

## **THE INVITATION: VOTE DEMOCRAT TO SAVE LIBERAL DEMOCRACY FROM REPUBLICAN RIGHT-WING POPULIST DICTATORSHIP**

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A spectre is haunting the world—the spectre of authoritarian right-wing populism. As the spectre of communism haunted Europe and, later, the world, from 1848, when *The Communist Manifesto* was published, through the end of the Cold War in 1991, the threat of authoritarian right-wing populism haunts the world in the present age.

If, during the Cold War, a United States president, although he did not declare himself to be part of the global communist movement, talked and acted like a dictator, controlled his party and his administration like a dictator, publicly admired dictators, publicly solicited aid from the Soviet Union in his election campaign, and his campaign staff had numerous interactions with known Soviet agents, and he dedicated himself, once in office, both to undermining liberal democracy and to showing great deference to the leader of the Soviet Union, and when presented articles of impeachment based on extensive evidence of his solicitation of such aid and his obstruction of attempts to investigate it, fellow members of his party refused to vote for conviction, we would hope the American people would have voted in the next election for the other major party's candidates across the board to throw out that president along with his fellow party members who failed to confront him and thus betrayed American liberal democracy.

In Donald Trump, we have a president who, although he doesn't declare himself to be such, is part of the global right-wing populist movement, who talks and acts like a dictator, controls the Republican Party and his administration like a dictator, publicly admires dictators, publicly solicited aid from Russia in his campaign, and his campaign staff had numerous interactions with known Russian agents, and he has dedicated himself, once in office, both to undermining liberal democracy and to showing great deference to President Vladimir Putin of Russia, and when presented articles of impeachment based on extensive evidence of his solicitation of such aid and his obstruction of attempts to investigate it, fellow Republicans refused to vote for conviction, so now we must convince our fellow Americans to vote on November 3<sup>rd</sup> for the Democratic Party's candidates Joe Biden and Kamala Harris—and all Democrats—and toss Trump out along with his fellow Republicans who failed to confront him and thus betrayed American liberal democracy.

A vote to re-elect Donald Trump is a vote for a dictatorship of authoritarian right-wing populism and destruction of liberal democracy in the United States. Worse, however, it is also a vote for the United States to join the world movement of authoritarian right-wing populism to destroy liberal democracy globally. It is also a vote for President Trump to continue to *incite* violent protest and racial conflict.

### **Donald Trump Talks and Acts Like a Dictator**

Some have described Trump as having developed a “cult of personality,” however, when the leader of a nation does this, the cult of personality has moved on to budding dictatorship. At the 2016 Republican National Convention (RNC), he told the nation, “Nobody knows the system better than me, which is why *I alone* can fix it.” After his election, at a Veterans of Foreign Wars Convention in Kansas City, Missouri, on July 24, 2018, President Trump told the gathering, “Just remember, what

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you are seeing and what you are reading is not what's happening. Just stick with us, don't believe the crap you see from these people, the fake news." He then pointed out reporters covering his speech (as he often does at his rallies), leading to boos and hisses from numerous veterans in attendance. His words ominously echoed those of George Orwell's *1984*, about a dystopian future dictatorship: "The Party told you to reject your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command."

Trump was returning to the theme of his Twitter message of February 17, 2017, "The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!" He returned to Twitter on April 5, 2019, saying of the press, "They are truly the ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE!" As observed in a 2017 article in the online site [Business Insider](#), dictators and those in their service, among them, Nero, leaders of the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution, Hitler's Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, Vladimir Lenin, and Joseph Stalin all used "enemy of the people" to mark political opponents for imprisonment or death.

President Trump is so dangerous because he is ignorant of liberal democracy and, as such, he is also ignorant of, and disregards, the checks on his power imposed by the [institutions](#) of liberal democracy—liberal democracy's "guardrails" in the terminology of former Vice President Joe Biden—as observed by Michael Tomasky, columnist for *The Daily Beast* and editor of *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*, in his [op-ed](#) in *The New York Times*, "Why Trump Lies," June 12, 2020. As Tomasky observes, the 19,127 false or misleading claims by Trump in his first 1,226 days in office (per Glenn Kessler of *The Washington Post*) are dangerous not only because they undermine the liberal democratic value of respect for truth and knowledge but, even more importantly, they promote a right-wing populist dictatorship undermining liberal democracy.

Trump's ignorance of liberal democracy is on display to the world. In an interview with the *Financial Times* prior to the G20 summit in Osaka, Japan, June 27, 2019, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared, "The liberal idea has become obsolete. It has come into conflict with the interests of the overwhelming majority of the population."

At a news conference at the close of the G20 summit, two days later, Peter Baker of *The New York Times* asked President Trump to address President Putin's comment. President Trump responded, "Well, I mean he may feel that way. He sees what's going on, I guess, if you look at what's happening in Los Angeles, where it's so sad to look, and what's happening in San Francisco and a couple of other cities, which are run by an extraordinary group of liberal people."

In this exchange, President Trump showed he does not even know that the liberalism to which Russian President Putin referred consists of the liberal democratic values and institutions that underlie the system of government of the United States and other liberal democracies, as he confuses it with the modern liberalism of California. Unaware of liberal democratic values and institutions, he has no interest in defending them. His ignorance undermines liberal democracy and threatens its future not only in the United States, but also in the rest of the world.

President Trump spoke on the fourth night of the 2020 RNC, repeating much of his 2016 address, and he boasting that he had kept all his [promises](#) from then—although Mexico is not paying for "the wall," and most of what wall construction has occurred is just replacement of existing wall. He repeated his claim of having done more for African Americans than any other president since

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Lincoln—the claim was ridiculous on its face, including, as it does, Lyndon Johnson, who signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. He criticized Joe Biden for “not following the science” regarding COVID-19—as though Biden was president—while as President Trump, he ignored recommendations of medical scientists at the CDC, FDA, and the National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases. He warned that Biden’s policies would be a “death sentence for the auto industry”—although Biden and Obama saved the auto industry during the Great Recession, while withstanding Republican criticism for their “auto bailout.” He claimed to have provided veterans choice in healthcare, however, it was the Obama-Biden administration that did that, in the Veterans Choice Act of 2014.

He continued, warning that Biden is “the destroyer of American jobs, and, if given the chance, he will be the destroyer of American greatness.” Complementing the apocalyptic tone of previous speakers, he said, “This election will decide whether we save the American Dream or whether we allow a socialist agenda to demolish our cherished destiny.” Doubling down, he added, “And this election will decide whether we will defend the American way of life or whether we will allow a radical movement to completely dismantle and destroy it. That won’t happen.” Not only were Democrats to destroy “the American way of life,” but also “totally collapse our improving economy” with a tax hike on all Americans; provide for “extreme late-term abortion of defenseless babies right up until the moment of birth” and stop “a beating baby’s heart in the ninth month of pregnancy;” “demolish the suburbs, confiscate your guns and appoint justices who will wipe away your Second Amendment and other constitutional freedoms;” “defund police departments all over America;” “stand with anarchists, agitators, rioters, looters, and flag-burners;” and “abolish the production of American oil, coal, shale [*sic*], and natural gas.” None of this was true. He also observed that US employers added more than 9 million jobs in May, June and July, but neglected to mention that that was fewer than half the 22 million jobs that were lost in March and April as the economy, under his watch, slid into the deepest recession since the Great Depression.

He has not slowed down with his nonsense since the convention. In a September 1<sup>st</sup> interview with Laura Ingraham on Fox News, he warned that Joe Biden’s campaign was controlled by “people that you’ve never heard of, people that are in the dark shadows.” He continued, regarding a plane that had been allegedly headed to Washington, DC, to disrupt the convention, “We had somebody get on a plane, from a certain city this weekend, and in the plane, it was almost completely loaded with thugs wearing these dark uniforms, black uniforms with gear, and this and that. They’re on a plane.” Addressing the shooting referenced above, by a Kenosha policeman of an unarmed African American man seven times in the back, he explained that police sometimes succumb to pressure, and “they choke, just like in a golf tournament, they miss a three-foot” putt.

As dictators do, Donald Trump surrounds himself with unsavory characters. Steve Bannon, who served as chief executive officer of Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign and Chief Strategist in the Trump administration, is just the latest Trump associate to face federal felony charges (for him, for his role in an alleged border wall funding scam). Roger Stone, longtime Trump friend and aide in the 2016 campaign was charged with lying to Congress about his communications with WikiLeaks regarding release of emails stolen by Russia from the Clinton campaign, and obstruction of justice and witness tampering for threatening an associate to get him to lie to Congress. Stone was convicted and given a 40-month sentence, later commuted by President Trump. Michael Flynn, Trump’s first national security advisor, pleaded guilty to having made

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false statements to the FBI regarding his conversations with then-Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak, but is in the midst of a litigation related to his desire to withdraw his guilty plea. Paul Manafort, Trump's former campaign manager, was convicted of tax and banking crimes and is serving a seven-year sentence. Rick Gates, a former Manafort associate who worked on Trump's campaign and his inaugural committee, was sentenced to 45 days in jail for conspiracy and making a false statement to investigators. Michael Cohen, Trump's former lawyer, pleaded guilty to campaign finance violations related to hush money payments before the 2016 election to a porn star and a Playboy model, and making false statements to Congress regarding a proposed Trump Organization real estate project in Russia. George Papadopoulos, a Trump 2016 campaign foreign policy aide, spent 12 days in jail after pleading guilty to making false statements to the FBI. And the Trump administration [continues to accept](#) Russian re-election aid and [to hide it](#).

As dictators also do, he has on at least [two occasions](#)—once in an interview with Maria Bartiromo of Fox Business, and again, in an interview with Laura Ingraham of Fox News—expressed frustration that Attorney General Bill Barr has not prosecuted his political rivals Barack Obama and Joe Biden for “lying to Congress” and “treason” without elaboration.

President Trump, as dictators do, is engaging in, and having his administration engage in, election sabotage. He has floated the idea of delaying the November election, warned that he may not abide by election results if he loses because the only way he would lose is if the election is “rigged,” and his administration is waging ongoing [sabotage](#) of the Postal Service to both move public opinion in favor of its privatization and undermine faith in election results. The Republican attack on the Postal Service serves as a warning to voters to “mask up” and avail themselves of, in states where available, voting in person early or voting in person on election day, and to demand the federal government enforce election results. However, voters should not, as President Trump recommended in campaign stops in North Carolina and Pennsylvania, vote [twice](#)—first, by mail-in ballot, and then again in person—to test the validity of the system. That would be illegal.

Finally, and importantly, Trump, as dictators do, promotes violence. He warned about his “Second Amendment people” at a rally in Wilmington, North Carolina, August 9, 2016. He warned of his support among “police, the support of the military, the support of Bikers for Trump—I have the tough people, but they don’t play it tough—until they go to a certain point, and then it would be very bad, very bad,” in an interview with Breitbart News, March 13, 2019. Finally, addressing governors on June 1, 2020, he advised them following the killing of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police, “You have to dominate. If you don’t dominate, you’re wasting your time...They’re going to run over you. You’re going to look like a bunch of jerks.” Later that same day, Trump mobilized government forces on the street outside the White House, having them shoot pepper balls into a crowd of peaceful protestors to clear the way for his moment to silently—with an *Il Duce* expression—hold up a Bible in front of a church.

**Donald Trump Controls the Republican Party and His Administration Like a Dictator**

Donald Trump, less than four years into his presidency, is dictator of the Republican Party. Republicans in Congress must pass a litmus test of boundless devotion to Trump, or he will punish them by running against them someone more devoted to him. None of his former critics in the party dare criticize him unless they are ready to end their political careers—including Senator Ted

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Cruz (R-TX), whose wife and father were insulted by Trump during the 2016, and Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL), dubbed by Trump “Little Marco.”

The [Republican Party Platform of 2016](#) was 66 pages long and called for restoring the American Dream. In contrast, the RNC of 2020 passed a “Resolution Regarding the Republican Party Platform” only one page long with only four resolutions, including a typo and a demand the media accurately report RNC obsequiousness to Dear Leader Trump:

RESOLVED, That the Republican Party has and will continue to enthusiastically support the President’s America-first agenda;

RESOVLED, [*sic*] That the 2020 Republican National Convention will adjourn without adopting a new platform until the 2024 Republican National Convention;

RESOLVED, That the 2020 Republican National Convention calls on the media to engage in accurate and unbiased reporting, especially as it relates to the strong support of the RNC for President Trump and his Administration; and

RESOLVED, That any motion to amend the 2016 Platform or to adopt a new platform, including any motion to suspend the procedures that will allow doing so, will be ruled out of order.

Most of the attendees at President Trump’s address on the White House lawn on the fourth night of the RNC, in deference to his sensitivity over what he calls the “China Virus,” did not wear masks, risking their health rather than irritating the President. Speakers tended to sound like they were speaking in service to a dictator, contradicting known truths regarding Trump’s disparagement of women and minorities, the economic recession that began on his watch due in part to his mishandling of the ongoing pandemic, and the existence of the ongoing pandemic itself. Speakers (led by the Trump family; notably absent were President George W. Bush and previous Republican presidential candidates) repeatedly misrepresented that Joe Biden and the Democrats are “socialist” and “radical” as they rallied support for President Trump’s re-election.

On opening night, Charlie Kirk, founder of Turning Point USA, inverted reality, calling President Trump “the bodyguard of Western Civilization.” According to Representative Matt Gaetz (R-FL), radical Democrats threaten to “disarm you, empty the prisons, lock you in your home and invite MS-13 to live next door.” In an echo of Vladimir Putin’s grant of an [additional](#) 12 years in office, on the first day President Trump led a crowd in chants of “12 more years!” In the category of imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, prior to a naturalization ceremony presided over by him and shown to the nation as part of the RNC ceremonies on the second night, President Trump entered a room in the White House via two doors opened by, and with salutes from, two marines, in an obvious reference to how President Putin entered St. Andrew’s Hall in the Grand Kremlin Palace for his 2012 inauguration via two doors opened by, and with salutes from, two members of the Russian military. On the RNC’s third night, Vice President Mike Pence warned, “You won’t be safe in Joe Biden’s America...the choice is whether America remains America.” Meanwhile, in President Trump’s America, crime was rising and there were riots in the streets.



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President Trump's actions as a dictator of his administration are familiar. He demanded an Attorney General who would serve him—not the nation—like the notorious (and later disbarred) Roy Cohn served his father and him, and got it with Bill Barr. He dictates to the CDC, the FDA, and the National Institute for Allergies and Infectious Diseases—and the nation's governors, who do not even report to him—demanding they ignore medical science and quickly reopen restaurants and schools and public gatherings in their states in hopes it will aid his re-election campaign.

### **Donald Trump Admires Dictators**

Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) famously [confronted](#) President Trump in a meeting in the White House, telling him, “all roads with you lead to Putin.” President Trump has been derided as “Putin's puppet” and “Putin's pet” as he has repeatedly criticized NATO, which condemned Putin's annexation of Crimea; repeatedly avoided criticizing Putin; and he has even taken Putin's word over his own intelligence agencies' conclusions that Russia hacked the 2016 US elections and paid rewards to terrorists who killed American soldiers.

Chris Cillizza and Brenna Williams of CNN, in “[15 Times Donald Trump Praised Authoritarian Leaders](#),” listed quotes from Donald Trump, illustrating his admiration for dictators—among them, he said of President Putin, in September 2016, “The man has very strong control over a country...he's been a leader. Far more than our president has been a leader.” In July 2018, he observed of a meeting with Putin, “We got along well....” Of Chinese President Xi Jinping, “I consider him a friend and—but I like him a lot.” On another occasion, at a closed-door fundraiser in Florida, aired by CNN, Trump observed of President XI, “He's now president for life, president for life. And he's great...And look, he was able to do that. I think it's great. Maybe we'll have to give that a shot someday.” Of North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un, “We fell in love.” Of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, “[H]e's become a friend of mine...He's running a very difficult part of the world. He's involved very, very strongly and, frankly, he's getting very high marks.” Other dictators of whom the President has spoken admiringly are the Philippines' Rodrigo Duterte, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and Egypt's Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

Former advisor to Bill Clinton, Paul Begala, in his 2020 book *You're Fired—The Perfect Guide to Beating Donald Trump*, in his chapter on Trump's foreign policy, also provides an excellent summary of Trump's catering to foreign dictators. Begala's interpretation of Trump's actions centers on financial greed—that he puts “Trump First;” however, financial motivations for his actions are often tenuous or nonexistent. More likely, Trump has a Social Darwinist philosophy that admires a dictator—someone who is a “killer” like he was raised by his father to be—and he despises the weak, along with the values and institutions of liberal democracy that defend them.

### **Donald Trump Solicited Aid from Russia**

The headline in *The New York Times* summarized the Senate panel's findings in one line: “[G.O.P.-Led Senate Panel Details Ties Between 2016 Trump Campaign and Russia](#).” The title of an [editorial](#) in *The New York Times* drove home the point: “The Trump Campaign Accepted Russian Help to Win in 2016. Case Closed.” No surprise. Previously, *Time* magazine [reported](#) the Mueller report had revealed over 100 contacts with Russians by at least 17 different Trump associates.

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Election campaign law provides, in 52 USC §30121(a), “It shall be unlawful for...a person to solicit, accept, or receive...a contribution or donation of money or other thing of value...from a foreign national...in connection with a Federal, State, or local election.” It does not make “collusion” illegal, although that is the term used repeatedly by President Trump. However, collusion with Russians in an election campaign indicates that a campaign did “solicit, accept, or receive” a “thing of value” from the Russians. A Republican appendix to the report directly conflicts with the report’s own findings, providing, “After more than three years of investigation by the Committee, we can now say with no doubt, there was no collusion.” In contrast, a Democratic appendix truthfully provided, “The committee’s bipartisan report unambiguously shows that members of the Trump campaign cooperated with Russian efforts to get Trump elected...Paul Manafort, while he was chairman of the Trump campaign, was secretly communicating with a Russian intelligence officer with whom he discussed campaign strategy and repeatedly shared internal campaign polling data....This is what collusion looks like.”

Senate Republicans, in voting down articles of impeachment, have given President Trump their approval to seek aid from foreign governments in the 2020 election—as he did as a candidate in the 2016 election from Russia (“Russia, if you’re listening...” July 27, 2016)—and as he has already begun doing in the 2020 election as President regarding Ukraine (“I would like you to do us a favor though,” July 25, 2019) and China (“China should start an investigation into the Bidens...” October 3, 2019).

**Donald Trump Will *Incite* Violent Protest and Racial Conflict**

We know from his history that when it comes to race, Donald Trump is confrontational. When working with his father, they were accused by the Justice Department in 1973 of alleged violations of the Fair Housing Act in the operation of 39 buildings. Based on the results from sending African American and white representatives posing as potential renters, the federal government alleged that the Trump family corporation quoted different rental terms and conditions and made false “no vacancy” statements to African Americans for apartments the Trumps managed. The Trump family settled the charges in 1975 without admitting guilt.

Donald Trump took out a full page ad in the May 1, 1989, issues of four New York City newspapers demanding prosecution and the death penalty for the “Central Park 5,” the five African American and Hispanic young men accused of raping a woman in Central Park. “BRING BACK THE DEATH PENALTY. BRING BACK OUR POLICE!” read the headlines of the ad. Even after DNA evidence exonerated them—and even after the actual rapist confessed—30 years after they were erroneously charged, in a reply to reporters June 18, 2019, he refused to admit his error.

He returned to promoting racial hatred, unquenchable by facts, when he led the “Birther Movement” in 2010, alleging that President Obama, the first African American president, was not a “natural born citizen” and eligible to hold the presidency under the Constitution. The effort was based on nonsense—even if Barack Obama had not been born in Hawaii, as his birth certificate proved, his mother was an American citizen and, thus, he was every bit as much a “natural born citizen” under Article II, Section 1, of the Constitution, as former presidential candidate Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, who was born in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, of an American citizen mother, even though at the time of his birth his Cuban-born father was not an American citizen.

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He yet again returned to nonsensical Birther race-based allegations with the announcement by Joe Biden of his choice of Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA) as his running mate. When [speaking to reporters](#), he observed that she is the daughter of immigrants, and questioned Senator Harris' citizenship and eligibility to run for Vice President. Born in Oakland, California, the Senator is, of course, a "natural born citizen."

Most recently, President Trump has resumed his critique of professional athletes kneeling during the National Anthem in protest of systemic racism and social injustice in the form of police mistreatment and death of African Americans in their custody. Trump began his criticism of the practice soon after former quarterback for the NFL's San Francisco 49ers Colin Kaepernick knelt during the National Anthem before a game in August 2016. In August of this year, with NBA players taking a knee as the violence has continued, in an interview on Fox Sports Radio on August 11<sup>th</sup>, he said, "Some are nasty, very very nasty, and frankly, very dumb."

President Trump resolutely refuses to even attempt to provide racial healing. He visited Kenosha, Wisconsin, site of the shooting, by a Kenosha policeman, of an unarmed African American man seven times in the back, and he avoided meeting with the man's grieving family. Ignoring that he is aggravating the anger in the African American community, already stressed, as are other communities, by his mishandling of the pandemic and resultant economic devastation, he signed a memorandum, announced in a statement issued September 2<sup>nd</sup>, with a title that, to be accurate, should have announced, "President Donald J. Trump is Inciting Lawlessness in American Cities;" misleadingly, it read, "President Donald J. Trump is Combating Lawlessness in American Cities." It announced he had signed a memorandum that "directs agencies to identify Federal funds provided to Seattle, Portland, New York City, and Washington, D.C., and the authorities available to withhold funds...restricting their eligibility for certain Federal grants, where permissible, and working to redirect those funds to jurisdictions that protect communities...By identifying funds that may be redirected from jurisdictions where local politicians have permitted anarchy and violence to abound, President Trump is ensuring Americans are no longer forced to foot the bill for local politician's dereliction of duty"—although we all are forced to foot the bill for President Trump's continuing dereliction of duty. The cities all have Democratic mayors, and the action is again that of a dictator, and probably an unconstitutional intrusion on Congressional authority.

The action was consistent with the statement—or misstatement—from White House spokesperson Kellyanne Conway when she gave away the Trump administration's election [strategy](#)—after failing at controlling the pandemic and after failing at growing the economy—telling *Fox & Friends* on August 27<sup>th</sup>, "The more chaos and anarchy and vandalism and violence reigns, the better it is for the very clear choice on who's best on public safety and law and order." There is, thus, one American we should fear more than any other of our fellow Americans.

### **The Threat We Face November 3<sup>rd</sup>**

We should fear Donald Trump. Donald Trump is not just running for re-election as *President* in 2020. Donald Trump is running for *Dictator*, to extend the dictatorial control he holds over the Republican Party and his administration to the United States as a whole. We know, because his



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first term in office has thus far been that of an incompetent *wannabe* dictator, lording over a once-proud party of politicians eager to join him in war on liberal democracy or fearful of his wrath.

Former President Barack Obama, commenting on the Trump administration in his speech to the Democratic National Convention on August 19<sup>th</sup> made clear that the threat from Donald Trump is a *present threat*: “our democracy” is “at stake right now.” He later returned to his warning, personalizing his message for November 3<sup>rd</sup>: “Don’t let them take away your democracy.” And as Jon Meacham, holder of the Rogers Endowed Chair in the American Presidency at Vanderbilt University and Pulitzer Prize winning author, observed on MSNBC’s *Morning Joe*, April 3<sup>rd</sup> referring to the Trump administration’s response to COVID-19, “The Enlightenment’s on trial here.”

Liberal democracy, science, and reason—our gifts from the Enlightenment—are on trial. In the United States, the defense is represented by the Democratic Party. The prosecution is conducted by the Republican Party led by Donald Trump, who, having so easily acquired dictatorial control over the Republican Party on behalf of himself and his family, now seeks to extend his dictatorial control over the country, in a right-wing populist dictatorship dedicated to destruction of liberal democracy, per the global right-wing populist movement vision of Steve Bannon.

Approaching this Labor Day, September 7, 2020, we must, as a nation, pledge on November 3<sup>rd</sup> to confront right-wing populism’s war on liberal democracy and its promotion by the economically powerful of racial and ethnic resentment among white and non-white workers, and resultant division and suppression of labor.

Ideologies are, essentially, operating systems for societies. We know from history, although we have tended to forget it, that the ideology of liberal democracy is superior as an operating system to right-wing populism for the common sense reason that liberal democracy, through its values and institutions, is intended to provide a good quality of life for everyone, in contrast to right-wing populism, which is intended to provide a good quality of life only for the economically powerful, who seek to complement their economic power with political power by conning votes from less economically powerful whites with empty—or nearly so—promises of privilege.

With apologies to Ecclesiastes the Preacher, regarding today’s Republican Party, “all is cons and vexations of democracy.” The party name ought to more accurately be the *Republicon* Party. Former Republican strategist Stuart Stevens confirms that the Republican Party exists solely to serve the wealthiest Americas in his 2020 book *It Was All a Lie—How the Republican Party Became Donald Trump*, observing, “A belief in the power of tax cuts is about as close as it can be to a definitional core belief that exists in the Republican Party.”

Admittedly—for now—the right-wing populist con of the Republican Party *sells*—at least for about 46 percent of the electorate, including about 85 percent of the Republican Party—though:

- *Even before* the COVID-19 pandemic struck in the US and the commencement of recession in February, during the first three years of the Trump administration, the economy was performing worse than most other presidential administrations since 1980 and, since the start of the pandemic, the number of Americans receiving unemployment insurance

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benefits, from its peak at 32 million, even by mid-August exceeded [29.2 million](#)—about 18.2 percent of the labor force of 160.8 million—and the pace of hiring is slowing;

- The incompetence of the Trump administration’s COVID-19 response has unnecessarily cost—as of Labor Day 2020—more than 188,000 lives, millions of jobs, and trillions of dollars, and has rendered Americans international pariahs unwelcome in most of the nations of Europe and Asia; and
- Donald Trump—who promotes racial division and violence; demands “law and order” as did [George Wallace](#) and Richard Nixon in racist dog whistles of half a century ago while disrespecting the law himself and thriving on chaos; and declared in his inaugural address, “This American carnage stops right here and stops right now,” while crime has gone *up* on his watch as president—is obviously the wrong person to have in the presidency at the very time most Americans want racial healing and serious police reform.

Millions of Americans plan to vote to re-elect President Trump in the hope that he will get the overwhelmingly popular *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision of 1973 overturned, even though recent Supreme Court opinions (especially the striking down of a Louisiana law restricting abortions, concurred in by conservative Chief Justice Roberts based on precedent) severely undermine faith in this; and a future Democratic administration will probably legislatively enact that case’s holding anyway. Millions more will vote to re-elect President Trump in the hope that he will cut their taxes again (doubtful given likely Democratic hold on the House) and restore manufacturing and mining jobs through continuing deployment of gratuitously cruel measures against immigrants and finally building that wall, even though the numbers of manufacturing and mining jobs have shrunk with the recession that commenced on his watch (and, even before COVID-19, [coal production](#) in 2019 shrank to its lowest level since 1978).

These voters need to ask themselves whether their causes justify destroying liberal democracy, which Trump threatens not only domestically, but also internationally, with his silence regarding Vladimir Putin and his threatening comments regarding NATO. President Trump is on video at a 2017 NATO meeting [shoving](#) aside a smiling Dusko Markovic, Prime Minister of Montenegro, attending his first meeting of NATO on behalf of his newly admitted nation. Markovic’s smile perhaps reflected relief that his nation was now covered by Article 5 of the NATO Charter, after Russia’s invasions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia in 2014, invasion of eastern Ukraine in 2014 in an attempt to conquer the Donbass and its successful annexation of Crimea. Fox News commentator Tucker Carlson in 2018 posed the question to President Trump of whether the US should honor Article 5, providing that an attack on one member of NATO is an attack on all, and Trump expressed [skepticism](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic reflects President Trump’s and Republican right-wing populists’ incompetence and nihilistic disregard for life, as he has said of the deaths attributable to it, “It is what it is,” and a majority of registered Republicans (57 percent) surveyed in CBS News/YouGov [poll](#) in late August essentially agreed, deeming the then to-date 176,000 deaths “acceptable.” Nations with leaders espousing right-wing populism in varying degrees—the US under Trump, the UK under Johnson, Russia under Putin, Brazil under Bolsonaro, Israel under Netanyahu, and India under Modi—are failing in their responses in comparison to the responses guided by deference to the Enlightenment’s lessons as implemented pursuant to liberal democracy in, for example, South Korea and Germany.

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Right-wing populism combines the historical appeals of conservatism's trickle-down economics to the rich, corporations and business generally; and cultural appeals to the religious; with an appeal to those who fear their culture and economic well-being are under attack by "others"—not "real" Americans like them—with the support of liberals. The Republican Party, presumably, will eventually reject right-wing populism and return to a conservatism that rejects trickle-down and is again fully supportive of liberal democracy—but it will do so sooner after defeat in November.

For now, however, the only party defending liberal democracy is the Democratic Party, whose modern liberalism upholds its values and institutions. The Democratic Party stands alone in its defense of liberal democracy because Republicans, among them, Pat Buchanan, Sam Francis, and Donald Trump—with the aid of the libertarian Murray Rothbard and the Trump ally Roger Stone, along with Steve Bannon—learned from former Klansman and neo-Nazi David Duke's right-wing populist campaigns in Louisiana in 1990 and 1991 that a politics that echoed the right-wing populism of the Antebellum South and Jim Crow era could win the presidency and vie for control of the world. They built an appeal to those who tolerated racism and rejection of the Enlightenment and with it all the values and institutions of liberal democracy that restrain hunger for economic, political, and social power—i.e., they built an appeal to right-wing populism.

While conservatism has always combined support for aristocracy, secured by the granting by that aristocracy of a sense of privilege to those not among its members so as to secure their votes, it always was in the context of at least lip-service devotion to the values and institutions of liberal democracy and the idea that what it was promoting was a system that was good for all. As Corey Robin, professor of political science at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center, observes in *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Donald Trump* (2018), conservatism arose in *reaction to* liberalism; however, as observed here, *not in rejection of* liberalism. Proponents of conservatism won elections with a set of constituencies that varied somewhat over time, but always included an alliance of the plutocrats who benefitted economically under it and their non-plutocratic allies upon whom they bestowed small privileges, while nonetheless promoting the ideals of liberal democracy and a theory that their vision was the best for the common good.

Right-wing populism has *always* combined—when it was winning elections over the past two centuries—rich whites with resentful whites in the shared cause of suppression of liberal democracy and suppression of extension of the American Dream to "others" unlike them. The importance of David Duke's 1990 and 1991 elections in Louisiana is addressed by Adam Serwer of *The Atlantic* in his insightful November 2017 article, "[The Nationalist's Delusion](#)," in which the term "nationalism" is used to refer to the ideology herein referred to as right-wing populism and, although its title refers to it as a "delusion," the article concludes by calling it a "con," as right-wing populism is referred to herein.

The ideological impact of Duke's performance in those elections constitutes much of what follows herein. Murray Rothbard, a libertarian PhD economist from Columbia University, authored *For a New Liberty: The Libertarian Manifesto* (1973; 1978; 1985), in which he laid out a theory of anarcho-capitalism—a system in which government is abolished and private business takes over all government functions. To win the elections necessary to acquire the political power to advance

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this cause, Rothbard, in essays addressed herein, urged libertarians to merge with Duke's followers in right-wing populism.

Liberal democracy's devotion to the ideal of a better life for all underlies the commitment to opportunity for all willing to work for it that is the American Dream. Republican right-wing populism, dedicated as it is to delivering a better life to a favored few and to destroying liberal democracy is, accordingly, dedicated to destroying the American Dream. To save liberal democracy—to restore the American Dream for all—on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, it is the responsibility of every American who loves liberal democracy and the American Dream to vote Democrat.

**LIBERAL DEMOCRACY VERSUS REPUBLICAN RIGHT-WING POPULISM**

**A Definition of Liberal Democracy and its Foundation in Universalist Values of Christianity**

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

—*The Book of 1 John* 4:7-8.

Love your neighbor as yourself.

—*The Book of Matthew*, Chapter 22, verse 39.

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.” Then the righteous will answer him, saying, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?” And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”

—*The Book of Matthew*, Chapter 25, verses 35-40.

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

—*The Book of Matthew*, Chapter 7, verse 12.

Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

—From “The New Colossus,” a poem written by Emma Lazarus in 1883 to raise money for the construction of the pedestal for the Statue of Liberty.

The silent message of liberal democracy, reinforced by good, safe streets; good, safe public schools; safe workplaces; clean environments; and good, safe parks and playgrounds for all—even the weak and poor—is, “You are loved.” The universalist values of Christianity provide support

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for the values of liberal democracy that allow, in liberal democracies such as that of the United States, for people to work with others outside their immediate family, neighborhood, party, tribe, race, ethnic group, religion, and nation. And these are the values that Donald Trump and the Republican Party, and its right-wing populist philosophy, are attacking.

“Liberal democracy” is the philosophy inspired by the “classical liberalism” of the Enlightenment, and is a system of government in which representative democracy operates based on the principles of individual social, economic, and political freedom, subject to checks on the exercise of individual social, economic, and political power. It includes the idea of universal suffrage accorded to all citizens after reaching a sufficient age, and majority rule, again subject to checks on exercise of political power, in a setting of capitalism, again, subject to checks on exercise of economic power.

These checks are embodied in the Constitution in the form of separation of powers among the Legislative Branch (in Article I; the House of Representatives and the Senate), the Executive Branch (Article II; the presidency and vice presidency), and the Judicial Branch (Article III; the federal courts including the Supreme Court). Among the political freedoms are those listed in the Bill of Rights, including freedom of speech, press, religion, and assembly, right to due process, right to a speedy trial before a jury of one’s peers, etc.

Additional examples of such liberal democratic values beyond the Constitution and checks and balances are respect for knowledge and truth, tolerance (support for pluralism), equality (especially of opportunity), peace, and the rule of law, all in a setting of humility. (See *The Trickle-Down Delusion: How Republican Upward Redistribution of Economic and Political Power Undermines Our Economy, Democracy, Institutions and Health—and a Liberal Response* [2016], by John Seip and Dee Wood Harper. As an aside, my dedication therein, “To my conservative Republican parents who taught me my liberal values” captures the idea herein of the shared origins of conservatism and modern liberalism in the classical liberalism of the Enlightenment.)

The classical liberal philosopher John Locke promoted, in his *Two Treatises on Government* (1689), the ideas of liberty and the separation of Church and State, and he, along with the French social philosopher Montesquieu, building on Locke’s work with his own ideas regarding separation of powers in *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), had a profound influence on James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay, authors of *The Federalist Papers*; as well as Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, George Washington, and other Founders. These ideas are carried forth in modern liberalism and conservatism.

A critical question for the new government of the United States was how to ensure that, given the new nation’s philosophical commitment to rule of the people and freedom, no one person or group could achieve concentrated power. From the Enlightenment, a crucial idea in liberal democracy is that conflict and struggle over power are inevitable in society. That idea appears in James Madison’s *The Federalist* No. 10, published in 1787, where he referred to what is called today class conflict as conflict among “factions” divided by “unequal distribution of property”:

[T]he most common and durable source of factions has been the various and unequal distribution of property. . . The regulation of these various and interfering



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interests forms the principal task of modern legislation, and involves the spirit of party and faction in the necessary and ordinary operations of government.

Note that Madison was talking about class conflict more than 30 years before Karl Marx was even born (in 1818). Madison and his fellow architects of the Constitution addressed the inevitability of conflict by providing for popular elections and representative democracy, and the power resulting from elections tempered by checks and balances. Liberal values and institutions enforce that system of checks and balances, and thereby temper both the potential for harm inflicted by the *politically and socially* powerful majority upon minorities, and the potential for harm inflicted by the *economically* powerful upon the have-nots.

Thus, self-interest under classical liberalism was exercised subject to self-imposed restraint—it was *enlightened* self-interest, combatting individualism and selfishness for the good of all, as exhibited in the works of two other classical liberal philosophers, one French and the other Scottish. Alexis de Tocqueville titled a chapter in his *Democracy in America* (1835) “How the Americans Combat Individualism by the Doctrine of Interest Well Understood”—in the original French, “*Comment les Américains combattent l’individualisme par la doctrine de l’intérêt bien entendu.*” Similar notions of the importance of restraint on self-interest and power appear in Adam Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). A quote from Adam Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* provides a relevant critique of attitudes in his time that resonate today regarding our attitudes toward the rich (and election of Donald Trump):

This disposition to admire, and almost to worship, the rich and the powerful, and to despise, or, at least, to neglect, persons of poor and mean condition, though necessary both to establish and to maintain the distinction of ranks and the order of society, is, at the same time, the great and most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments. That wealth and greatness are often regarded with the respect and admiration which are due only to wisdom and virtue; and that the contempt, of which vice and folly are the only proper objects, is often most unjustly bestowed upon poverty and weakness, has been the complaint of moralists in all ages.

Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt are professors of government at Harvard University and the authors of *How Democracies Die* (2018). In [an extract of their book](#) in *The Guardian* they observed “extreme polarization” such as that practiced by the Republican Party in the Age of Trump “can kill democracies.” Liberal democracy, they explained, relies on the practice of certain related norms: “mutual toleration” (“the understanding that competing parties accept one another as legitimate rivals”) and “forbearance” (“the idea that politicians should exercise restraint in deploying their institutional prerogatives”).

As observed by Adam Serwer in [The Atlantic, April 2020](#), the Tea Party movement is an example of a Republican movement that challenged the legitimacy of Democratic rule beginning in February of 2009, in the first month of the Obama presidency. Serwer argues that the gridlock in Washington is not caused by ideological differences regarding size of government (government has grown massively in Republican administrations, too), but, rather, by the Republican Party’s view of Democratic Party governance as illegitimate. The rot starts at the top, from “the Republican Party’s leadership and propaganda apparatus” that “have trained their base to view

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Democratic voters not just as political rivals but as an existential threat, whose claims to American identity and therefore power are intrinsically invalid,” and for President Trump “to govern as though his voters are the only ones with legitimate claims to American citizenship...” In Trump’s right-wing populist Republican Party, the only “real” Americans are Trump voters.

A final observation regarding terminology: Recently there has been an attempt to resurrect the term “populism” as a description for the left-wing populism of Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), linking it to the Populist movement that began in Kansas in 1892—most notably by Thomas Frank in *The People, No: A Brief History of Anti-Populism* (2020) but also by other self-described progressives. While well-intentioned, this is dangerous, leaving defenders of liberal democracy without a name for the global movement attempting to destroy it, which its own proponents refer to as “right-wing populism.” Because its proponents refer to it as such, that is the name used for it herein.

### **The “Conservative Dilemma” and Evolution from Conservatism’s *Reaction to Liberal Democracy* to Right-Wing Populism’s *Rejection of Liberal Democracy***

For historical context, the terms “left” and “right” in politics originated during the French Revolution, in the National Assembly. Those who sat on the right side supported concentrated power in the landed aristocracy, the Church, and the dethroned monarchy—the *Ancien Régime* (“Old Order”)—and were the conservatives. Those who sat on the left side supported the republic, secularism, civil liberties, and dispersal of power, and included the classical liberals supporting liberal democracy.

As was observed by Corey Robin in *The Reactionary Mind*, the Anglo-Irish social philosopher Edmund Burke first articulated conservatism as a philosophy in reaction to the French Revolution, driven by classical liberal idealism, in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). Burke proved prescient, as the revolution devolved into mob rule and the Reign of Terror, followed by the rise of a dictator, Napoleon. Burke established conservatism’s distrust of the masses and caution regarding placing authority in the hands of the people and taking it away from the traditional sources of authority. Conservatism, from its beginning, conserved *order* pursuant to the rule of aristocracy, while liberals were more comfortable with loosening the reins of order and giving more power to the governed people, in a setting of institutional checks and balances.

Conservative elites in a liberal democracy need to overcome their electoral disadvantage by getting enough of the non-elites—the masses—to vote for them. This is the Conservative Dilemma, introduced by Daniel Ziblatt in his 2017 book, *Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy*, and addressed in great detail in *Let Them Eat Tweets: How the Right Rules in an Age of Extreme Inequality* (2020), by political scientists Jacob S. Hacker of Yale University and Paul Pierson of the University of California, Berkeley (the concept is also addressed by Robin, but not by name).

Conservative elites, feeling their status threatened by liberals, must inculcate in non-elites an appreciation that *their* status, too, is threatened, by cultivating in their non-elite constituency a sense that—even though they are not aristocracy—they enjoy privileges bestowed and maintained by the conservative aristocracy that separate them from other members of the nation, and their privileges are under attack by liberals and members of the liberal constituency who are not as

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deserving. Thus, the goal of conservatism has always been defense of the authority of an *aristocracy* by means of government establishment of *privilege*, although in a setting of liberal democracy in which the goal is the common good.

The evolution from embrace of liberal democracy in service to the common good to its rejection in favor of right-wing populism for the few was aided by conservatism's embrace of trickle-down economics and the evolution toward the vision of Democratic opponents as illegitimate, in turn aided by branding them as opponents in a "culture war," as embodied in the speech by Republican former presidential candidate and current paleoconservative commentator Pat Buchanan at the 1992 Republican National Convention in Houston, at which he spoke of George H. W. Bush:

Friends, this election is about more than who gets what. It is about who we are. It is about what we believe and what we stand for as Americans. There is a religious war going on in this country. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as the Cold War itself. For this war is for the soul of America. And in that struggle for the soul of America, Clinton & Clinton are on the other side, and George Bush is on our side.

Vice President Bush would lose the election, but Republican branding of Democratic opposition as illegitimate, and the intensity of Republican partisanship, would remain.

**THE REPUBLICAN RIGHT-WING POPULIST WAR ON LIBERAL DEMOCRACY**

**Republican Evolution from Embrace of Conservatism to Embrace of Right-Wing Populism**

The evolution of the Republican Party from conservatism to right-wing populism began—unintentionally—with the "new conservatism" of William F. Buckley Jr., beginning with his founding of *National Review* in 1955, forming the "New Right" of that era promoting what came to be called "movement conservatism." This new conservatism was also dubbed "fusionism," as it combined libertarianism (at the time, viewed as essentially classical liberalism in modern form), traditionalism, and anticommunism. This new conservatism was promoted in opposition to the "Modern Republicanism" of Dwight Eisenhower, who had made peace with the New Deal and the Civil Rights Movement, signing into law the Civil Rights Act of 1957, the first federal civil rights legislation passed since the Civil Rights Act of 1875. He also expanded Social Security, raised the minimum wage, appointed Supreme Court Justices who struck down "separate but equal" in *Brown v. Board of Education*, integrated Little Rock schools pursuant to that opinion, and launched the nation's largest public works project in the form of the Interstate Highway System.

There was so much policy agreement during the 1950s and early 1960s that a prominent book of the era was *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* by Harvard sociologist Daniel Bell (1960 and 1962). So popular was Eisenhower that, in the elections of 1952 and 1956, he won a majority of the popular vote in back-to-back elections, the last candidate to do so until Barack Obama did it in the elections of 2008 and 2012.

As Stuart Stevens observes in *It Was All a Lie*, Buckley authored an editorial in 1957 titled "Why the South Must Prevail," in which he endorsed segregation and the right of whites to discriminate

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against African Americans. Buckley later renounced racism and George Wallace's candidacy, and he became lionized for chasing the "kooks" out of conservatism, among them racists, John Birch Society conspiracists, Ayn Rand, and anti-Semitic conspiracy promoters. However, the tolerance of his fellow conservatives for racial intolerance, illiberalism, wild conspiracy-mongering, and Ayn Rand selfishness would undo his purge and begin conservatism's move rightward, toward the right-wing populist takeover of the Republican Party and undermining of liberal democracy.

Barry Goldwater, Republican presidential nominee in 1964, was a new conservative and hero of the New Right like Buckley and, famously, opposed the Voting Rights Act of 1964 on libertarian grounds, helping win him several Southern states as well as his native Arizona. This result, along with that in 1968 of Alabama Governor George Wallace in winning several Southern states with outright racist appeals, led President Richard Nixon to run his re-election campaign on a Southern Strategy in 1972, echoing Wallace's racist dog whistle appeal to "law and order."

Ronald Reagan in 1980 ran on a platform combining promotion of "supply-side"—trickle-down—economics, support of the Religious Right, and anti-communism, in the second version of the "New Right." In a racist dog whistle, Reagan held his first rally as presidential nominee on August 3, 1980, at the Neshoba County Fair in Philadelphia, Mississippi, declaring his support for "states' rights" where three civil rights workers had been murdered 16 years before.

Critical to understanding what follows, in its adoption of trickle-down, this conservatism was also rejecting the idea from liberal democracy that we all do better when we *all* do better, substituting for it the idea that we all do better when *the rich* do better, chipping away at conservatism's concern for the common good. Also important regarding this evolution was the idea of the federal government as the enemy of "real" Americans—most pointedly made in the declaration by Ronald Reagan in his first inaugural address in which he declared, "Government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem."

In his 1988 presidential campaign, then Vice President George H. W. Bush, guided by Lee Atwater, his advisor influenced by the Southern Strategy of Nixon, played on racial fears in a commercial featuring Willie Horton, an African American criminal who had gone on to commit violent crimes after release under a parole program by Bush's opponent, Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis. Bush went on to win the 1988 election, the last before the end of the Cold War, but over the next seven elections, Republicans would only once win a plurality of popular votes.

In the Louisiana elections of 1990 (for US Senator) and 1991 (for Governor), the right-wing populist message of former Klansman and neo-Nazi David Duke won majorities of white voters, catching the attention of Pat Buchanan, Roger Stone, and Donald Trump.

### **The Republican Party's Quarter Century Evolution from David Duke to Donald Trump, and Capitulation to Right-Wing Populism**

The views that Donald Trump is talking about now were David's platform decades ago.

—Mike Lawrence, David Duke's campaign manager for his unsuccessful 2016 run for the Republican nomination for the US Senate, quoted by Campbell Robertson

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in “David Duke’s Senate Run in Louisiana Draws Attention but Not Support,” *The New York Times*, September 10, 2016.

The history recounted above provided fertile ground in the Republican Party for the less well recognized right-wing populist incursion that began in 1988 with David Duke, running as a Republican, winning a seat in the Louisiana legislature. He captured the Republican nomination for the US Senate in 1990 and lost in a close election—although he won 60 percent of the white vote—and again captured the Republican nomination for Governor in 1991 and again lost—but captured 55 percent of the white vote.

In an October 1991 opinion column, Pat Buchanan took note of Duke’s popularity and urged the Republican Party to devise a plan to win back white voters who had delivered Louisiana to the Republican Party in the three previous presidential elections. (The column was published in *The Washington Times*, October 23, 1991, under the title “Duke’s Challenge to the Right”.) Buchanan and Duke shared positions on tax-cutting, fighting crime, and eliminating affirmative action, as well as opposing immigration, free trade, US policy toward Israel, and the Persian Gulf War.

This election also caught the attention of the 45-year-old Donald Trump. In an interview on CNN’s *Larry King Live*, November 19, 1991, just three days after the Louisiana gubernatorial runoff election, Trump exhibited a keen understanding of the political appeal of David Duke and the tolerance of racism among whites generally and in the Republican Party in particular. In response to King’s questioning regarding his feelings about the close results in the election, Trump offered the opinion that if David Duke ran for the presidency in 1992, he would siphon votes almost exclusively from President George W. Bush and potentially throw the election to a Democrat (Trump speculated the nominee would be Andrew Cuomo). In the same interview, Trump observed that Pat Buchanan running for the Republican presidential nomination in 1992 would promote much of Duke’s same philosophy but present it in a more palatable package; and would similarly siphon votes from President Bush. Buchanan ran for the Republican presidential nomination in 1992 and 1996, and as the Reform Party candidate for president in 2000.

Murray Rothbard, prominent libertarian theorist and author, embodied the libertarian break from classical liberalism’s concern for the common good, with a vision resembling that of Ayn Rand, whose book containing her philosophy was titled *The Virtue of Selfishness*. He joined with Llewellyn Rockwell (founder of the Ludwig von Mises Institute at Auburn University) in publishing the *Rothbard-Rockwell Report*, which promoted this vision of libertarianism.

The [January 1992 issue](#) of the *Rothbard-Rockwell Report* contained Rothbard’s endorsement of Pat Buchanan and, in the same issue, his article titled “Right-wing Populism: A Strategy for the Paleo Movement.” It proposed slashing taxes, slashing welfare, abolishing affirmative action, law and order reform getting tough on criminals and the homeless, abolition of the Federal Reserve, an “America First” strategy in economic and foreign policy (that phrase later lifted by Donald Trump), and—to “defend family values”—abolition of public schools. It endorsed the ideas of David Duke and Joe McCarthy, and announced, “In a sense, the strategy we are now proclaiming is a strategy of Outreach to the Rednecks.”



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Paleoconservative columnist Samuel T. (“Sam”) Francis, authored, in the magazine *Chronicles*, in February 1992, [“The Education of David Duke.”](#) The column was a commentary on the 1991 Louisiana gubernatorial election and among its lessons was the depth, breadth, and intensity of Duke’s support among whites. Francis speculated that notwithstanding Duke’s defeat, future historians might look on the election as a turning point in history. Francis keenly observed that the success Duke had was attributable to addressing people’s “political, cultural, and economic dispossession,” and Duke’s defeat he accurately attributed to intense opposition from business and religious leaders (although he neglected to mention the staunch opposition from African Americans, roughly 25 percent of the electorate in Louisiana).

The [March 1992 issue](#) of the *Rothbard-Rockwell Report* contained Rothbard’s January 18, 1992, address to the John Randolph Club, Herndon, Virginia, titled “A Strategy for the Right” in which Rothbard urged his fellow libertarians to join with paleoconservatives and support right-wing populism. In a sense, Rothbard’s right-wing populism was an updated version of the “fusionism” of Buckley. Among the elements of fusionism was libertarianism. That libertarianism was understood by Buckley and others as classical liberalism applied to the modern age. In contrast, Rothbard’s libertarianism was devoid of classical liberalism’s concern for common good. Rothbard combined it with paleoconservatism—which shared with traditionalism a distrust of free trade and capitalism generally (something Rothbard urged potential supporters to overlook; Rothbard was Jewish and chose himself to overlook the movement’s occasional anti-Semitism). As for anti-communism, the Soviet Union had fallen in 1991, so there was no longer need for this element—and no need for costly foreign wars waged in favor of tenuous American interests.

In February 1996, Francis [authored](#), in the magazine *Chronicles*, “From Household to Nation.” The article, subtitled “The Middle American Populism of Pat Buchanan,” presented to Buchanan a program on which to run in 1996, identifying Buchanan as the leader of the “Middle American revolt” against globalism of the left and right. Buchanan lost in the Republican presidential primaries to ultimate Republican nominee, Bob Dole.

The rightward ideological evolution of part of the Republican Party was complemented by a southward geographical evolution and alienation of conservatives in other regions of the country, as observed by former senior writer for the conservative *Weekly Standard* Christopher Caldwell in “The Southern Captivity of the GOP,” *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1998. The article appropriately gave much credit to then-House Minority Leader, and later Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich (R-GA) for this capture, however, the article’s condemnation of the Republican Party as “obsolescent” would prove premature.

“Get Me Roger Stone,” a Netflix documentary, shows that Roger Stone urged Trump to run for the Republican presidential nomination as far back as 1998, and he directed Trump’s campaign for the Reform Party presidential nomination in 2000. In 2000, Stone was afraid that Pat Buchanan, running on the Reform Party ticket, would draw so many votes away from George W. Bush that he would throw the election to ultimate Democratic nominee Al Gore. Stone encouraged Trump to declare for the Reform Party presidential candidacy in 2000 to throw the Reform Party into disarray, weaken Buchanan and ensure Bush victory. Trump ran for the Reform Party nomination and won California and Michigan primaries before dropping out. Buchanan ultimately

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won only 0.4 percent of the popular vote, and Bush, although losing the popular vote, would win the Electoral College with the help of a favorable Supreme Court opinion.

An important part of the Republican Party's evolution from conservatism to right-wing populism was the emergence of the Tea Party, launched with a rant by CNBC reporter Rick Santelli on the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange on February 19, 2009, calling for a "Chicago Tea Party in July." President Obama, who had only just taken office on January 20<sup>th</sup>, had signed a bill providing modest relief for homeowners during the Great Recession. Trump advisor Steve Bannon is among those who have re-written history, claiming that the Tea Party revolt was on behalf of the middle class and poor incensed at a *bank bailout* bill signed into law by President Bush October 3, 2008. Santelli's rage, however, was directed against this latest round of relief on Obama's part, the effect of which Santelli alleged was to subsidize the "losers' mortgages"—as opposed to "reward people that could carry the water instead of drink the water." The Koch family was welcomed as sponsors of the Tea Party, and the link was forged between the rich and business people tolerant of right-wing populism with those right-wing populists feeling the political, cultural, and economic dispossession identified by Duke and Francis, consisting in great part of the working class whites called the "resentful" by Katherine J. Cramer of the University of Chicago in her 2016 book, *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*. With the rise of the Tea Party, the Republican Party really became what Stuart Stevens in *It Was All a Lie* calls it: "just a white grievance party" (see also his op-ed, "We Lost the Battle for the Republican Party's Soul Long Ago," *The New York Times*, July 29, 2020).

The *National Review* issue of February 15, 2016, ran a cover story titled "[Against Trump](#)," consisting of short anti-Trump opinion pieces by prominent conservatives. However, by the time the October 24, 2016, issue came out, there appeared an article by *National Review* contributor and Hoover Institution fellow Victor Davis Hanson titled "[The Case for Trump](#)." *National Review*'s surrender to Trump was finalized with editor Rich Lowry's essay "[The Never Trump Delusion](#)," *National Review*, March 30, 2018, followed by his book in 2019 titled *The Case for Nationalism*.

For further insight regarding the nature of Trump's right-wing populism, it is instructive to observe that David Duke continues to support President Trump, and President Trump has appeared to acknowledge it. On August 12, 2017, at the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, David Duke was quoted on video saying, "This represents a turning point for the people of this country. We are determined to take our country back. We are going to fulfill the promises of Donald Trump. That's what we believed in. That's why we voted for Donald Trump, because he said he's going to take our country back and that's what we gotta do."

That same day, President Trump addressed on Twitter the violence accompanying the torch lit protest and violence of the night before: "We ALL must be united & condemn all that hate stands for. There is no place for this kind of violence in America. Let's come together as one!" (12:19 PM - Aug 12, 2017; before 1:45 pm., when a car driven by a white nationalist plowed into a crowd of counter-protestors and killed a young woman counter-protestor).

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David Duke replied on Twitter less than one hour later (from the rally but, again, before the tragedy), “I would recommend you take a good look in the mirror & remember it was White Americans who put you in the presidency, not radical leftists.” (1:03 PM Aug 12, 2017.)

The message appears to have been received by President Trump. Two days later, asked to address the death of the young woman counter-protestor, President Trump had changed his tune, saying, “I think there is blame on both sides. You had some very bad people in that group. But you also had people that were very fine people, on both sides.” (The President was including as “very fine people” those comfortable in the company of white supremacists promoting violence.)

The following year, at a campaign rally in Houston, October 22, 2018, President Trump declared himself a “nationalist,” saying, “A globalist is a person that wants the globe to do well, frankly not caring about our country so much. And you know what? We can’t have that. You know, they have a word. It sort of became old-fashioned. It’s called a nationalist. And I say, really, we’re not supposed to use that word. You know what I am? I’m a nationalist, OK? I’m a nationalist.”

David Duke replied the next day on Twitter, interpreting Trump’s nationalism as “White Nationalism,” saying, “Trump Embraces Nationalism in a Massive JamPacked 99.9 percent White Venue in Houston! Zio Journalists asked him if this is White Nationalism! Of course fundamentally it is as, there is no ethnic or racial group in America more Nationalist than White Americans... So What’s the Problem? (David Duke, Twitter, 1:45 p.m., October 23, 2018.)

Duke would continue to give advice to President Trump, even helping him in his re-election campaign with the recommendation to drop Mike Pence for Fox News’ Tucker Carlson, “Trump & Tucker is the only way to stop the commie Bolsheviks! It is the only path to beat them!” (David Duke, Twitter, 10:46 p.m., July 8, 2020.)

Buchanan, Rothbard, and Francis; and, later, Stone, Bannon, and Trump, derived lessons from the success and shortcomings of David Duke’s campaigns that carried America over the quarter century evolution from the “Dukism” of a failed run for Governor of Louisiana in 1991 to the “Trumpism” of the successful 2016 presidential campaign, proving the Republican Party could win by discarding conservatism and its values of liberal democracy for right-wing populism, enabling it to attract four constituencies: the rich, business, the religious, and the resentful.

The observation by Francis that an appeal to dispossession in Duke’s campaigns gave it its popularity, echoes in the theory that “status threat,” as opposed to economic hardship, explains Trump’s 2016 win, according to researcher Diana C. Mutz of the University of Pennsylvania Political Science Department in her paper “[Status Threat, Not Economic Hardship Explains the 2016 Presidential Vote](#),” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, May 8, 2018. The threat to status includes not only the threat to earnings but also the threat to raise taxes to support minorities, and fear of crime waged by minorities.

Donald Trump’s call to “Make America Great Again” came from Ronald Reagan, who used it in the context of a call to all Americans to pull out of the slump created by “stagflation” (massive unemployment and inflation), long gas station lines, and Iran’s taking of Americans as hostages. In contrast, as used by Trump, it was a call to right-wing populism, a racially and ethnically

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exclusive movement in which (in the US) the “authentic” or “real” citizens are white conservative Christians who believe they have been dispossessed economically, socially, and politically, and want to return to a mythical past. In contrast, the nonwhites, Muslims, Jews (in varying degrees historically), and immigrants are outsiders and threats. In exchange for their votes these “real” Americans get some psychic, and little economic, compensation, while Trump and his fellow members of the 1 percent profit massively. There is an “again” aspect to Trump’s call that he did not intend, and that is the history of right-wing populism before his arrival.

### **Right-Wing Populism in American History and Its Influence on Nazism**

Senator John C. Calhoun, (D-SC), in a speech to the US Senate, August 12, 1849, stated, “With us the two great divisions of society are not the rich and the poor, but white and black, and all the former, the poor as well as the rich, belong to the upper class, and are respected and treated as equals, if honest and industrious, and hence have a position and pride of character of which neither poverty nor misfortune can deprive them.”

Over 100 years later, as recalled by Bill Moyers, his press secretary, President Lyndon Johnson observed, “I’ll tell you what’s at the bottom of it. If you can convince the lowest white man he’s better than the best colored man, he won’t notice you’re picking his pocket. Hell, give him somebody to look down on, and he’ll empty his pockets for you.” (Quoted by Bill Moyers, in “What a Real President Was Like,” *The Washington Post*, November 13, 1988.)

We in the United States have been down this road before, in the Antebellum South and in the Jim Crow era, also called the “Redemption,” in which the “Redeemers” in the post-war era South waged bloody counterrevolution against Reconstruction and fought to “redeem” the era of the Antebellum South (reference to “redemption” was intended by supporters to provide for the movement a Christian basis). Two essays in particular point to the similarities of the current era to that of Jim Crow: See *The Atlantic*’s Adam Serwer, “[Is This the Second Redemption?](#),” *The Atlantic*, November 10, 2016, and Henry Louis Gates Jr. of Harvard University, “[The ‘Lost Cause’ That Built Jim Crow](#),” *The New York Times*, November 8, 2019. As Serwer observes, Donald Trump started the Second Redemption, beginning his rise to power on his promotion of the slander that President Obama, the first African American president, was born in Kenya, not America. In *Madison’s Sorrow: Today’s War on the Founders and America’s Ideal* (2020), Kevin C. O’Leary, a research fellow at the Center for the Study of Democracy at the University of California, Irvine, and teacher in the Political Science Department at Chapman University also addresses right-wing populism as having its beginnings in the Antebellum South and continuing through the Jim Crow era, and, as here, addresses the importance of Pat Buchanan and Sam Francis to the development of the modern right-wing populism that overtook the Republican Party (although in his account he omits David Duke and Murray Rothbard).

The sociologist and early civil rights leader W. E. B. DuBois and the later civil rights leader the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. both observed the elements of right-wing populism, although not calling it such. They both remarked upon how the rich white aristocracy bestowed through government *privilege* on non-rich whites to convey to them that they, too, shared some sense of membership in the aristocracy.

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W. E. B. DuBois, in *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935), observed elements of the fear of loss of privilege of the right-wing populist con. He observed that the planter aristocracy of the Antebellum South was able to re-establish its hold on the economy of the South after Reconstruction, impoverishing both African Americans and whites, by dividing the two labor groups. To quote DuBois: “It must be remembered that the white group of laborers, while they received a low wage, were compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage...”

He continued, “White labor saw in every advance of Negroes a threat to their racial prerogatives...Thus every problem of labor advance in the South was skillfully turned by demagogues into a matter of inter-racial jealousy.” These demagogues came from the ranks of the white elites. Through their control of the Democratic Party, they promoted the right-wing populist con and white supremacy, and dominated politics from the end of Reconstruction into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Martin Luther King Jr. succinctly described, in his speech at the end of the March from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, March 25, 1965, the compensation to poor whites provided by the right-wing populist con that seduced them to oppose African Americans similarly situated economically. There he observed, “If it may be said of the slavery era that the white man took the world and gave the Negro Jesus, then it may be said of the Reconstruction era that the Southern aristocracy took the world and gave the poor white man Jim Crow.” King was describing the right-wing populist con—a system of economic exploitation of non-rich whites and minorities which elite whites were able to maintain by distracting non-rich whites from the real cause of their economic and social disappointments—elite whites having rigged the system against them—by pitting them against their fellow poor but lower status African American neighbors.

Fittingly, on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of W. E. B. DuBois, King honored him with a speech in which he observed of DuBois that African Americans in his time had been oppressed and deprived due to a “poisonous fog of lies” depicting them as inferior. The right-wing populist con, thus, works on two levels, spreading a poisonous fog of lies among those to whom is accorded privilege that they are deserving, and among those who are not among the privileged that they are inferior and deserve their lowly status. This project of reality manipulation that has existed since the days of the Antebellum South and was perpetuated during the Jim Crow era is now displayed prominently by Donald Trump and his minions.

David Duke in the 1970s complemented his Klansman uniform with a Nazi Party uniform, signifying that he full well understood, before many political commentators did, that Nazism was the fascist extension of the Klan’s right-wing populist white supremacy doctrine. Thus, it should not surprise that, in an uncomfortable historical fact, Nazi Germany used the Jim Crow laws of the United States as inspiration for its own race-based laws. James Q. Whitman is the Ford Foundation Professor of Comparative and Foreign Law at Yale Law School and the author of *Hitler’s American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* (2017). He observes that not only did Hitler offer praise for the Jim Crow era racial practices of the South in *Mein Kampf*, but both our federal government’s citizenship laws and the anti-miscegenation laws of thirty states—many outside of the South—were used as models for the two principal Nuremberg Laws (the anti-Jewish statutes enacted by Germany in 1935)—the Citizenship Law and the Blood Law.



**Steve Bannon, Leader of “The Movement” and Its Effort to Spread Right-Wing Populism Globally and Destroy Liberal Democracy**

“The future belongs to populism. It is only going to be defined by asking if it’s left-wing populism or conservative and right-wing populism...” So said Steve Bannon, November 2, 2018, quoted in *The Rise of Populism: Bannon vs. Frum: The Munk Debates* (2019), in support of the motion before the audience at a debate in Toronto against David Frum, former speechwriter for President George W. Bush and an editor of *The Atlantic*. The motion: “Be it resolved: the future of Western politics is populist not liberal.”

Steve Bannon provides the philosophy underlying right-wing populism in the war on liberal democracy and is spreading it globally. He and administration advisor Stephen Miller and other right-wing populist Republicans know what liberal democracy is and want it destroyed, and know that Donald Trump’s control of the Republican Party is their best chance to achieve their goal.

Bannon espouses his philosophy as “anti-elite” and expresses contempt for those elites supporting global capitalism and annually meeting at Davos. Yet, he supports elites who promote his right-wing populist vision—he is, himself, a multi-millionaire, and he promoted the presidency of a self-proclaimed billionaire with the aid of the billionaire Robert Mercer and his daughter Rebekah, and other billionaires and multi-millionaires.

Bannon rejects the liberal democratic concept of the United States of America as a lofty idea rather than a “blood and soil” nation. His radicalism is not new. At a book party held at his Capitol Hill townhouse in November 2013, he called himself a “Leninist,” elaborating: “Lenin wanted to destroy the State, and that is my goal too. I want to bring everything crashing down, and destroy all of today’s establishment.” ([Quoted](#) in *The Daily Beast*, June 22, 2016.) In an exchange of emails between Bannon and *Breitbart* reporter Matt Boyle on December 16, 2014, obtained by *The Daily Beast*, Bannon strategized with Boyle regarding how to “turn on the hate” and “burn this bitch down.” ([Quoted](#) in *The Daily Beast*, August 19, 2016.)

In 2014, Bannon addressed a conference on poverty hosted by the Human Dignity Institute at the Vatican. (A [transcript](#) of the address appears in the November 2016 article by Lester Feder for *BuzzFeed*.) Toward the end of the Q&A period—although he has elsewhere criticized Putin for running a kleptocracy—he expressed admiration for Vladimir Putin’s “standing up for traditional institutions” as well as for the man called “Putin’s Rasputin,” his advisor Aleksandr Dugin, the main promoter of a “Eurasianist” fascist philosophy. He observed that Dugin “harkens back to Julius Evola” and the “Traditionalist School” (more extreme than traditionalist conservatism, the Traditionalist School sees the Enlightenment and modernity as having corrupted mankind, according to Benjamin Teitelbaum in his 2020 book *War for Eternity*, which addresses Traditionalism in detail as well as its adherents, among them Bannon, Dugin, Evola, and others).

Dugin, [as reported by The New York Times](#), advocated a “genuine, true, radically revolutionary, and consistent fascist fascism” in his 1997 article “Fascism—Borderless and Red.” In his book, [The Foundations of Geopolitics](#) (1997), he laid out his Eurasianist philosophy, including recommendations “to provoke all forms of instability and separatism within the borders of the United States” and “to introduce geopolitical disorder...encouraging all kinds of separatism and

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ethnic, social and racial conflicts...thus destabilizing internal political processes in the US....[and] simultaneously to support isolationist tendencies in American politics.” Further, “The task of Moscow is to tear Europe away from the control of the US (NATO)...” In his later book, [The Fourth Political Theory](#) (2012; his first three political theories are capitalism, socialism, and fascism), Dugin says, “Liberalism is an absolute evil...Only a global crusade against the US, the West, globalization, and their political-ideological expression, liberalism, is capable of becoming an adequate response...The American empire should be destroyed. And, at one point, it will be.” In his vision, “The Western border of the Eurasianist civilization goes somewhat more East of the Western border of the Ukraine, making that newly-formulated government *a fortiori* fragile and not viable.” (As an aside, a repeated misrepresentation by Republicans is that the Obama administration only gave Ukraine “[MREs and blankets](#)” or “[pillows and sheets](#)” in their struggle against Russia—in reality, the Obama administration gave Ukraine a total of 230 armored Humvees plus more than \$75 million worth of equipment including unmanned remotely-controlled aircraft, counter-mortar radars, night vision devices, and medical supplies.)

In August, congratulatory messages flowed to Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenko from Russia’s Putin and the authoritarian leaders of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan after Lukashenko won a sham election that extended his 26-year long right-wing populist dictatorship. These leaders’ shared governing vision is the vision of Putin and Dugin, dedicated to the defeat of Western liberal democracy.

Julius Evola was admired by Benito Mussolini and the Fascists for his opposition to liberal democracy in Italy. Evola’s influence on the alt-right—when Bannon was executive chairman of Breitbart.com he declared it to be “the platform for the alt-right”—is acknowledged in the article titled “[An Establishment Conservative’s Guide to the Alt-Right](#)” by Allum Bokhari and Milo Yiannopoulos, which appeared at Breitbart.com in March 2016. Bokhari and Yiannopoulos quoted alt-right and white supremacist leader Richard B. Spencer as saying, “it means a tremendous amount” that Bannon, in his Vatican address, acknowledged Evola. (Spencer popularized the term “alt-right” at the website AlternativeRight.com, which he founded in 2010.) Among the contemporary influences on the alt-right cited by the authors are the Republican “paleoconservative movement rallied around the presidential campaigns of Pat Buchanan” and the French New Right.

Bokhari and Yiannopoulos conclude, after referencing social psychologist Jonathan Haidt’s 2012 book *The Righteous Mind*, “The conservative instinct, as described by Haidt, includes a preference for homogeneity over diversity, for stability over change, and for hierarchy over radical egalitarianism;” later adding that the alt-right’s leaders “would also argue that culture is inseparable from race.”

In his address to the Values Voter Summit, October 14, 2017, Bannon, as recounted [in an article and video](#) at Breitbart.com, declared “a season of war against the GOP establishment.” Bannon championed the Alabama Republican Senatorial primary victory of Alabama Judge Roy Moore (accused of sexual misconduct with underage girls in malls and ultimate loser to Democrat Doug Jones) and urged the Senate’s abolition of the filibuster to give more power to President Trump—who he also predicted would run for re-election in 2020 and receive 400 electoral votes.

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[As recounted by the \*Los Angeles Times\*](#), in his speech to the California Republican Party on October 20, 2017, in which he described himself as Trump’s “wingman outside,” regarding his professed program of “economic nationalism” Bannon said, “it’s not about your race, your color, your gender, your religion, your ethnicity, your sexual preference.” Yet, we know the people he supports are, like Richard Spencer, white supremacists who promote racism; like Donald Trump grope women; and, like Roy Moore, want to outlaw the right of Muslims to serve in Congress, outlaw homosexuality, and refuse to enforce same-sex marriage laws. In the same speech, he referred to Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin’s “middle-class tax cut,” which actually delivered disproportionately huge tax benefits to the richest 1 percent, while, according to the Congressional Budget Office, raising the federal debt over the next ten years by a projected \$1.9 trillion.

Christopher Wylie is the whistleblower who was the research director of Cambridge Analytica and author of the 2019 book *Mindf\*ck*, subtitled *Cambridge Analytica and the Plot to Break America*. He reveals that Steve Bannon, with his military experience, recognized that US and UK militaries used psychological operations (PSYOPS) cyber weaponry to target those vulnerable to appeals by Islamist terrorist groups. Through Cambridge Analytica, the company which he named and which he served as an officer, Bannon turned this cyber weaponry on American voters vulnerable to disinformation campaigns on behalf of the right-wing populist campaign of Trump.

Wylie recalls that Bannon, in their last conversation, said that to change society fundamentally, “you have to break everything.” Bannon’s right-wing populism is similar to the right-wing populism sweeping Western liberal democracies such as the UK (Cambridge Analytica worked with the pro-Brexit Leave.EU and Nigel Farage), France (the National Rally of Marine Le Pen), Italy (Lega Nord, of Matteo Salvini), Hungary (Fidesz, of Viktor Orban) and the Netherlands (the Dutch Party for Freedom, of Geert Wilders), as well as Israel, Russia, Turkey, Brazil, and India. All promote, in varying degrees, rejection of liberal democracy. Several of the European right-wing populist and neo-fascist movements are gathered under a Belgium-based umbrella organization “The Movement,” dedicated to promotion of right-wing populism globally, and of which Bannon assumed leadership. Bannon’s activities in The Movement are addressed by Teitelbaum in *War for Eternity* and in the 2019 Netflix documentary *The Brink*, covering Bannon’s actions to mobilize right-wing populist and neo-fascist elements in advance of the 2018 midterms (his efforts at that time are also addressed by Nico Hines in *The Daily Beast*—see [Inside Bannon’s Plan to Hijack Europe for the Far-Right](#)). Bannon has replaced his billionaire backers, the Mercers, who left him after release of Michael Wolff’s uncomplimentary book about Trump, *Fire and Fury*, with John Thornton, multimillionaire former CEO of Goldman Sachs; Blackwater (now Academi) CEO Erik Prince (brother of Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos); and Chinese exile billionaire Guo Wengui (aka Miles Kwok), who promised Bannon \$100 million for his organization efforts and a \$1 million annual salary, accommodating Bannon’s preference for flying in private jets and staying in five-star hotels.

Bannon stated, in an interview that accompanied the Munk debate, that the opportunity for Trump was created when “global elites” like liberal Democrats and their “Establishment” Republican allies broke trust with the middle class during the Great Recession of 2007-2008 and thereafter, as they bailed out Wall Street and the rich rather than the middle class who had bought homes that were being foreclosed upon. As observed previously, Bannon’s argument is another con. Republicans, with their reckless trickle-down economic policies, caused the Great Recession to be

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worse than it would have been absent those policies, and Wall Street bankers and the rich have long been allies of the Republican Party, which opposed aid Democrats proposed for homeowners owing more on their mortgages than the worth of their homes.

Bannon exhibited his rejection of liberal democratic values and institutions in the 2018 debate and is emphatic that, in his view, liberal democracy *has failed*. Its successor will be either populism of the left or right—regardless, both *rejecting liberal democracy in its entirety*. Bannon, here, commits the mistake of many of his fellow Republicans, projecting onto Democrats radicalism of the left as the Republicans have radicalized to the right. He makes two mistakes in doing so. First, the Democrats chose as their candidate in 2020 the more moderate Joe Biden rather than the social democrat Bernie Sanders. Second, Sanders' vision of social democracy is along the lines of Scandinavian nations such as Denmark and Sweden, liberal democracies with capitalist economies, albeit with extensive social safety nets. Biden and Sanders revere liberal democracy, while Bannon and Trump reject it.

Bannon's activities reveal that not only is the Russian military involved in spreading globally the right-wing populist ideals of Putin and Dugin, but they are joined in this effort by Americans prominent in the Trump 2016 presidential campaign. In addition to Bannon's role in promoting the Putin and Dugin goal of Brexit, former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort and his associate Rick Gates worked in the campaign of pro-Putin President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich and Manafort shared 2016 polling data with Russians, and Roger Stone coordinated with Julian Assange, whose website WikiLeaks published the Democratic emails hacked by Russians during the 2016 campaign.

Understanding the threat posed by Donald Trump, Steve Bannon, and the rest of the Republican Party to liberal democracy is necessary to save it for the United States, other liberal democracies of the West and the world, and people all over the world who aspire to live in a liberal democracy.

### **Right-Wing Populism Lacks Fascism's State-Sponsored Violence Against Opponents and Imperialism**

The actions of President Trump and the stated admiration of Steve Bannon for fascists beg the question of how right-wing populism differs from fascism. The major ideological differences between the right-wing populism of Donald Trump's Republican Party and fascism are that fascism promotes imperialism (the military conquest of other nations) and uses government to intimidate political enemies with arrests on made-up charges and violence against them ("political enemies" include political rivals and members of the press). The differences regarding the shared ideological elements are a matter of degree of implementation—thus, a second term of a Trump presidency will invite the movement of the United States rightward on the road toward fascism.

However, as observed above, Trump has on at least [two occasions](#)—once in an interview with Maria Bartiromo of Fox Business, and again, in an interview with Laura Ingraham of Fox News—expressed frustration that Attorney General Bill Barr has not prosecuted Barack Obama and Joe Biden for "lying to Congress" and "treason," without basis in truth, thus inviting political prosecution of his rivals—reminiscent of his leading "lock her up!" chants in the 2016 campaign.

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Also, classifying Russia as right-wing populist, as here, rather than fascist, is questionable in light of, as observed above, its invasions of its neighbors and annexing of Crimea, and its known use of made-up charges and violence against—and murder of—opponents in politics and the press. Perhaps with these actions (and Dugin’s ideology guiding it) Russia qualifies as fascist.

Numerous books describe the elements of fascist ideology; here the sources are the 1932 essay “[The Doctrine of Fascism](#),” by Benito Mussolini and Giovanni Gentile, and Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* (1925), and the actions of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Key elements fascism shares with the Republican right-wing ideology under Trump:

1. Both view classical liberalism is the enemy. Both ideologies support rigging elections; crony capitalism; restriction of First Amendment rights such as freedom of speech, press, religion, assembly, and petition; dictatorship instead of checked power; disrespect for knowledge, science, and truth; intolerance; inequality; and disregard of the rule of law.
2. Both promote Christianity as the religion of the nation. “The Doctrine of Fascism” promotes Catholicism and man’s spirituality. Point 24 of the Nazi Party’s 25 points manifesto issued at the founding of the party in 1920 provided that the Nazi Party is Christian but does not belong to any denomination. Adolf Hitler, in *Mein Kampf*, favorably references Christianity and God, and based his program to oppress Jews as “*fighting for the work of the Lord*” (emphasis original). The German military employed several references to the cross and the motto “*Gott mit Uns*”—“God with Us.”
3. Both are authoritarian right-wing movements demanding loyalty.
4. Both reject globalism and global alliances.
5. Both place faith in the masses.
6. Fascism promotes the maintenance of a militia. Mussolini’s militia was the Blackshirts; Hitler’s, the Brownshirts. Trump’s actions indicate he views the Department of Homeland Security as his informal militia.
7. Both tolerate corruption. A similarity between right-wing populism and fascism not claimed as a principle by either but nonetheless shared is the tolerance of both for corruption. Russian President Putin is viewed by at least one knowledgeable source as worth [\\$200 billion](#) due to his kickbacks received as President of Russia, and President Trump makes little effort to hide his milking of the federal government for personal gain, and his administration will end as one of the most corrupt in history.

While all these values conflict with liberal democracy, modern liberalism, and conservatism, they coexist comfortably in the cynical, nihilistic world of right-wing populism.

### **TRICKLE-DOWN NEVER WORKED BEFORE AND DID NOT WORK FOR TRUMP**

#### **Trickle-down has always been a con**

President Trump has continued the trickle-down policies of conservatism in right-wing populism. Those policies are tax cuts, especially skewed toward the rich, corporations and business generally; deregulation, consisting of removing regulations designed to protect the health and safety of workers and Americans generally; and cuts in spending on the safety net, upon which the middle



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class and poor rely. Trickle-down policies always upwardly redistribute income and wealth, creating bubbles that burst, resulting in recessions and depressions. They are the policies of the Gilded Age and the Roaring Twenties that led to the Great Depression; the Dot.com bubble that led to the crash in 2000, the real estate and financial bubble that led to the Great Recession; and the bubble since then, that is bursting now in the recession that began in February of this year as declared by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) and which will result in Wall Street falling from record stock market highs to a level more in line with Main Street.

Former President Barack Obama correctly identified trickle-down as a con when he observed of it in a campaign trail speech in December 2011, at a venue (Osawatomie, Kansas) visited 100 years before by Theodore Roosevelt, “It doesn’t work. It has never worked. It didn’t work when it was tried in the decade before the Great Depression. It’s not what led to the incredible postwar booms of the ‘50s and ‘60s. And it didn’t work when we tried it during the last decade. I mean, understand, it’s not as if we haven’t tried this theory.”

The Democrat Barack Obama is not alone among those who see trickle-down as a con. One respected [study](#) by the Tax Policy Center concluded that Trump’s trickle-down inspired Tax Cuts and Jobs Act bestowed on the richest 1 percent of Americans 83 percent of its benefits. Republican Senator Marco Rubio of Florida, in an interview with *The Economist* (April 26, 2018), echoed Barack Obama’s observations about trickle-down, regarding its application in the Trump administration’s Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, “There is still a lot of thinking on the right that if big corporations are happy, they’re going to take the money they’re saving and reinvest it in American workers. In fact they bought back shares, a few gave out bonuses; there’s no evidence whatsoever that the money’s been massively poured back into the American worker.”

*Numerous studies expose the con as well—the economy has historically done better under Democratic presidential administrations than under Republican.* Among the earliest of these was a report by Michael Kinsley, “[Politicians Lie, Numbers Don’t](#),” *Slate.com*, September 16, 2008. Several studies released in 2012 confirmed Kinsley’s conclusion (among them: Bob Drummond, “[Private Jobs Increase More with Democrats in White House](#),” *Bloomberg Business*, May 8, 2012; Richard Carroll, “[Democratic Presidents Are Better for the Economy](#),” *Bloomberg Business*, June 25, 2012; the 2012 book *Bulls, Bears, and the Ballot Box: How the Performance of OUR Presidents Has Impacted YOUR Wallet*, by Lew Goldfarb and Bob Deitrick; and the study by Ameriprise Financial, “Presidential Election 2012, released September 26, 2012.) *Salon.com* returned to the argument in late 2015 with an article by Sean McElwee, “[These 5 Charts Prove that the Economy Does Better under Democratic Presidents](#),” *Salon.com*, December 28, 2015. Among the findings addressed therein, the economy under Democratic presidents averaged: higher GDP growth, a lower unemployment rate, higher stock market returns, higher corporate profits, higher compensation growth, and higher productivity increases. Additionally, income growth is faster and more equal under Democratic presidents. A study by two Princeton University economists published in the *American Economic Review*, April 2016, also confirmed better economic performance under Democratic presidents (Alan S. Blinder and Mark W. Watson, “[Presidents and the Economy: An Econometric Exploration](#)”).

Finally, we have the word of President Trump himself that trickle-down is a con when, after signing into law the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act earlier in the day on December 22, 2017, he told a

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gathering of some of the wealthiest Americans at Mar-a-Lago, “You all just got a lot richer.” It should come as no surprise that trickle-down since 1980 has increased inequality while failing to make the national economy grow faster—for nearly two centuries in the South, trickle-down was essentially the economic philosophy that complemented the political philosophy of right-wing populism, the two combining to promote inequality and hold back economic development there.

**Even *before* COVID-19, the Trump Economy Was Outperformed by the Obama Economy**

President Trump, on February 11, 2020—before his incompetent management of the COVID-19 pandemic devastated the economy—bragged on Twitter, “Best USA economy in history!” He was correct, in one sense. Although the Trump economy was growing more slowly than the economies of his predecessors, the Trump Economy had not experienced a loss of jobs and a decline in GDP from the levels left it by the Obama Economy on January 20, 2017—*yet*.

However, even *before* COVID-19, the idea that the Trump Economy was booming was a con. Stock market performance, as measured by the S&P 500, was greater during the first three years of the Obama Economy than under the first three years of the Trump Economy, and job growth under the Obama Economy’s last three years exceeded by *1.52 million jobs* the job growth under the first three years of the Trump Economy. However, GDP growth was slightly better during Trump’s first three years in office—up 2.5 percent—versus Obama’s second term—during which GDP was up 2.3 percent. However, according to a [February 2020 study by Axios](#) of average annualized GDP growth, growth of the Trump Economy—even before COVID-19—was only the sixth best among all president’s terms since 1980 and, of course, the Trump Economy’s final GDP growth numbers will be substantially lower due to the recession that started in February 2020 and his administration’s gross mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As to Trump’s claim to have done the most of any president in history for African Americans by delivering the lowest unemployment rate in history for them—in reality, the Trump Economy only continued the steadily falling unemployment rate for African Americans [that began in 2011](#) during *President Obama’s first term*—a run of declining unemployment rates that *ended* with Trump’s colossal failure to manage the COVID-19 pandemic.

The precariousness of the Trump Economy as of Labor Day 2020 was well captured by CNBC’s Jim Cramer, channeling Shakespeare and Samuel Beckett on August 20<sup>th</sup> when he warned, “The S&P’s new highs are a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing about the hardship of millions of people on food stamps, or the millions about to be fired from service jobs, or the homeless, or the people who are just huddled at home waiting for the vaccine, which currently feels a lot liking waiting for Godot.”

**THE LIBERAL DEMOCRACY CONSTITUENCY**

In the liberal democratic vision, government policy, the market, and civil society all influence, and are influenced by, each other. In his book, *Statecraft As Soulcraft: What Government Does* (1983), the conservative commentator George Will presented a conservative vision of this interrelationship, but one very consistent with conservatism’s roots in liberal democracy.

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Will addressed both liberals “and those who call themselves conservatives” when he said, “Politics is more difficult than you think” (a departure from conservative and right-wing populist orthodoxy) and “there is more to a social system than can be presumed.” Will quoted Justice Felix Frankfurter: “Law is concerned with external behavior and not the inner life of man;” to which he responded: “The purpose of this book is to say why that proposition is radically wrong.” Will approvingly quoted the liberal Democrat Daniel Patrick Moynihan, former Senator from New York: “A purpose of politics is to facilitate, as much as is prudent, the existence of worthy passions and the achievement of worthy aims. It is to help persons want what they ought to want.” Moynihan’s quote was similar to another of his, perhaps more familiar: “The central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics, that determines the success of a society. The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself.”

As observed above, ideologies such as liberal democracy and right-wing populism are operating systems, but they are more than *political* operating systems—they are also *social* and *economic* operating systems, influencing all human interaction. These ideas from Will and Moynihan are consistent with the liberal democratic vision of using government to promote liberal democratic values with the utilitarian end of providing the greatest sum of happiness to the greatest number of people—to promote the truism of liberal democracy that we all do better when we *all* do better and, in accordance with our liberal democratic heritage and Constitution, return to seeking “a more perfect Union” and “to promote the General Welfare.”

It is commonly accepted that the country is divided politically along lines of pro-Trump versus anti-Trump, however, this division is underlain by a more profound one: the right-wing populism of the pro-Trump Republicans versus what is called herein the “liberal democracy constituency” of the Democrats, a substantial percentage of independents, and a group referred to, variously, as the “liberal-conservatives,” “Never Trumpers,” “McCain Conservatives,” and “McCain Republicans.”

Michael Tomasky correctly observed, in a 2017 [opinion piece](#) in *The New York Times*, that it is the Democrats’ responsibility to save liberal democracy from Donald Trump’s Republican Party, and here it is argued Democrats should frame the upcoming election in stark relief between preserving this nation as a liberal democracy versus capitulating to the creeping authoritarianism of Donald Trump’s Republican right-wing populism. However, the Democrats cannot do it on their own; they face the challenge of attracting independents and Republicans to their cause of defense of liberal democracy.

One perspective on this challenge is provided by Robert P. Saldin, University of Montana Professor of Political Science, and Steven M. Teles, Professor of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University, in [an article](#) in *The Atlantic* (May 2020), addressing the idea of their book, *Never Trump: The Revolt of the Conservative Elites* (2020). They identify a constituency in the Republican Party as a “liberal-conservative” faction, which embraces the principles of classical liberalism of the Enlightenment—the principles of liberal democracy. Saldin and Teles observe that this constituency shares the Republican Party with the more dominant group of Trump supporters (the right-wing populists identified herein), however, they speculate that moderate Democrats perhaps have more in common with these liberal-conservative Republicans than with other members of their own party.

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These Republicans do have more in common ideologically with moderate Democrats than they do with the right-wing populists that dominate their own party, however, the authors are mistaken in imagining that moderate Democrats do not share most of their values with other Democrats. So mistaken, they imagine these Republicans pulling to their side in the Republican Party moderate Democrats. These “liberal-conservative” Republicans are in the liberal democracy constituency, and they should be voting Democrat—voting for candidates who are in the only party the entirety of which embraces liberal democracy—as opposed to the Republican Party, the vast majority of the members of which embrace the right-wing populism waging war against liberal democracy.

Along similar lines, Perry Bacon Jr., in [“How ‘Never Trumpers’ Crashed the Democratic Party,”](#) at FiveThirtyEight.com, addresses the book by Saldin and Teles. The article is outstanding for its succinct presentation of its extensive research. Based on the methodology that Bacon explains, there may be as much as 10 percent of the electorate consisting of Never Trumpers—a group he defines as including not only those Republican-and Republican-leaning voters who refused to vote for Trump in 2016 but also those who did vote for Trump then, but would not now.

Admittedly, 10 percent is not a big number. However, from the perspective of a closely divided nation, in which the last election was decided by fewer than 78,000 votes across just three states, this is a big deal. Such a big deal, in fact, that the widely accepted list of six battleground states should expand to ten: to Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, North Carolina, Florida, and Arizona should be added Texas, Georgia, Ohio, and Iowa, as polling now shows.

A final turn on this same theme is that of author and *The Nation* contributor Andrew Levison’s use of the terms “McCain Conservatives” and “McCain Republicans” to describe about one-third of Republicans who are “ambivalent or reluctant Trump supporters” offended by Trump’s “deeply corrupt character,” “stunning lack of patriotism and support for the American system of government,” and “fundamental lack of decency,” illustrated by his disrespectfulness toward John McCain. Levison presents his case [in a memo](#) for *The Democratic Strategist*.

Instead of a liberal-conservative/Never Trumper/McCain Conservative/McCain Republican perspective based on an aversion to the *personality* of Donald Trump, herein it is proposed that there is an as-yet unrecognized liberal democracy constituency moved more by aversion to the Republican Party’s right-wing populist *ideology* under Donald Trump.

This liberal democracy constituency consists of Democrats, independents, and current and former Republicans—many of whom still call themselves “conservatives” (they might also be called “Establishment Republicans”). Many of this last group, as could be seen from polling results after the election of 2018 and the 2020 primaries, are joining with Democrats in defending liberal democracy. Many of them are college-educated, upper middle class, and suburban voters, however, what unites them with Democrats more than education, income, or geography is their shared love of the ideology of liberal democracy, although they may not even recognize it. They do have at least a vague understanding that Donald Trump, campaigning on and governing according to his corrupted vision, has abandoned conservatism, the philosophy with which they were comfortable, by extending it into right-wing populism and rejection of liberal democracy.

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To all the members of this liberal democracy constituency, sharing the epiphany that the Republican Party has, as it abandoned conservatism, abandoned commitment to the values and institutions of liberal democracy: If you are waiting for an invitation, *please consider this your invitation* to add your voice, using whatever platform you have, to join the defense of liberal democracy; to *vote Democrat on November 3<sup>rd</sup>*; and, if you are not already a member, please join the Democratic Party, the only party fighting for liberal democracy. If you are a Republican, know that you are not abandoning the Republican Party. *The Republican Party has already abandoned you*, as it abandoned conservatism, and conservatism's support for liberal democracy, in exchange for right-wing populism dedicated to destroying liberal democracy.

It is up to us now to defend the United States of America and its liberal democratic values and institutions—and thereby to restore the American Dream.