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The Velvet Coup: The Constitution, the Supreme Court and the Decline of American Democracy

Daniel Lazare

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According to the media, the 2000 election debacle was a once-in-a-century fluke. But, in this riveting new polemic, political analyst Daniel Lazare argues that such events are increasingly likely to become the rule rather than the exception. After more than two hundred years, America's antiquated government is in a state of chronic breakdown. A constitutional overhaul is urgently needed to update the machinery in line with the needs of modern democracy. With an amending clause that requires approval by two-thirds of Congress and three-quarters of the states, such change is extremely difficult to achieve. As a result, the United States has entered the twenty-first century with an eighteenth-century government. Not only will breakdowns like the one that occurred last November grow more frequent, they will grow more serious as well.

Lazare contends that nothing less than a democratic revolution is needed to rescue American politics from growing paralysis and decay. A constitution supposedly drawn up by "we the people" that cannot be amended by the people is patently absurd. A new arrangement for governments is required, one which abolishes such pre-democratic vestiges as the electoral college, equal representation in the Senate for all states regardless of size, and an all-powerful Supreme Court. Only when these shackles from the past are broken can the American public assert effective control over their government.

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