of how "the executive branch gains power partly through its increasing international activities," Sassen directly confronts what she identifies as "a key argument in much of the globalization literature . . . that the rise of the global economy has weakened the state" (Sassen 2010). Indeed, she goes so far as to claim that the globalized economy "has actually strengthened the power of the executive even as many other components of the state, notably the legislature, have lost authority" (Sassen 2010). However, the federal government shutdowns in 2013, 2018, and especially the unprecedentedly long shutdown in 2019 that ended with executive capitulation in the face of the legislature's resolve, appear to contradict Sassen's thesis (Appleton and Stracqualursi 2014; Scott, Golshan and Nilsen 2018; Baker 2019).

Additionally, through her overemphasis on the economy, Sassen neglects other key facets of globalization in the twenty-first century. The Council on Foreign Relations defines globalization as "not just an economic phenomenon, but a political, cultural, military, and environmental one" (Lindsay, Greenberg and Daalder, 2003). The "terrible new perils" of

modern globalization include global warming, electronic hacking, and terrorism (Lindsay, Greenberg and Daalder, 2003). The increased mobility and migration that has accompanied globalization in the twenty-first century has clearly been a central cause for concern, as reflected in Trump's appeals to hyper-nationalism and election rhetoric to "build the wall" (Barbaro et al. 2016). While Trump opportunistically takes advantage of the general fear of terrorism and mass immigration, the crux of the issue remains that globalization and the innumerable complex issues that it has created constrain presidential power and limit the potential of a candidate whose election campaign transformed the nation to become a transformational president in the twenty-first century. Indeed, as political scientist Matthew Laing recognizes, "Major challenges to presidential exercise of authority are occurring, with important consequences for how Skowronek's original cyclical model plays out" (Laing 2012, 259). This is especially apparent in the diminishing potential for a transformational presidency to occur as Trump is operating in an era of post-nationalism and political globalism, that despite challenges, continues to define the post 9/11 world – an era that strips away independence from, or, at the very least, directly challenges the hegemonic power structure of the American presidency.

In the context of the Trump presidency, executive orders can be understood as a sign of presidential weakness through their legal limitations. Trump's infamous travel ban that was suspended by the federal appeals court is a vivid example of limitations on presidential power (Smith 2017). The time lapse between the suspension of his original travel ban and the issuing of a third revised, narrower travel ban reflects the necessity for the president to work alongside other branches of government and other bureaucracies, such as the State Department (Almasy and Simon 2017; Barnes 2017). The exclusion of Iraq further demonstrates the impact of geo-political considerations on presidential power (De Vogue, Diamond and Liptak 2017; Barnes 2017). Political scientist Keith Whittington emphasizes the power of transformational presidents by describing them as "likely to disagree with the constitutional understandings of the [Supreme] Court, and they have the ambitions and capacity to displace the judicial authority to interpret the Constitution with their own" (Whittington 2007, 161). Nevertheless, the strength of the checks exerted by the

judiciary on presidential power currently remain evident in the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the third and limited version of the travel ban (De Vogue and Stracqualursi 2018).

A lot has changed since 2008, both socio-culturally and politically. The increasing influence of globalization, interconnectedness, and the technology revolution in the twenty-first century should never be underestimated. Articles such as "The Technology Revolution and Its Role in Our Lives," that appeared in *The Huffington Post* in 2014, have convincingly emphasized the ways in which modern technology has impacted our socio-cultural lives (Nazarian 2014). The impact of modern technology on the economy, such as ambitious projections "that 47% of jobs categories will become automated in the next decade," are consistently stressed (Nazarian 2014). However, the effect of new technology on politics has not been fully explored, for example in her book on American elections, political scientist Pippa Norris cites the threat of hacking as the singular technological issue relating to concerns over electoral integrity in 2016 (Norris 2017, 5-6). The speed with which technology changes and adapts makes it difficult for academics to provide in-depth analysis of its overall significance to any particular political context. While social media clearly has a huge impact on politics, its influence may be unquantifiable.

The impact of modern technology on presidential power is a controversial question. Some scholars such as Daniel M. Cook and Andrew J. Polsky imply that technology enables an increase of presidential power, arguing that "Although the organizational setting is doubtless more complex today than in the age of Jackson, Jefferson, or even FDR, the means at the disposal of an emergent regime are also vastly greater" (Cook and Polsky 2005, 600). However, the speed of technology can be clearly understood as inhibiting presidential power, as it creates innumerable issues that require the president's immediate attention or response. This is demonstrated in how the communications revolution has resulted in chain reactions, where, for example, nationwide Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movement protests are becoming a persistent presence (Capehart 2015; Gilbert 2017). Overall, while the information and communications revolutions of the twenty-first century have had clear benefits for democracy in providing "enhanced possibilities for coordinating

activism” and giving a voice to the discontented, this rising clamor of voters with increasing expectations simultaneously provides a check on presidential power (Schroeder 2018, 40).

Additionally, Trump’s persistent use of Twitter during both his election and presidency continue to demonstrate the prominence of social media as a communications outlet and as “weapons of mass distraction” (Begala 2017). Notably, Trump has attempted to justify his use of social media in a tweet stating “My use of social media is not Presidential – it’s MODERN DAY PRESIDENTIAL” (LeBlanc 2017). While Trump appears to understand the way in which he communicates as successfully utilizing contemporary technology in an innovative way, he simultaneously does not seem to recognize that the controversies he inspires make it unlikely that any future president will replicate his use of social media. Nevertheless, Trump projects unbridled confidence, holding his first re-election campaign fundraiser in June 2017 and even filing for re-election on his inauguration day, making history for being the earliest incumbent president to do so (Sinclair 2017). Trump’s constant campaigning and avoidance of governing raises the question of whether he even distinguishes between a transformational election and a transformational president.

Despite Trump’s confidence in the power of Twitter as a platform, social media presents far more numerous constraints than benefits on the ability of a president to become transformational. The growing anti-Trump movement also utilizes social media to enhance their message and has disrupted Republican town halls nationwide (Dreier 2017). Undoubtedly, new technology also possesses unintended consequences such as encrypted applications that enable terrorist networks to communicate effectively without being apprehended, bringing into question a president’s ability to balance privacy and security in policies concerning surveillance (Fink, Pagliery and Segall 2015). Perhaps the ongoing investigation over the role of Russia in Trump’s election campaign may provide some illumination of the consequences of modern technology and the power it holds over the presidency (Bayoumy 2016). Regardless, as a result of globalization and the technology revolution, international checks and balances now inhibit the presidency alongside America’s domestic system of checks and balances.

The impact of the information revolution that has been supported by the technology revolution in the twenty-first century is a matter that Skowronek briefly mentions in his 2010 analysis of Obama's potential to become a transformational president (Skowronek 2010, 173). Skowronek muses that "It may be that so many major issues are presented simultaneously in a modern presidency that it has become harder for the public to calibrate the balance of repudiation and accommodation" (173). Trump's election can certainly be understood as a repudiation of the Obama presidency and his legacy. The transformations that have occurred as a result of the information and technology revolutions in the twenty-first century and the impact they have had upon the presidency and the public's rising and arguably unrealistic expectations have been dramatic.

Conversely, Republican support of Trump is clearly not guaranteed and Trump's controversial political style is a vital deviation from Skowronek's definition of how "Reconstructive leaders establish a new majority that can be depended upon to support the president's new commitments and priorities" (176). Evidence of divisions between Trump and the Republican Party is brewing. Indeed, Trump cannot rely on party unity, as exemplified by the battle over repealing and replacing Obamacare and the growing divide between and among the moderate Tuesday group and the conservative Freedom Caucus (Golshan 2017). Additionally, Trump's nominee for Labor secretary Andrew Puzder was forced to withdraw as a result of Republican disunity in the Senate (Rappeport 2017). Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos made history by being the first cabinet nominee who required the vice-president to cast the decisive affirmative vote in the Senate, due to defections in the president's own party (Huetteman and Alcindor 2017).

Both Republican divisions and Democratic opposition pose a persistent challenge to Trump. This was exemplified in the need for Republicans to invoke "the nuclear option" to confirm Trump's Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch (Weaver and Dye 2017). The liability Trump presents to the Republican Party is especially apparent in the fact that Trump set a record for being the first president elected with less than a 50 percent approval rating (Gallup Politics 2017). Indeed, Trump's job approval rating as president has never been over 50 percent and his average rating is 39 percent (Gallup Presidential 2019). This is

comparable to the immensely unpopular George W. Bush's 34 percent approval rating at the end of his second term (Gallup Presidential 2009).

Trump's lack of credibility and divisiveness were key in destroying the honeymoon period a new presidential administration usually enjoys. A lack of transparency has plagued the Trump administration and led to the early enforced resignation of National Security Advisor Michael Flynn, as well as the firing of F.B.I. Director James Comey and the recusal of former Attorney General Jeff Sessions from the ongoing investigation into Russia's role in the election has exacerbated Trump's credibility gap (Bump 2017). Indeed, Trump's firing of Comey has been seen as reminiscent of President Richard Nixon's firing of special prosecutor Archibald Cox during the Watergate investigation (Hopper 2017). Trump's disregard for factual accuracy created bipartisan and international consternation following his unsubstantiated accusation that Obama ordered the wiretapping of Trump Tower prior to the election (Heigl 2017). Overall, therefore, numerous controversial issues that are rife with the possibility of conflict between the president and his party and Trump's divisive political style made the supposed presidential honeymoon period nonexistent.

Trump's firebrand rhetoric persistently prevents any opportunity for unity. Through his loss of the popular vote Trump lacks a mandate from the general public, who elected Republican congressional majorities that included Trump critics such as Senators Marco Rubio and John McCain (Ayres 2016; Phillips 2016). Specifically, divisions between congressional Republicans and Trump were vividly displayed through Trump's controversial budget, which Rubio and other Republicans critiqued (Bresnahan, Ferris and Scholtes 2017). Therefore despite Republican control of both the executive and legislative branches, significantly, Trump's much-heralded legislative agenda appears in practice to be potentially limited to a single tax reform bill (Long 2017). Similar to the majority of Obama's presidential tenure when he faced a partisan Republican Congress, the federal government remains gridlocked despite current Republican control of the Senate and executive branch. This gridlock was painfully evident in the recent government shutdown, historic for its longevity and reflective of the hyper-partisanship and divisive intra-party struggles present under the Trump presidency (Baker 2019).

Notably, none of the four presidents who lost the popular vote (John Quincy Adams, Rutherford B. Hayes, Benjamin Harrison, and George W. Bush) were transformational (Gore 2016). Indeed, as Trump is identified as a divisive and polarizing figure both inter- and intraparty, the congressional partisanship that checked Obama could give way to interparty, bipartisan pro- and anti-Trump factions. However, even if party loyalty remains intact, Trump's prospects for reliable Republican support, and thereby his prospects to become a transformational president seem bleak. Skowronek himself cites both Trump's loss of the popular vote and the divisions he wrought amongst Republicans during the 2016 election as strong indicators that Trump will fail to become a transformational president (Kreitner 2016).

Skowronek additionally associates transformational presidents with "Party building and institutional reconstruction" (176). Trump's reliance on the politics of personality means that he will most likely achieve limited results in terms of party building. The strength of Trump's anti-establishment sentiment may preclude any positive, constructive party building through re-organization of the Republican Party, let alone party unity, which is a necessity for transformational presidents. His highly controversial comments make it appear unlikely that he will ever achieve completely unified support from the Republican Party. Another possible option for Trump would be to create a new political party but, for this to succeed and for history to define his presidency as transformational, this new party would have to outlive his presidency and survive on its own. Due to the numerous obstacles to Trump's success in party building, it therefore seems unlikely that Trump will revive the transformational presidency within the context of the twenty-first century.

Indeed, based on the electoral success of the Republicans in 2016, party building may become a broader and more localized effort, rather than a top-down facet of presidential "reconstruction." In this sense, parties may become or be forced to become more reflective of society and its demands and concerns. This trend may already be apparent in the demographic and ideological diversity represented by the congressmen and women elected in the 2018 mid-terms to serve in the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives (Viebeck 2018). These freshmen congressmen and women have had a trial

by fire in beginning their time in Washington during the record-breaking government shutdown (Baker 2019). The solidarity of Democrats in the House of Representatives forced President Trump to end the shutdown without gaining the money he demanded to build the southern border wall between America and Mexico, thereby demonstrating the organizational ability of parties to reflect society's concerns, in this case the federal government reopening, while simultaneously stymieing the power of the presidency (Baker 2019).

Writing in 2010, Skowronek mused that “we have to wonder whether a political reconstruction is ever again likely to come from the American Left” (193). However, it now appears more pertinent to question if “political reconstruction,” or in other words a transformational presidency, will ever come again from either the political Left or the Right. Overall, Trump's divisiveness seems to preclude any possibility for re-organization of the Republican Party, as was called for following the GOP's loss of the 2012 presidential election (Cheney 2016). Transformational leaders are usually identifiable through the party unity and loyalty they inspire, a feature that is certainly lacking in Trump's divisive administration so far. Indeed, Republicans have reason to be nervous over Trump's limited coattails considering Republican Roy Moore's loss of the senatorial race in Alabama in 2017 and Democrats takeover of the House of Representatives following the 2018 mid-term elections (Sullivan, Weigel and Scherer 2017; BBC 2018). It is entirely possible that the transformational presidency may be extinct.

TRANSFORMATIONAL ELECTION CAMPAIGNS INSTEAD OF A TRANSFORMATIONAL PRESIDENCY?

The presidential elections of 2008 and 2016 were both transformational and unprecedented in the different nature in which the campaigns were fought. In 2008, America elected its first African American president and in 2016, Trump threw out the proverbial political playbook and altered the electoral map. Most significantly, however, both elections fit into a definition of a transformational election – the election of a presidential candidate who embodies and whose campaign is underpinned by a larger social movement. In this sense,

a transformational election is representative of a more durable force in American politics, regardless of whether the movement actually achieves any consequential successes with their candidate in office, as the strength of the movement has already been proved in the election. The campaigns of 2008 and 2016 therefore show how a presidential election campaign can be transformational, despite it being almost impossible for a transformational presidency to occur in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, it is plausible that W. Bush was the final imperial president. While Skowronek's emphasis on context and his definition of the Bush presidency as "a conjunction of circumstances uniquely conducive to no-holds-barred presidentialism," is compelling, he continues by stating that during the Bush presidency there was, "a transit of power and authority from which there might be no turning back," (161). This concern of Skowronek's has not come to fruition, as there is no evidence that the presidency grew in power under Obama. Instead, Obama's power as president was limited by increasingly interconnected technology, which impacted globalization and created further checks on presidential power.

Vital to recognizing transformational election campaigns in the twenty-first century is the ability to identify their historical predecessors. Significantly, the five presidents that Skowronek recognizes as transformational, (Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, FDR and Reagan), all embodied the core tenets of the social movement that had undergirded their transformational elections (Skowronek 2011, 171). These five distinct social movements all predated each presidential candidate and were indicative of longstanding socio-political fault lines among Americans. Prior to the increased obstacles for a potential transformative presidency to occur in the twenty-first century, it may have seemed unnecessary to consider a particular president's election, with scholars choosing instead to focus on the accomplishments of presidents. The recent rise of new impediments to presidential power may explain why Skowronek does not discuss transformational elections.

The presidents Skowronek identifies as transformational all had transformational elections that were underpinned by social movements specific to their political time and context. Jefferson's election was the nation's first bitter and partisan campaign that resulted in the first transfer of the power of the executive between political parties (Miller Center

2017). The social movement for democratic agrarianism and a small federal government as espoused by Jefferson's Democratic-Republican Party was a critical component for Jefferson's election (Sharp 2010, 3). Although Jackson claimed to be Jefferson's political heir, despite Jefferson having referred to him as "a *dangerous man*," Jackson's election was supported by a different social movement (Feller, 2016a; Heidlers 2011, 173). Scholars such as Lynn Hudson Parsons and James M. McPherson have cited Jackson's election in 1828 as transformative in that he was the first presidential candidate who began to embrace the "modern" concept of actively campaigning, while establishing "a cult of personality" (Parsons 2009, x). Jackson's cult of personality strengthened his populist appeal, which courted the contemporaneous social movement concerned with expanding democracy for the "common man" (Genovese 2001, 61-62). Perhaps the most indisputable transformational election was that of Lincoln, who was the first presidential candidate of a major political party to be elected while openly advocating against the expansion of slavery, with anti-slavery being the social movement clearly undergirding his election (Mieczkowski 2001, 52-53). FDR's first election in 1932 was transformational through his representation of the rise of liberalism in American politics, evident in his advocacy of New Deal policies (Ritchie 2008; Library of Congress 2017). In the midst of the Great Depression, the labor movement was a critical component of FDR's base of support (Ritchie 2007, 5). Finally, presidential scholar Iwan Morgan in writing the latest biography of Reagan describes how Reagan's 1980 election has been understood as "a revolutionary event that signaled the end of the New Deal political order established by Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s" (Morgan 2016, xiii). Notably, political scientist Theodore J. Lowi compares Reagan to FDR regarding Reagan's first election: while the breadth of FDR's and Reagan's policy agendas are comparable, the latter candidate was more open than the former in revealing his plans (Lowi 1985, 12). In terms of the "revolutionary" style and tactics Reagan successfully used to be elected, Laing describes how "Reagan's election campaigns and presidency illustrate the *ceremonialization* of presidential rhetoric," that combined emotive calls couched in a glorified portrayal of America's past, while directly challenging the size of the federal government (Laing 2012, 244). Reagan's election was transformational

as it symbolized the rise of the conservative right, the social movement he represented. Overall therefore, there is a clear historical connection between a transformational election and a transformational president.

A pertinent example of historical connections is evident in how Trump has frequently been compared and has himself cited Jackson, a nineteenth century president that Skowronek recognizes as transformational (Parks 2017). What Trump fails to recognize is that both he and Jackson thrived within the given contexts of their campaigns by tapping into the heightened public suspicion of government elites and railing against supposed corruption (Feller, 2016a). They both utilized an anti-establishment message in their populist campaigns (Feller, 2016b). Through rewarding his loyalists with political appointments, Trump has also been reminiscent of Jackson, who established the “spoils system” (Feller, 2016b). This tendency is especially evident in the choice of numerous Wall Street executives friendly to Trump as appointees to federal government positions, as well as the choice of Ben Carson as secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (Wright 2016). Running transformational election campaigns, both Jackson and Trump spoke as the opposition, against those in power. Voters that supported these men were either enthralled by their candidate’s personality or disillusioned by the opposing party in power (Feller, 2016a). Jackson’s opponents were often deemed elitist and a similar problem now seems to plague the Democrats (Ball 2017).

A common theme that Skowronek identifies among the transformational presidents in American history is that they “consistently claim that they have discovered the true basis of national unity and that they are acting to restore it” (174). This is another similarity between Jackson’s campaigns and Trump’s campaign to “Make America Great Again.” Furthermore, Skowronek describes transformational presidents as having “characteristically connect[ed] forthright repudiation of their immediate inheritance to a ringing reaffirmation of values emblematic of the American polity that seem to have been lost or squandered in the indulgences of the old order” (174). Trump’s campaign reiterated this sentiment through his rhetoric that repetitively attacked the “rigged” political system (Johnson 2016). As president, Trump has continued to campaign and his rhetoric that

describes how he “inherited a mess” remains unchanged (Morin 2017). Skowronek stated in an interview that “Trump won the 2016 election by talking up this fabricated image of the Obama presidency as a failure, but it had very little foundation in reality,” thereby attempting to explain Trump’s election in the context of his political time theory (Kreitner 2016).

However, globalization in the twenty-first century and the rise of the informational and technological revolutions have presented presidents with increasing challenges and have seemingly divorced a transformational election from a transformational presidency. Indeed, while transformational elections supported by social movements can still occur, a transformational presidency may no longer be a possibility. Both Obama’s 2008 election and Trump’s 2016 election were underpinned by two divergent social movements. Although Obama’s campaign was representative of a broad yearning for “change,” economic equality was a central tenet of this change, espoused by a burgeoning social movement concerned with economic inequities during the Great Recession (Lizza 2008). The rise of Occupy Wall Street during Obama’s first term demonstrated his incapability of delivering on his hopeful campaign promises and his inability to remain in control of the narrative of protest that had galvanized his supporters and been integral to his election (Levitin 2015). In stark contrast to concerns over equality, Trump’s election can be defined as a nativist movement, based on a virulent anti-immigration stance and appeals to a shared national heritage, through for example embracing (sometimes literally) the American flag (*Washington Post* 2018).

The 2008 and 2016 elections may provide evidence of the replacement of the transformational presidency with transformational elections. It is possible to argue that as both Obama and Trump created a legacy through being elected, pressure to create a legacy as a transformational president was lacking. On the other hand, the creation of a legacy through a transformational election can be better understood as providing contextual pressure on a president to become transformational. Under the scrutiny of the twenty-first century media and twenty-four hour news cycle, this pressure likely intensifies on presidents who find themselves constrained by the impact of globalization on their ability

and power to control events. The constraints of the presidency thereby sharply contrast with the relative freedom of a presidential candidate. The methods evinced by the Obama and Trump campaigns demonstrate new ways in which a candidate can become president by transforming the nation through a campaign that brings a social movement to its zenith.

Obama's election transformed America by proving that it is possible for an African American to be elected president. Trump's election transformed America through the impact of his rhetoric that contradicted the proverbial political playbook by destroying the illusion of America living in the age of political correctness and, as some analysts have accurately stated, "opened up a new public square, where racists and misogynists could boast of their views and claim themselves validated" (Scherer 2016, 41). Additionally, Trump's election defeated scholars' projections of how "long-term demographic shifts favor the Democrats," in the Electoral College (Balkin 2012). Nevertheless, Clinton's 2016 winning of the popular vote was reliant on her landslide victory in California and thereby consistent with projections based on demographics (*New York Times* 2016). Overall, it is vital to understand the tactics and ways in which Obama and Trump as candidates succeeded in transforming the nation through their election campaigns.

Rhetoric was key for both Obama and Trump, although the difference in tone between the two could not be starker. Obama embodied optimism about the American dream, as represented in his 2008 campaign slogan "Yes We Can" (Obama 2008). In comparison to Obama's message of hope, Trump's rallying cry of "Make America Great Again," became a euphemism for his negative and nativist portrayal of America in 2016. Notably, while the catchphrase "Make America Great Again" originally served as part of Reagan's successful election to the presidency in 1980, his campaign presented optimistic rhetoric, such as describing immigrants as part of the American dream, which is a far cry from Trump's rhetoric and use of the slogan (Klein 2018). In its 2016 issue that named Trump "Person of the Year," *Time* magazine persuasively describes Trump's method as that "of a demagogue. The more the elites denounced his transgressions, the more his growing movement felt validated" (Scherer 2016, 42). Trump and his advisors consistently dismissed concerns over the negative impact of his rhetoric on socio-cultural relations both

domestically and internationally. Following the election, Conway defined Trump's appeal by stating that "There's a difference for voters between what offends you and what affects you" (Scherer 2016, 42). As Trump's campaign manager, Conway persistently defended her candidate; as she has explained, "You cannot underestimate the role of the backlash against political correctness – the us vs. the elite," thereby depicting Trump's controversial comments as the brave voice of the silent majority (Scherer 2016, 41).

Both Obama and Trump were elected through campaigns that promised change. In 2008, Democrats steadfastly believed they had elected the next transformative president, a man who would alter the political system and the nation. Journalists have referred to "the myth that Obama's election represented a permanent shift for the nation" and while Obama's legacy has yet to be determined, voters have voiced their disappointment with his eight-year presidential tenure and its lack of transformational qualities (Scherer 2016, 42). Skowronek consistently stresses presidential action over rhetoric or elections more broadly (Kreitner 2016). Nevertheless, even if Skowronek does not consider that elections have the potential to be transformational in and of themselves, elections remain significant to a presidency. A president cannot escape the context in which they were elected, especially the pressure to fulfill the promises they made as a candidate representative of a broader social movement and to maintain their base of supporters.

Political scientist Jack Balkin aptly describes how "In 2008 Obama certainly campaigned as if he planned to be a transformative president. His campaign slogans of hope and change promised that old political assumptions would be swept away and that American politics would be placed on new foundations" (Balkin 2012). However, these new foundations never materialized, as Obama was unable to turn his transformational candidacy into a transformational presidency. In 2010, Skowronek considered that "It may be that the promise of transformational leadership has been hollowed out by modern campaign hyperbole, that it is now just a matter of electoral positioning for momentary advantage" (169-170). While there is likely some truth in Skowronek's statement, candidates like Obama are prone to be idealistic and unrealistic about what they could achieve as president, so although "modern campaign hyperbole" continues apace, it may be too

cynical to identify it as “just a matter of electoral positioning for momentary advantage” (Sandel 2010). Both the 2008 and 2016 presidential campaigns demonstrate the power of political rhetoric for candidates unrestrained by the responsibility of the executive office.

Both Obama and Trump utilized personality politics to depict themselves as the face of change, while encouraging voters to identify with them. Additionally, both relied upon grassroots movements that supported their promises of change. Referring to Obama, Skowronek stresses “the significance to reconstructive politics of social mobilization independent of campaign organizations and interest groups” (193). Indeed, Obama’s 2008 campaign received its primary financial support through social mobilization of small grassroots donors and replicated this successful tactic for his reelection in 2012 (Eggen 2012). In 2008 and 2016 both Obama and Trump increased social media mobilization in support of their elections through utilizing new forms of communication with social media, made available as part of the technology revolution. For Obama in 2008, campaigning through social media was revolutionary and transformational in and of itself due to the unprecedented form of the technology. Obama’s successful election was recognized as being partially the result of his campaign’s use of social media and columnists have convincingly described the “bolting together [of] social networking applications under the banner of a movement, [through which] they created an unforeseen force to raise money, organize locally, fight smear campaigns and get out the vote” (Carr 2008). Embodying a social movement enabled Obama to benefit from grassroots mobilization through his modern use of social media, thereby transforming both America and the nature and future of campaigning.

During his election campaign in 2016, Trump was regarded with either preeminence or infamy for his use of Twitter as his primary form of communication. Notably, Twitter is a more equalizing site for social media as all messages are limited to the same number of characters (Hess 2016). Through his continuous use of Twitter, which some critics continue to regard as obsessional, Trump sharpened his rhetorical skills, mobilizing and growing a nativist movement to which he became the figurehead (Barber, Sevastopulo and Tett 2017). Nevertheless, despite the controversy surrounding many of Trump’s tweets and re-tweets,

his use of Twitter as a medium for directly communicating his populist message was clearly successful.

Unlike Obama's broad use of social media as a campaign tactic, Trump continues to express his unique political style through Twitter. Although the role of social media in campaigns is only likely to increase during the twenty-first century, Trump's focus on one social media outlet can best be described as unique and unlikely to be replicated by a future presidential candidate. Nevertheless, both men were able to harness the use of social media to their advantage and turn their campaign into a space of protest for their different social movements, while the consumption of information became increasingly ideologically insular (Mitchell, Gottfried and Barthel 2017).

Regardless of the similarities and differences in campaign tactics, the 2008 and 2016 elections were both transformative in electing candidates that were representative of social movements. Unlike previous transformative elections, however, the constraints placed on the presidency in the twenty-first century makes it almost impossible for a transformational candidate to become a transformational president.

CONCLUSION

Ominous of the death of the transformational presidency is that the elections of both Obama and Trump did not shield them from questions concerning their legitimacy as leaders. With Trump's encouragement, the "Birther Movement" plagued Obama throughout his presidency (Abramson 2016). However, Trump's own election legitimacy was questioned, as he lost the popular vote, and American security agencies continue to emphasize the significance of Russia's hacking during the campaign (Entousand and Nakashima 2016). Additionally, Trump's unsubstantiated insistence on voter fraud that supposedly caused him to lose the popular vote and the blame he placed on the lack of cooperation from states in explaining the disbanding of a voter fraud commission further delegitimize his own victory (Nelson 2017; Tackett and Wines 2018). Perhaps voters' perception of the death of the transformational presidency even increased the political disillusionment that was integral to Trump's election.

While only the future will tell whether a transformational presidency is still possible in the twenty-first century, the information and technology revolutions undoubtedly provide a check on presidential power. Although the use of modern technology is an extremely effective tool for a transformational election campaign, the increased expectations and responsibilities that have accompanied the technology revolution have placed a huge burden on the presidency and can act as a serious constraint to presidential power. There is a great likelihood that a president could lose control of the social movement they previously represented and the united space of protest their campaign created as activists splinter to protest for space, thereby overwhelming their agenda. Furthermore, appeals to hyper-nationalism, while reflective of fears associated with globalization, cannot stem the influence of contextual post-nationalism that directly challenges the hegemonic power structure of the American presidency. In the twenty-first century it therefore appears nearly impossible for the candidate who was elected through a transformational campaign to become a transformational president.

Context is critical for both a transformational presidency and a transformational campaign. A transformational candidate will have come to embody a social movement and during the election campaign will have succeeded in manipulating and utilizing context to their best advantage. This manipulation of context is evident, for example, in the tools both candidates used, as Obama demonstrated groundbreaking campaigning through social media and Trump displayed a unique political style that utilized Twitter to deliver his populist rhetoric. In these ways, both men created a groundswell of grassroots support that propelled them to the presidency to deliver the change that they promised.

Presidential power has always been limited through the sharing of power between the executive, judicial and legislative branches of government. However, international checks and balances now act in addition to America's system of domestic checks and balances due to the impact of modern technology in strengthening globalization in the twenty-first century. The potential for a president to become transformational is thereby further constrained. For the president, neither rhetoric nor tweets are free from responsibility: consequences of presidential action or even inaction, unintended or

otherwise, should never be underestimated. In the twenty-first century, as a result of the information and technology revolutions, context, whether domestic or international, is magnified. The result is that transformational election campaigns have become divorced from any potential for a transformational presidency.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Genovese, Michael A. 2001. *The Power of the American Presidency 1789-2000*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Heidler, David S. and Jeanne T. 2011. *Henry Clay: The Essential American*. New York: Random House.

Lowi, Theodore J. 1985. *The Personal President: Power Invested, Promise Unfulfilled*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Mieczkowski, Yanek. 2001. *The Routledge Historical Atlas of Presidential Elections*. New York: Routledge.

Morgan, Iwan. 2016. *Reagan: American Icon*. New York: I.B. Tauris.

Norris, Pippa. 2017. *Why American Elections Are Flawed (And How to Fix Them)*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Parsons, Lynn Hudson. 2009. *The Birth of Modern Politics: Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, and the Election of 1828*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ritchie, Donald A. 2007. *Electing FDR: The New Deal Campaign of 1932*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Schroeder, Ralph. 2018. *Social Theory after the Internet: Media, Technology, and Globalization*. London: UCL Press.

Sharp, James Roger. 2010. *The Deadlocked Election of 1800: Jefferson, Burr, and the Union in the Balance*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Skowronek, Stephen. 1997. *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Skowronek, Stephen. 2011. *Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Whittington, Keith. 2007. *Political Foundations of Judicial Supremacy: The Presidency, the Supreme Court, and Constitutional Leadership in U.S. History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Newspapers

Ayres, Whit. 2016. "Threading the Needle: Donald Trump's Electoral College victory highlights the long-term challenges facing the GOP." *US News*, November 28. <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2016-11-28/how-trump-lost-the-popular-vote-and-won-the-2016-election>

Baker, Peter. 2019. "For a President Consumed With Winning, a Stinging Defeat." *New York Times*, January 25. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/25/us/politics/trump-shutdown.html>

Balkin, Jack. 2012. "What It Will Take for Barack Obama to Become the Next FDR." *The Atlantic*, November 1. http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2012/11/what-it-will-take-for-barack-obama-to-become-the-next-fdr/264195/?utm_source=eb

Ball, Krystal. 2017. "Democrats have a classism problem." *The Hill*, November 2. <https://thehill.com/opinion/campaign/358493-democrats-have-a-classism-problem>

Barbaro, Michael, Alex Burns, Maggie Haberman, and Kirk Semple. 2016. "Highlights of Donald Trump's Immigration Speech and Mexico Trip." *New York Times*, August 31. http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/31/us/politics/donald-trump-mexico.html?_r=0

Barber, Lionel, Demetri Sevastopulo, and Gillian Tett. 2017. "Donald Trump: Without Twitter, I would not be here – FT interview." *Financial Times*, April 2. <https://www.ft.com/content/943e322a-178a-11e7-9c35-odd2cb31823a>

Barnes, Robert. 2017. "Supreme Court allows full enforcement of Trump travel ban while legal challenges continue." *Washington Post*, December 4. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/courts_law/supreme-court-allows-full-enforcement-of-trump-travel-ban-while-legal-challenges-continue/2017/12/04/486549co-d5fc-11e7-a986-doa9770d9a3e_story.html?utm_term=.d24aibe36b6a&wpisrc=al_news__alert-politics--alert-national&wpmk=1

BBC. 2018. "Mid-term elections: Democrats win House in setback for Trump." *BBC*, November 7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-46120373>

Bump, Philip. 2017. "Everything that led up to Comey's big moment, in one visual timeline." *Washington Post*, June 8.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2017/06/08/everything-that-led-up-to-comes-big-moment-in-one-visual-timeline/?utm_term=.07b2be6c61a2

Capehart, Jonathan. 2015. "From Trayvon Martin to 'black lives matter.'" *Washington Post*, February 27. https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2015/02/27/from-trayvon-martin-to-black-lives-matter/?utm_term=.ca84e0053016

Carr, David. 2008. "How Obama Tapped Into Social Networks' Power." *New York Times*, November 9. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/10/business/media/10carr.html>

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2017. "My President Was Black: A history of the first African American White House – and of what came next." *The Atlantic*, January/February. <https://www.theatlantic.com/press-releases/archive/2016/12/my-president-was-black-the-atlantics-ta-nehisi-coates-on-the-first-african-american-white-houseand-what-came-next/513923/>

Cook, Daniel M., and Andrew J. Polsky. 2005. "Political Time Reconsidered: Unbuilding and Rebuilding the State Under the Reagan Administration." *American Politics Research* 33/4: 577-605. doi/10.1177/1532673X04270520

Dreier, Peter. 2017. "The Anti-Trump Movement: Recover, Resist, Reform: The profusion of citizen organizing as defense – and offense." *Prospect*, April 4. <http://prospect.org/article/anti-trump-movement-recover-resist-reform-o>

Eggen, Dan. 2012. "Obama fundraising powered by small donors, new study shows." *Washington Post*, February 8. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obama-fundraising-powered-by-small-donors-new-study-shows/2012/02/08/gIQANfKlZQ_story.html?utm_term=.020cdo7cfa49

Entous, Adam, and Ellen Nakashima. 2016. "FBI in agreement with CIA that Russia aimed to help Trump win White House." *Washington Post*, December 16. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/clinton-blames-putins-personal-grudge-against-her-for-election-interference/2016/12/16/12f36250-c3be-11e6-8422-eac61coef74d_story.html?utm_term=.2cfd66cbef3f&wpisrc=nl_headlines&wpmm=1

Gilbert, Sophie. 2017. "The Movement of #MeToo." *The Atlantic*, October 16. <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/10/the-movement-of-metoo/542979/>

Gore, D'Angelo. 2016. "A short history lesson on presidents winning without the popular vote." *USA Today*, November 8. <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/onpolitics/2016/11/07/presidents-winning-without-popular-vote/93441516/>

Hopper, Nate. 2017. "Is Donald Trump Like Richard Nixon." *Time*, May 11.
<http://time.com/4775984/trump-nixon-james-comey/>

Huetteman, Emmarie, and YamicheAlcindor. 2017. "Betsy DeVos Confirmed as Education Secretary; Pence Breaks Tie." *New York Times*, February 7.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/07/us/politics/betsy-devos-education-secretary-confirmed.html>

Hughes, Sarah. 2017. "American Monsters: Tabloid Media and the Satanic Panic, 1970-2000." *Journal of American Studies* 51/3: 691-719. doi.org/10.1017/S0021875816001298

Johnson, Jenna. 2016. "Donald Trump says the election is 'rigged.' Here's what his supporters think that means." *Washington Post*, October 18.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/10/18/donald-trump-says-the-election-is-rigged-heres-what-his-supporters-think-that-means/?utm_term=.f31172aofd88

Klein, Philip. 2018. "Here's how Ronald Reagan spoke of immigrants when he said he wanted to 'Make American Great Again.'" *Washington Examiner*, January 12.
<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/heres-how-ronald-reagan-spoke-of-immigrants-when-he-said-he-wanted-to-make-america-great-again>

Kreitner, Richard. 2016. "What Time Is it? Here's What the 2016 Election Tells Us About Obama, Trump, and What Comes Next." *The Nation*, November 22.
<https://www.thenation.com/article/what-time-is-it-heres-what-the-2016-election-tells-us-about-obama-trump-and-what-comes-next/>

Laing, Matthew. 2012. "Towards a Pragmatic Presidency? Exploring the Waning of Political Time." *Polity* 44/2: 234-59. doi.org/10.1057/pol.2011.24

Levitin, Michael. 2015. "The Triumph of Occupy Wall Street." *The Atlantic*, June 10.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/the-triumph-of-occupy-wall-street/395408/>

Long, Heather. 2017. "The final GOP tax bill is complete. Here's what is in it." *Washington Post*, December 15. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2017/12/15/the-final-gop-tax-bill-is-complete-heres-what-is-in-it/?utm_term=.17983aab69f7&wpisrc=al_news__alert-economy--alert-politics--alert-national&wpmk=1

New York Times. 2016. "California Presidential Race Results: Hillary Clinton Wins." December 13. <http://www.nytimes.com/elections/results/california-president-clinton-trump>

Obama, Barack. 2008. "Barack Obama's New Hampshire Primary Speech." *New York Times*, January 8. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/08/us/politics/08text-obama.html>

Phillips, Amber. 2016. "John McCain wins his primary, promptly gives up on Donald Trump." *Washington Post*, September 2. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/09/02/john-mccain-wins-his-primary-promptly-gives-up-on-donald-trump/?utm_term=.32ab1eee8d3d

Ramakrishnan, Karthick. 2016. "Trump got more votes from people of color than Romney did. Here's the data." *Washington Post*, November 11. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/11/11/trump-got-more-votes-from-people-of-color-than-romney-did-heres-the-data/?utm_term=.58d6ecb8c580

Rappeport, Alan. 2017. "Andrew Puzder Withdraws From Consideration as Labor Secretary." *New York Times*, February 15. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/15/us/politics/andrew-puzder-withdrew-labor-secretary.html?_r=0

Sandel, Michael. 2010. "Obama and Civic Idealism." *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas* No. 16. <https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/16/obama-and-civic-idealism/>

Scherer, Michael. 2016. "The Person of the Year," *Time*, December 19.

Sinclair, Harriet. 2017. "Trump's 2020 Re-election Campaign To Kick Off With \$35,000-Per-Ticket Dinner At Own Hotel In Washington, D.C." *Newsweek*, June 21. <http://www.newsweek.com/trumps-re-election-2020-campaign-hotel-ethics-charity-ivanka-washington-628130>

Sullivan, Sean, David Weigel, and Michael Scherer. 2017. "Doug Jones declared victor in Alabama race for Senate; Roy Moore may seek recount." *Washington Post*, December 13. https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/voters-head-to-the-polls-in-contentious-senate-race-in-alabama/2017/12/11/26e36b56-deb7-11e7-8679-a9728984779c_story.html?utm_term=.027cc7d77e1f&wpisrc=al_news__alert-politics--alert-national&wpmk=1

Tackett, Michael, and Michael Wines. 2018. "Trump Disbands Commission on Voter Fraud." *New York Times*, January 3. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/03/us/politics/trump-voter-fraud-commission.html>

Viebeck, Elise. 2018. "Diversity on stark display as House's incoming freshmen gather in Washington." November 13. https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/diversity-on-stark-display-as-houses-incoming-freshmen-gather-in-washington/2018/11/13/87ef9a5c-e783-11e8-bbdb-72fdbf9d4fed_story.html

Washington Post. 2018. "Trump hugs the American flag." June 19.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/trump-hugs-the-american-flag/2018/06/19/8bb51088-73f5-11e8-bda1-18e53a448a14_video.html

Weaver, Courtney, and Jessica Dye. 2017. "Neil Gorsuch confirmed as US Supreme Court justice." *Financial Times*, April 7. <https://www.ft.com/content/f42a1ea8-1ae4-11e7-bcac-6d03d067f81f>

Websites

Abramson, Alana. 2016. "How Donald Trump Perpetuated the 'Birther' Movement for Years." <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/donald-trump-perpetuated-birther-movement-years/story?id=42138176>

Almasy, Steve, and Darran Simon. 2017. "A timeline of President Trump's travel bans." <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/02/10/us/trump-travel-ban-timeline/index.html>

Appleton, Kirsten, and Veronica Stracqualursi. 2014. "Here's What Happened the Last Time the Government Shut Down." <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/heres-happened-time-government-shut/story?id=26997023>

Bayoumy, Yara. 2016. "Putin turned Russia election hacks in Trump's favor: U.S. officials." <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-cyber-idUSKBN1441RS>

Begala, Paul. 2017. "The irony of Trump whining about leaks." <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/02/15/opinions/trump-complains-about-leaks-begala/index.html>

Best, Samuel. 2010. "Why Democrats Lost the House to Republicans." <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/why-democrats-lost-the-house-to-republicans/>

Bresnahan, John, Sarah Ferris, and Jennifer Scholtes. 2017. "Republicans pan Trump budget." <http://www.politico.com/story/2017/03/trump-budget-republicans-capitol-hill-236146>

Cheney, Kyle. 2016. "Trump kills GOP autopsy." <http://www.politico.com/story/2016/03/donald-trump-gop-party-reform-220222>

De Vogue, Ariane, Jeremy Diamond, and Kevin Liptak. 2017. "US President Donald Trump signs new travel ban, exempts Iraq." <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/03/06/politics/trump-travel-ban-iraq/index.html>

De Vogue, Ariane, and Veronica Stracqualursi. 2018. "Supreme Court upholds travel ban." <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/06/26/politics/travel-ban-supreme-court/index.html>

Diaz, Daniella. 2016. "Conway: 'The biggest piece of fake news' was idea Trump can't win." <http://www.cnn.com/2016/12/01/politics/kellyanne-conway-robby-mook-fake-news-harvard/>

Dougherty, Jill. 2016. "The reality behind Russia's fake news," <http://www.cnn.com/2016/12/02/politics/russia-fake-news-reality/>

Feller, Daniel. 2016a. "Andrew Jackson: Campaigns and Elections." <http://millercenter.org/president/biography/jackson-campaigns-and-elections>

Feller, Daniel. 2016b. "Andrew Jackson: Life in Brief." <http://millercenter.org/president/biography/jackson-life-in-brief>

Fink, Erica, Jose Pagliery, and Laurie Segall. 2015. "Technology and the fight against terrorism." <http://money.cnn.com/2015/11/24/technology/targeting-terror-intelligence-isis/>

Gallup Politics. 2017. "Trump Sets New Low Point for Inaugural Approval Rating." http://www.gallup.com/poll/202811/trump-sets-new-low-point-inaugural-approval-rating.aspx?g_source=position1&g_medium=related&g_campaign=tiles

Gallup. 2019. "Presidential Approval Ratings – Donald Trump." <https://news.gallup.com/poll/203198/presidential-approval-ratings-donald-trump.aspx>

Gallup. 2009. "Presidential Approval Ratings - George W. Bush." <https://news.gallup.com/poll/116500/presidential-approval-ratings-george-bush.aspx>

Golshan, Tara. 2017. "A health care votes has turned moderates against moderates in the House." Accessed June 9 2017. <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/5/23/15681134/macarthur-ahca-deal-resigns-tuesday-group>

Harvard. 2016. "War Stories: Inside Campaign 2016." <http://iop.harvard.edu/forum/war-stories-inside-campaign-2016>

Heigl, Jana. 2017. "A timeline of Donald Trump's false wiretapping charge." <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/article/2017/mar/21/timeline-donald-trumps-false-wiretapping-charge/>

Hess, Amanda. 2016. "How Trump Wins Twitter." http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2016/02/donald_trump_is_the_best_at_twitter_here_s_why.html

LeBlanc, Paul. "Trump defend social media use after controversial tweets."
<http://edition.cnn.com/2017/07/01/politics/donald-trump-tweets/index.html>

Lee, MJ, Dan Merica, and Jeff Zeleny. 2016. "Obama: Would be 'personal insult' to legacy if black voters don't back Clinton." <http://www.cnn.com/2016/09/17/politics/obama-black-congressional-caucus/>

Library of Congress. 2017. "Great Depression and World War II, 1929-1945: President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1933-1945."
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/depwwii/newdeal/>

Lindsay, James M., Maurice R. Greenberg, and Ivo H. Daalder. 2003. "The Globalization of Politics: American Foreign Policy for a New Century." Accessed December 23 2016.
<http://www.cfr.org/world/globalization-politics-american-foreign-policy-new-century/p6330>

Lizza, Ryan. 2008. "Obama's Winning 'Change' Strategy." November 10.
<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=96810759&t=1531303076081>

Miller Center. 2017. "Thomas Jefferson: Campaigns and Elections: The Campaign and Election of 1800." <https://millercenter.org/president/jefferson/campaigns-and-elections>

Mitchell, Amy, Jeffrey Gottfried and Michael Barthel. 2017. "Trump, Clinton Voters Divided in Their Main Source for Election News."
<https://www.journalism.org/2017/01/18/trump-clinton-voters-divided-in-their-main-source-for-election-news/>

Morin, Rebecca. 2017. "Trump doubles down on 'I inherited a mess' claim."
<http://www.politico.com/story/2017/02/trump-inherited-mess-fake-mainstream-media-235169>

Nazarian, Angella. 2014. "The Technology Revolution and Its Role in Our Lives."
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/angella-nazarian/the-technology-revolution_b_4809786.html

Nelson, Louis. 2017. "Trump signs executive order creating voter fraud commission."
<http://www.politico.com/story/2017/05/11/trump-voter-fraud-commission-238263>

Parks, Miles. 2017. "Fact Check: Could Andrew Jackson Have Stopped The Civil War, As Trump Said?" <http://www.npr.org/2017/05/01/526388034/fact-check-could-andrew-jackson-have-stopped-the-civil-war-as-trump-said>

Ritchie, Donald. 2008. "The New Deal Campaign of 1932."
https://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=4296

Ryan, Josiah. 2016. "This was a whitelash': Van Jones' take on the election results."
<http://www.cnn.com/2016/11/09/politics/van-jones-results-disappointment-cnntv/>

Sassen, Saskia. 2010. "Shadow Elite: What's Behind Surging Executive Power? Globalization." http://www.huffingtonpost.com/saskia-sassen/emshadow-eliteem-whats-be_b_538513.html

Scott, Dylan, Tara Golshan, and Ella Nilsen. 2018. "The second government shutdown of 2018, explained." <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/2/8/16993196/government-shutdown-2018-second>

Smith, Laura Ellyn. 2017. "Now let him enforce it': The long history of the imperial presidency." <http://ncph.org/history-at-work/now-let-him-enforce-it-the-long-history-of-the-imperial-presidency/>

Stelter, Brian. 2016. "Donald Trump's 'rigged' election claim targets the media."
<http://money.cnn.com/2016/10/15/media/donald-trump-media-journalists/>

Wright, David. 2016. "Trump taps Ben Carson for HUD secretary."
<http://www.cnn.com/2016/12/05/politics/ben-carson-hud-secretary-nomination/>

Laura Ellyn Smith graduated with a Ph.D. in History from the University of Mississippi in 2019. Her thesis was entitled "Populism and Democratization in the Presidential Election of 1832." She gained a Distinction in her MA in U.S. History and Politics at University College London in 2015, where she was awarded the Americas Excellence Award. She graduated with First Class Honors for her BA in American Studies with a Year Abroad from the University of Leicester in 2014. Her first published article, based on her BA year abroad at the University of Southern Maine and focusing on the presidential election of 1844, appeared in the journal, *Maine History* in January 2016. She has since had an article comparing James K. Polk and Franklin D. Roosevelt as imperial presidents, published in the journal *White House Studies* in 2018. She has also had an article analyzing school desegregation in 1960s America published in the *Journal of Illinois History* and another article examining the 1844 presidential election forthcoming in the *Journal of Mississippi History*. Her main area of focus is the American presidency and presidential elections. She enjoys writing political history op-eds on topics varying from the impact of the National Rifle Association on American politics to Brett Kavanaugh's Supreme Court confirmation, that have appeared in *The Washington Post*. She has presented her work at a variety of conferences in America, England and Italy. This article is based on a paper she presented at the Sapienza Graduate Forum, University of Rome, in 2018.