

Trumpism

by Alexander Reid Ross



The following pieces were written by Alexander Reid Ross and originally published as a semi-regular column between November 2015 and April 2016 on It's Going Down.

"Rethinking Tactics & Strategies" features contributions from Ben Jones.

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RETHINKING TACTICS AND STRATEGIES

I

Trump The Populist

Matthew Lyons's recent piece *On Trump, Fascism, and Stale Social Science* on the blog Three Way Fight condemns the stream of reports linking current Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump to fascism. Joining with Chip Berlet, who published a similar piece in *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting* (FAIR), Lyons declares that Trump is a right-wing populist, not a fascist, per se. For those of a different opinion, Lyons reserves blunt reproach, accusing them in the title of "Stale Social Science." Since he links to my article, "Trump the Fascist," published in *Counterpunch* on the same day David Duke commended the Don, I find his article merits response.

Firstly, my article's title is a broad stroke, which perhaps may have undermined a careful reading of the actual article, itself. In the article, I note that Trump's campaign has presented "the ugly face of fascism in the US"—a relatively uncontroversial claim given the amount of neo-fascists who make up his base. My conclusion is that Trump is a manifestation of the ideology of Americanism, which I position as developing from the merger of old-school, Klan-style US conservatism with the fascist America Firsters and anti-interventionists during the 1930s.

I agree with Lyons and Berlet, co-authors of the straight-forward and righteous work, *Right Wing Populism in America*, that the Don is a populist. In my own article, which Lyons cites, I use Cas Mudde's definition of the "populist radical right party" to tackle a general definition of Trump's ideology, inclusive of authoritarianism, populism, and nativism. Berlet seems to agree with me, bringing in precisely the same scholarly description (although he does not mention my article).

To define Trump in the current of Americanism, however, I use Roger Griffin's generic formula of fascism: palingenetic ultranationalism. In other words, Trump maintains a kind of ultranationalist platform that rejects in certain ways the present nationalist condition, and seeks a rebirth of a "new man" based on the formulations of historical myths. These myths include the unreconstructed US of the Klan's dreams and our nightmares, evoked through an anti-democratic propaganda campaign against the 14th Amendment.

Berlet and Lyons position Trump closer to "neo-populism," the "radical right," or "authoritarian" populists (respectively). Berlet lists Zhirinovskiy in Russia and the Danish People's Party, and they both list Jean-Marie Le Pen.

Other journalists who have made this comparison to Le Pen include Ishaan Tharoor and Cas Mudde with the *Washington Post*, Paul Vale with the *Huffington Post*, Jake Flanagan with *Quartz*, Bernie Quigley with *The Hill*, and even Anne Deysine with the French mainstay *Le Figaro*. However, given all the comparisons to Zhirinovskiy and Le Pen, it seems awkward that such harsh words would be reserved for those likening “Trumpism” to fascism.

For his part, Zhirinovskiy was called the “Russian Hitler” by *Bild*, and expert Stephen Sheffield describes his platform as “a nationalist and imperialist ideology of a composite liberal-fascist character.” Le Pen, himself, was not only a former newspaper vendor for pro-Nazi Action Française during WWII, but an anti-communist street fighter, and in the 1960s even owned a publishing house that hawked Nazi memorabilia, speeches, records, etc. Le Pen’s party, Front National (FN), was originally founded by a core neo-fascist groupuscule called New Order (ON), which attempted to develop in the early 1970s an alternative to both “Social Movement” Strasserism and neo-fascist, Evola-inspired terrorism. The ON decided to create a populist political party, which they called the “National Front,” in order to attract conservatives to their fascist/neo-fascist idea by focusing on the common fight against immigration. Quite literally, Le Pen’s FN was founded by a front group started by fascists, and its numerous international imitations, whether consciously or unconsciously, repeat the same fascist strategy. Scholar David Renton has no problem calling Le Pen’s FN a fascist group.

As Le Pen rose through the ranks of the FN but failed to gain electoral success, members of the ON began an internal struggle to remove him. His apartment was bombed, and then in what some have indicated was a reprisal, his main opponent in the FN, François Duprat, an important fascist, met his own violent death in a car bomb that also paralyzed his wife. With Le Pen securely in the lead, the FN developed successful intersections with the Nouvelle Droite, a crew of neo-fascist intellectuals, which modified their leadership and ideology throughout the 1980s and 90s (although they also have their serious disagreements). Among Le Pen’s most famous aphorisms is his promise to “bring together the fasces of our national forces so that the voice of France is heard once more, strong and free.” As the FN marches through electoral victory after electoral victory, the quaint, cozy notion that Trump is simply one of their types does little to comfort a sense of fascism on the move.

Just as it was not uncommon for leftists to denounce the so-called “Popular Front” policy developed by the Comintern in 1935 as “Stalinist”, due to the fact that it was devised as Stalin’s principle strategy, for a long time,

build together. People are rising up against the oligarchy, represented in the real estate mogul who controls the land, the history of Americanism that he represents, and its joint roots in slavery, genocide, fascism, and the Red Scare; in the Klan and the police; the mines and the prisons.

leading Hitler to create his hall security force, which would develop into the paramilitary Sturmabteilung (SA). The militant opposition congealed under Social Democrat leadership as the Reichsbanner and the Iron Front, under the Communist's Red Front and in the Ruhr, the Anarcho-Syndicalist Free Union of German Workers. In Austria, it was the Schutzbund who would end up fighting a bloody civil war against the fascist Heimwehr in 1934. The difference was not made by the refusal to fight, but by the fact that the SA and other various paramilitary groups of the "Patriotic movement" were equipped and protected by the German Reichswehr (army) in accordance with the policies of Social Democrat Gustave Noske, and given a free pass by local officials in Bavaria (particularly Franconia) and elsewhere.

The line about destroying Trump's candidacy by breaking up his rallies is important, but it's also inflated unless there is a focus on defensive measures. In particular, given Trump's prediction of riots if he is rejected by the Republican National Convention, there is every reason to assemble for local, autonomous self-defense.

It is wrong to insist that the escalation of antifascist tactics that we have seen will lead necessarily to an escalation on the right—but that does not mean we should not expect such an escalation to emerge. We must maintain pressure on Trump's campaign, because of the accumulation of capital and oppression that he symbolizes, while also taking defensive measures. Even though neo-conservatives like William Krystal are rallying behind Clinton as she embraces the legacy of Ronald Reagan and George Bush, Jr., Trump's "anti-establishment" populism still makes him a threat—particularly after the election should he lose.

If Trump is dog-whistling "riot" to his supporters in the primaries, imagine what he would be saying if nominated for president. Trump's support within the Republican Party is not even close to a majority, and it is possible that much of the GOP would not vote for him if he is nominated. However, if the Republican Party loses a third straight time—this time to a female establishment politician—there is the further possibility of the Party fracturing into increasingly militant groups prepared to fight with increased vitriol, making the expansion of the militia movement after Bill Clinton and Obama's elections look like small potatoes.

Matthew Lyons is right to state that part of a strategy to defeat not just Trump but radical right wing populism is giving "people better ways to channel that rage, radical alternatives that speak to their reality." Passivity is impossible. There is potential. There is possibility. There is a future we can

it was not uncommon to denounce the "National Front" as a fascist organization using precisely the same logic. Cas Mudde seems to point to the change in recent years in a quotation cited by Berlet: "The terms neo-Nazism and to a lesser extent neo-fascism are now used exclusively for parties and groups that explicitly state a desire to restore the Third Reich (in the case of neo-fascism the Italian Social Republic) or quote historical National Socialism (fascism) as their ideological influence." Indeed, the creation of a clear, crisp distinction between "radical right" or authoritarian populist parties like the FN and neo-fascism is somewhat recent. In 1996, for instance, one of the main thinkers in the modern school of "fascist studies," Roger Eatwell, had no problem discussing Berlusconi's Forza Italia!, Le Pen's FN, the British NF, and Germany's Republicans in relation to post-war fascism. In 2002, J Sakai could write about "new populist neo-fascists in the wealthy imperialist metropolis, such as Jorg Haider in Austria or the rapidly growing British National Party (BNP)."

Jorg Haider's FPÖ, the BNP, and Greece's Golden Dawn—all called "radical right populist parties" by Cas Mudde—have been implicated in recent "conservative revolution" conferences with known fascist organizations like Roberto Fiore's Forza Nuova, the Romanian New Right, the Polish Falange, and a number of other insidious vectors. This isn't just because they have similar aims, but because they are populist parties established by fascists with a fascist strategy.

The founder of the FPÖ, Anton Reinthaller was an official in the Nazi Party of Austria before Anschluss, and then made a come-back, serving in the Reichstag. The BNP was created by John Tyndall, who had previously co-founded the National Socialist Movement in England. The Golden Dawn was formed out of a confluence of military coupsters and fascists, has a kind of a swastika on their flag, sings a version of the Nazi Horst Wessel anthem, and has been known to shout "Heil Hitler" in Greek parliament. Yet the analytical field is confused by their formation of populist fronts, as well as the switch in rhetoric toward "conservative/national revolutionaries." We should not be fooled, however. Much if not most of the European populist radical right is firmly rooted in fascist strategy, and it isn't going anywhere.

In his article, Lyons speaks out against the content of the shift in analysis where fascism has come to be delimited so strictly, stating that it obstructs an understanding of changing forms and discourses of fascism. He's right. The disfunction in today's approach comes from a period of transformation during the 1970s and the so-called "Historians' Debate" (*Historikerstreit*) of 1987, during which some prominent scholars of fascism began to promote

revisionist theories on the Holocaust while significantly changing and delimiting the way fascism was perceived. While the idea of revisionism would be strictly rejected by the entire field of “fascism studies,” the *Historikerstreit* had an important conservatist affect, forcing the discourse more generally away from its prior threshold on the left.

Some showed this movement more than others. The great historian Stanley Payne, for instance, while a brilliant scholar, would end up denying that Nazi Germany was actually fascist. If we are to claim that Hitler’s Germany was merely an issuance of populist radical right or authoritarian right as thematically and historically distinct from fascism, we are avoiding historical reality and preparing to make historic mistakes. The strategy of the National Front was developed in Spain by the fascist José Antonio shortly before the Civil War, and it should come as no surprise that Payne also cannot describe the Spanish national front that came to power through Franco as fascist.

This raises a question. If a fascist group creates a populist part explicitly to distance itself from accusations of fascism—as with the FN, National Front, and so on—should it be treated as a totally distinct phenomenon from fascism? Should it be treated as totally fascist? Or, is it more important to note the ways in which the two intersect on a generic level?

Mudde’s models of the “populist radical right” and “neo-fascist” should be amended to allow for a general understanding of how the former in many cases emerged from the latter in a deliberate attempt to disassociate from the negative connotations of fascism. While the comparisons to the radical right groups like the FN should raise alarm bells immediately, Trump’s candidacy should also be analyzed in real terms of the fascist/neo-fascist trends of US history.

than a navigation of everyday political nuances and categories. “Either protest everything at once, or whatever your protesting is going to help all the other things,” may seem like a powerful claim, but in reality, it is totalizing. What if people who stood against Trump didn’t vote for someone else, but joined in resistance at a local level?

A Transformative Movement?

From Clinton or Bush to Gore or Bush and eight years deep into Obama only to return to Clinton, more and more people are refusing to support the electoral system of the United States of America. There has not been in our lifetime a point where the US electoral system has been so discredited. Rather than stand by the wayside, there is wisdom in looking at the growing movement in its developing autonomous power, and recognizing intersections of collective liberation.

The trouncing of Clinton in Washington points to a kind of “new Washington consensus.” The first Washington Consensus formed the basis for neoliberalism in the 1970s—deregulation, austerity, privatization. In the state that gave us Starbucks, the symbol of Clinton-era neoliberalism, the old Washington Consensus has been rejected in favor of a social democratic alternative. However, the idealism surrounding Sanders outstretches possibility in electoral politics, and his candidacy remains a longshot with odds stacked against him. Claims that Sanders could “lead a political revolution,” through a post-election strategy should be thrown out entirely. Sanders’s politics are not revolutionary whatsoever.

That’s the real post-election strategy, and it can be better actuated by demonstrating against a candidate who provides a providential intersection around which many different groups can organize autonomously for collective liberation than demonstrating in favor of a “revolutionary leader” who represents a political bailout for a discredited system.

Yet there is a fatal flaw in our thinking if we do not recognize crucial defensive measures that must be taken, along with demonstrating against Trump. One hears a lot about “Death to the Klan” when three people are stabbed by a Klansman, but there is little perspective over the fact that the slogan itself was raised during an unsuccessful campaign that led to the murders of five anti-Klan protestors in 1979. Similarly, we hear much about how Hitler claimed that the only thing that might have stopped him would have been counter-protesters breaking up his meetings. Yet there is little understanding of the fact that such protesters did exist in numbers. Thousands organized to break up Nazi meetings in the years between 1919 and 1923,

28th: Small demonstration outside Madison rally.

29th: Interruptions and fighting at Radford rally.

March

3rd: Repeated interruptions and fighting at Louisville rally.

4th: Frequent interruptions at New Orleans rally.

5th: Frequent interruptions at Orlando rally.

7th: Multiple interruptions at Concord rally.

9th: Multiple interruptions at Fayetteville rally with protests outside.

11th: Interruptions and fighting at St. Louis event.

11th: Fighting at cancelled Chicago rally followed by clashes with the police in the street.

12th: Stage stormed by protester during Dayton rally.

13th: Repeated interruptions and fighting at Kansas City rally.

15th: Protests outside West Chester rally.

19th: Blockade outside of Fountain Hills rally.

19th: Fighting at Salt Lake City rally.

There has also been extensive vandalism at Trump's campaign offices, graffiti and wheatpastes, as well as other autonomous actions that have no formal agents or organizations. Trump has recently resumed touring after his longest break since Christmas, likely as a result of the confrontations. It's certainly a welcome departure, but it also helps give more perspective on what these networks could accomplish if they stuck together without Trump to militate against.

These actions are generally not part of a coordinated effort to undermine political institutions—although they could possibly provide an interesting model for autonomous, spontaneous organizing. What needs to happen is to expand this beyond a campaign against a candidate, but what he represents—a position of power that most assuredly other candidates would fill. Cruz could be even worse than Trump—the focus on Trump for the time being is a providential unifying point, but there are much deeper issues at play that would move on to other candidates with the same message.

Telling people who to vote for or not vote for typically offers little in terms of rewards. Such ideology policing tends to come off as pedantic. The process is de-legitimized, and there is no stress on radicals to point people to that frustration. The point is rather to redirect that anger toward anti-systemic action.

Rejection of Republican politics is still not “sheepdogging” for the Democrats or for social democracy, for that matter. Politics is less a zero-sum game

II

The Making Of An American Fascist

On a fast-pace, FOX News talk show discussing the recent beating of a Black Lives Matter protestor at a Trump rally, the presidential hopeful phoned in with an ambivalent tone. First contemplating the host's term “roughed up,” the Don returned to the notion with more effrontery: “maybe he should'a been roughed up.”

Activists around the world signaled despair at the thought that the local violence against a Black Lives Matter protestor would translate to open season against protestors across the US. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it did, in Minneapolis, where white supremacists fired on a peaceful gathering of Black Lives Matter demonstrators, sending five to the hospital. According to reports, before they fired the shots, the culprits yelled, “Race war and Trump 2016!” Trump's parallel non-response came in the form of a tweet—a meme with false information about “black-on-white crime” traceable to a neo-Nazi handle.

Despite the fact that even mainstream media sites and even conservative commentators have begun to note the proximities between Trump's ideology and fascism, some more academic commentators still seem to be on the fence. One article states that describing Trump as a fascist “obscures the fact that Trump's demagogic hate-mongering is deeply rooted in mainstream U.S. politics.” Some have even gone as far back as the 19th Century “Know Nothings” to identify Trump's style.

We have seen Trump's recent statements to the effect of issuing special IDs (perhaps badges?) to Muslims in the US and shutting down “certain” Mosques reflected in the opportunism of Republicans refusing Syrian refugees. Both seemed to land symbolically too close to the anniversary of the US's rejection of the St. Louis carrying Jews fleeing from Nazi Germany, with the US Holocaust Museum pointedly condemning the treatment of Syrian refugees. We could further note that, according to his ex-wife, Trump used to read from a book of Hitler's speeches, *My New Order*, kept in a cabinet near his bedside. There are also reports that when he visits, Trump's cousin “clicks his heels and says, ‘Heil Hitler.’”

While it is very useful to observe racist tendencies in the US and Europe before fascism (and even alongside it), I would argue for an alternative viewpoint. Returning to the 19th Century is provocative, but we would do well to identify the important influence fascism has had on the US (and vice-ver-

sa) not just as a detail, but as a significant milestone. Trump's chatter belongs just as much in the fictional Hotel Wessex at the opening of Sinclair Lewis's 1935 warning of American fascism, *It Can't Happen Here*, as it does in his own mega-hotels.

All in the Family

As is well-known, the Don's father, Fred Trump, likely took part in the Klan's militant street activity during the 1920s, which many would suggest represents a simple, US-American phenomenon. In fact, the Klan had heavy cross over with the American Legion, the leader of which announced in 1923, "Do not forget that the Fascisti are to Italy what the American Legion is to the United States" (don't worry, we won't). Just over a decade later, the Klan would join a united paramilitary organization called the Storm Troops with the corporate-funded Silver Shirts, the German American Bund (the Nazi Party in the US at the time), the Black Legion, and other racist neo-fascist groups. While the Klan is distinctly US-originated, by the end of the 1930s, they were intertwined with the US's homegrown Nazis, and by the 1970s were inextricably united with David Duke's brand of neo-fascism.

It wasn't just the Klan, though. In 1976, correspondence between J Edgar Hoover and his "pen-pal" Nazis running Interpol during the late-1930s emerged, showing that Hoover's autographed picture hung on the wall of Interpol's offices in Nazi Berlin, and he remained on good terms with Nazi high officials until three days before Pearl Harbor. He became Interpol vice president in 1946, and refused to use his power to incarcerate Nazis war criminals on the run. Instead, through the State Department, the OSS, and FBI, the US brought Nazi scientists to the US, and helped coordinate the escape of numerous high ranking Nazis. To view neo-fascism as foreign to US groups like the Klan and neo-Confederate organizations is to ignore how it was absorbed in this country and to what utility.

The Klan has never been the sole or even principle point of intersection for US fascism; formal, official Americanism has always been the lynchpin. During the 1920s, the US's great industrial and finance moguls, from Hearst, Ford, Du Pont, and GM to the house of JP Morgan, Jr., went fascist, and big business groups like the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), a leading purveyor of Americanist propaganda, joined them. In 1923, after Mussolini's March on Rome, the counsel of NAM delivered a speech to their convention called il Duce an "extreme leader, not only converted by the lightning stroke of intelligence and falling from his error like Saul of Tarsus from his horse, but leading through the streets of a reunited

Page May, an organizer with #ByeAnita which took a leading role in Chicago's anti-Trump shut-down, said that anti-Tump is an "opportunity to connect the dots between what's happening here locally in Chicago and particularly the state's attorney position, and how that's connected to the national politics of the moment." The organizers galvanized national rejection of Trump to demonstrate against incumbent Anita Alvarez, who has neglected to act on the police murder of Dante Servin and other acts of police violence. Another organizer, Veronica Morris Moore reflected on the national-to-local rally, commenting, "We tied the fascist politics all into one." One of our tasks as revolutionaries, is to push for a critique of the State as a totality of violence, and to not rely on reformist or electoral strategies.

To gain some perspective about the kind of movement we're talking about, here's a non-exhaustive list of anti-Trump Actions:

2015

June 29th: About 100 protesters outside Chicago rally.

October 23rd: Repeatedly interrupted at Miami rally.

November 18th: Sporadic interruptions at Worcester rally.

December 4th: Ten interruptions at Raleigh rally.

December 11th: About a dozen protesters interrupt NYC event.

December 14th: Interruptions and fighting at Las Vegas rally.

January 2016

4th: Frequent interruptions at Lowell rally.

8th: Multiple disruptions at Burlington rally in addition to a separate anti-Trump demonstration in the city.

13th: Small protest outside Pensacola rally.

20th: Tulsa rally interrupted with a banner.

27th: Pelted with tomatoes at Iowa City rally.

28th: Interruption at Des Moines event.

February

1st: Pro- and anti-Trump rallies in Seattle.

7th: Students protest outside Plymouth rally.

14th: Hundreds of protesters outside Tampa rally.

18th: Interruption and fighting at Augusta rally.

19th: Myrtle Beach rally interrupted with a banner.

19th: Anti-Trump piñata bash outside Houston debate.

22nd: Lights are cut during Atlanta rally.

23rd: Disruptions at Las Vegas rally.

23rd: Pickets outside of Trump hotels in Las Vegas.

Finale

Rethinking Strategies & Tactics

If you want to bring death to the Klan don't talk about it. If you want to bring death to the Klan then organize and bring death to the Klan.

- Alfred "Skip" Robinson

Actions against Trump have increased in intensity and pace since it began last year. Listing the litany of reasons for this would be virtually impossible. His lies veiled as politics; his actual history and network; his unapologetic reception of David Duke's support; his Mussolini reference, taken up by a pro-Trump militia; his threats of riots and attacks.

The two dominant alternatives to Trump seem equally terrible. Ted Cruz's call for patrols in Muslim neighborhoods evokes the legacy of white crosses, and is so racist that even the NYPD rebuked him. Hillary Clinton was recently endorsed by the California Invisible Empire Klan Grand Dragon.

However, Trump's own applause for land grabs and his economic background as a high-rolling speculator indicate another reason for opposition. Trump's father, Fred Trump, made his fortune first building single family homes during the Depression in Brooklyn, and then apartments during the boom following WWII. When Trump took over the family business in the 1970s, he shifted focus to luxury residences and casinos—symbols of the exploits of capital. He has gone through bankruptcy four times, most recently in 2008, when he was rescued by the financial crash through a clause in his contract excepting an "act of God" (and yes, Trump did actually argue publicly that the housing market crash was caused by God).

While people were evicted from those single-family homes and apartments build by his father, Trump continued to live the high-life, with the conspicuous consumption of his hotels, casinos, and golf courses serving as landmarks of the 1%.

Chip Berlet is correct in strategizing a defensive movement by "organizing now to protect the people being demonized and scapegoated as targets of White rage," and calling for people to "build broad and diverse local coalitions that tactically address local issues while strategically linking them to national struggles." This involves acting within the evolving social movements against white supremacy, and with smaller, local, and often-overlooked formations that focus on specific issues, pushing to exit the radical and activist bubble.

country a great body of citizens," liberating Italy from "the blighting hand of radical socialism."

Fascism and the Red Scare

Along with the NAM, the America First Committee, founded by publishing magnate Henry Regnery, warned that intervention in WWII would be traumatic to the US's small and medium-sized manufacturers, insisting that the US maintain neutrality. One of NAM's most well-regarded propagandists was a columnist named George Sokolsky, who famous anti-fascist journalist George Seldes aptly called an "agent [of] fascist [interests]." By the time the US entered the War, the NAM had abandoned its pro-fascist position, but it maintained the same spirit and ideology, shifting the focus to anti-communism.

While the American Legion's Americanist Committee spurred the anti-communist movement toward McCarthy's show trials, Sokolsky played the part of "clearance man" for an "American Fascisti" that now enforced the Black List in Hollywood. Senator McCarthy attempted to stay clear of associations with fascism. However, by 1948, McCarthy's awkward enthusiasm for the liberation of German POWs had become impossible to hide, as he dove into the Malmedy war crimes case along with Regnery and Rudolf Aschenauer, a high ranking official of the Socialist Reich's Party (the heir of the Nazi Party), which helped to derail denazification in Europe.

McCarthy also developed a relationship with the well-known fascist agent Francis Parker Yockey on his trips to Germany, according to the latter's friend John Anthony Gannon, and a letter obtained by the FBI, penned in 1952, reveals that McCarthy went so far as to ask Yockey to ghost write a speech for him. The manuscript, "America's Two Ways of Waging War," also intercepted by the FBI, concludes in the following fashion: "We shall liberate our land from the domination of traitors and then, by the help of the Almighty God, we shall restore the word America to its old meaning in the world before all nations. By the deluge of our votes, by the irresistible storm of our organized protest, we shall sweep America clear of its inner enemies and onward to its God-given Destiny."

Yockey's tailor-made mission to make America great again was likely going to be unfurled at a rally planned later that year for which McCarthy was a keynote, hosted by the fascist successor to the German American Bund and "floor managed" by infamous Nazi H. Keith Thompson. After negative press in *The Daily Compass* and *The New York Post*, McCarthy pulled out.

Americanism Comes to the Don

Perhaps partly as a form of PR, McCarthy enlisted a hot, young, Jewish columnist and lawyer named Roy Cohn as his chief prosecutor for the Red Scare. After illegally convincing judge Irving Kaufman to hand down sentences of execution to Julius and Ethel Rosenberg while acting as a prosecutor in the notorious anti-communist espionage case, Cohn found his way to McCarthy through Sokolsky, who he considered his father figure. One of the more well-funded circles that Cohn gained credibility by helping to establish was the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), an anti-communist youth group notorious for singing fascist hymns.

The master of national sleaze, Cohn's rancor was particularly vitriolic toward Jews. According to Robert Sherrill writing in *The Nation*, "[Cohn] spent a great deal of his life tormenting Jews to show that, down deep, he could be just as anti-Semitic as the most bigoted WASP." After Cohen went on what one historian calls a "book-burning" romp through Europe with his semi-secret boyfriend, McCarthy started to feel the heat. When Cohn's boyfriend was drafted into the army, his tactics of pulling strings, bribing, and blackmailing backfired, and McCarthy found himself in a full-scale war with the Army, leading to the collapse of McCarthyism.

In the aftermath, McCarthy would drink himself into a death spiral, and some of the leadership of the NAM, including leader James O Welch, moved on to spearhead the John Birch Society, which amassed a sizable constituency of fascists, masking their anti-Semitism in cryptic anti-communist conspiracy theories. In the words of Chip Berlet and Matthew Lyons's impeccable book, *Right Wing Populism in America*, "it was at the NAM, during the height of the Red Menace hysteria, that Welch honed his Americanist philosophy." In 1964, the Birchers threw most of their influence behind Barry Goldwater, whose campaign was jumpstarted by a German *émigré* turned New York real estate entrepreneur named Fred Trump.

Although even Richard Nixon and Pat Buchanan felt that Goldwater went too far at times, his campaign established "the Southern strategy." Like Cohn and Sokolsky, the Birchers and Goldwater shared what Cohn's biographer von Hoffman calls, somewhat tepidly, an "apparent willingness to accommodate himself to European fascism." As time went on, Cohn would sink into a role as one of the Birchers' leading intelligence men along with members of La Rouché's network in what would later become known as the Council for Inter-American Security (CIS), infamous for snooping on the Committee in Solidarity for the People of El Salvador (CISPES). By the onset of the

against the lunacy of the Tea Party and worse.

Whatever the outcome, it would appear that the organizers of protests against both Democratic and Republican National Conventions will have their hands full. For the next installment of this column, Ben Jones has promised to rejoin me for an analysis of the campaigns against Trump thus far, and the potentials for galvanizing both disillusioned Sandernistas and anti-Trumpists for a radical alternative in the streets.

of violence.

In other works, like the 2010 book *Over the Cliff* (with John Amato), Neiwert shows how right-wing populist movements percolate a grassroots base from foundation funding and media representation that garners public support by “wrapping racial ignorance and blind hypocrisy in the trappings of an ‘honest racial discussion’ that only reinforces hoary stereotypes of white nationalism.”

There had been attempts at filling the vacuum of power in the white nationalist movement—first by David Duke under the Populist Party, then by Bo Gritz, his heir apparent, whose failure at populism and romantic turbulence led to a self-inflicted bullet wound that just missed his heart. Pat Buchanan seemed poised to lead the white nationalist movement in 2000 after beating out the Trumpster in a race orchestrated by Roger Stone to undermine Ross Perot’s grip on the Reform Party, but Bush, Jr., stole his luggage.

The fact is that the momentum of the white nationalist movement has not been stronger since George Wallace in 1968, and they found their mouthpiece in Trump. Ted Cruz is something of a different phenomenon. Far from a New York elitist who considers himself disenfranchised and openly calls for the revocation of the 14th Amendment in a way that pricks the ears of the sovereign citizens’ “organic citizens” dogma, Cruz projects the image of a homely middle-class Texas boy whose smarmy attitude points more to Nixon’s Southern Strategy than to out-elite populism.

For sure, Cruz is an opportunist—that’s what his Tea Party record shows. By jumping into the Congressional healthcare feud, undermining the Republican Party’s establishment, and galvanizing radical right resentment against Washington politics, Cruz dug himself a niche for which he is not well loved. Yet Cruz’s politics remain ensconced in the extremes of the Republican Party, and the fact that the Republican race is dominated by the choice between him and Trump shows the depth of that parafascist pathology that Neiwert writes about.

The difference between Trump and Cruz is really the difference between a strong leader who could bind parafascist elements together toward a larger goal, on one hand, and a severely unpopular man who would simply serve as a place holder for a number of competing interests who have to contend with a constantly radicalizing base, on the other. Either way, it would appear that the Republicans’ primary race has brought the party further to the brink of self-destructive madness. And Bernie’s campaign trail may likely be coming to an end, in which case Hillary Clinton stand as the only contestant

1970s, Cohn’s public life involved representation of mobsters, Studio 51, and a certain élite. In these circles, at a place for Manhattan high rollers called Le Club, Cohn met Fred Trump’s son, Donald.

With Roy Cohn, Down and Dirty

The two must have gotten along swimmingly, because Cohn became Trump’s mentor, guiding him through lawsuits and counter-lawsuits as his business grew. It was Cohn who told the young Don to countersue after being charged with discriminating against black people in 1973—a policy perhaps incurred from his father’s era. Although he lost the countersuit, Trump would revolutionize his dad’s old business into a lavish, luxurious, and extremely modern enterprise. The posterboy of the highflying modernism of the 1980s, Trump outfitted his hotels and casinos with sumptuous furnishings and the latest in technology. He became a Bloom County cartoon character for some, a symbol of the “new man” of the 1980s for others. Either way, he represented a morally bankrupt class that never stepped foot on a tightrope that didn’t have a golden safety net beneath it.

During his relationship with the *ne plus ultra* of yuppie playboys, Cohn also insisted on a reputedly conservative public profile. By the early 80s, he even claimed to reject the John Birch Society, even as he joined the advisory board of the Western Goals Foundation, a private intelligence group organized by leading Birchers that openly worked with Nazis like Hitler’s unreconstructed spy chief, Reinhard Gehlen, who had been rescued from war crimes trials by the CIA’s first chief, Allen Dulles, in order to help coordinate clandestine anti-communist resistance. By the mid-1980s, Western Goals had become embroiled in the Iran-Contra scandal due to the workings of the CIS, among others, which Cohn had been a part of since the 1950s. (As reported by Antifa in 1996, the CIS’s hierarchy included Klan and Aryan Nations collaborator Larry Pratt, who went on to co-chair Pat Buchanan’s 1992 presidential run, as well as Buchanan, himself, who we’ll come to later in this article.)

A UK copy-cat organization called Western Goals Institute formed in the late-1980s, throwing its support behind Le Pen, who historian Martin A. Lee calls the “neofascist führer” of the French radical-right party, Front National. One of the top funders for Western Goals Foundation was the Bircher son-of-an-oil-magnate Nelson Bunker Hunt, who also helped bankroll the Council for National Policy, tied to the leadership of US Nazi Willis Carto’s old Nazi comrade, Roger Pearson (a former member of the editorial board for the Heritage Foundation, which politely allowed Trump to pull

out of his September, since his birther ideas are beyond the pale).

While up to his eyeballs in fascism, Cohn attempted to keep his conservative slate clean by fighting legal rights to gay people, although he was gay, himself, and later died of AIDS. Underneath the alleged mob links, drugs, and corruption there remained strong bonds between Trump's mentor to the fascist-fused Americanism of the War years, brought through McCarthyism by the leadership of NAM into the John Birch Society, and further into the Western Goals Foundation.

Meet Roger Stone

This year, Trump enlisted as his campaign manager another of Cohn's protégés, Roger Stone, who Mark Ames profiles on *Before It's News*: "Roger Stone is a Libertarian prankster fighting the two-party stranglehold; and Donald Trump is a right-wing populist shaking up the system because by gum, he just doesn't care and he doesn't need to care," Ames writes. "That's one, very dumb, very gullible way of putting it." Another way of describing Roger Stone, according to Ames, is "Dick Nixon dirty trickster, fascist fan of Roy Cohn, lobbyist for some of the worst dictators in the world."

Stone met Trump through Cohn in NYC around the 1979 Reagan campaign, but was brought into the world of politics in the early 1970s, at the age of 19, by Donald Segretti, who initiated the teenage Stone into the Committee to Re-Elect the President (CREEP). Notably using American Nazi Party members to shift voters from the American Independent Party to the Democratic Party, among other dirty tricks, CREEP's fellow members included Pat Buchanan, who once described recollections of Holocaust survivors' as "group fantasies of martyrdom," and G. Gordon Liddy, a bizarre man obsessed with pain tolerance and willpower who grew up with an avowed admiration for Hitler and later became ghostwriter for J. Edgar Hoover. Liddy would remark, "at assemblies where the national anthem is played, I must suppress the urge to snap out my right arm."

After Watergate, Stone linked up with notorious lobbyists Charlie Black and Terry Dolan—another publicly anti-gay but closeted gay man who died of AIDS—to found the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC) as a revision of the old Barry Goldwater campaign. Both Black and Dolan were former YAFers of the fascist songbook era.

Other than helping Ron "Stormfront" Paul to his first election victory in Texas, the NCPAC formed Conservatives Against Liberal Legislation (CALL, later renamed Conservatives Alliance), connected to Carto's neo-Nazi outfit

VI

What Hath The Donald Wrought?

In the dust of the Iowa stunner, the Don might be bewildered and confused, but he's not out of the race. The question emerging for the first time is, will he actually lose the primaries, and if so, will he take the Republican Party down with him by running as a third party candidate?

On the other side of the aisle, the Democrats are beginning to sink into that slow and steady malaise that only decades of programmed and uninterrupted establishment politics can bring has begun to set in, as Hillary beat out Sanders in what was supposed to be the primary foothold of Sanders candidacy.

Whether or not Sanders was beaten by the weather, the blizzard that kept his older supporters indoors, the loss in Iowa simply sets reality into clearer focus: Hillary maintains the Super Delegates and will more than likely pull in the South on Super Tuesday.

The presidential race will likely be Hillary versus the Right. Who's right, though—the right of Trump or Cruz? And why does it matter?

The reality is that whether or not Trump loses, Trumpism has proliferated. Indeed, one could argue that Trumpism remains a mere epiphenomenon of the populist radical right, which composes a majority of the Republican Party. Is Trumpism more blatant, in-your-face, and virulent in its expressions of fascism than the cynicism beneath the traditional family values veneer of the Cruz Campaign? Yes. Does that mean Trump is the singular driving force of those expressions? No. He merely gives voice to them. He is, in a way, their figurehead. The victory of Cruz would likely represent the same movement, but in a more decentralized and guarded fashion.

In his 2009 book *The Eliminationists*, journalist David Neiwart strikes to the heart of the US conservative movement, exposing the cruel discourses of modern FOX News TV personalities, the punditocracy, and their Patriot connections. Identifying these networks on a range from proto-fascist to parafascist, Neiwart strikes an important chord, "Para-fascism, as it exists now, remains a political pathology, but a manageable one."

Identifying the distance between the proto-fascist militia movement and actual fascism as the absence of the singular leader, Neiwart has shown that, at least until 2015, the conservative movement slid into increasingly extreme and violent provocations, but lacked a leader to consolidate lone wolf acts

Trump's candidacy falls, in no small part, within the fascist tradition, and his maneuvers—particularly his deportation plan—show that his presidency would make vital steps toward fascism. As antifascists, we should act against him and his program, and in favor of emergent communities linked to Black Lives Matter and local efforts to build sustainable networks in order to make sure we don't find out how far Trumpism is able to go.

Liberty Lobby. In turn, CALL created the National Coalition for America's Survival, which included the reincarnation of the granddaddy of them all, the America First Committee, headed up by Art Jones, an infamous neo-Nazi.

Stone also formed a heavyweight power-broker consulting firm with Black, Paul Manafort, and Lee Atwater (later BMSK), which started out on the Reagan campaign and Donald Trump's casino business, and later became notorious for representing the apartheid-supported army of witch-burning opportunist Jonas Savimbi in Angola.

However, Stone came into his own by fixing votes. His methods were honed in New Jersey during the 1980s, where he employed a "National Ballot Security Task Force" to patrol majority-black and latino precincts while wearing what the local NAACP president described as "Gestapo armbands."

Holocaust Denial and Nativism

Throughout the 1990s, Trump was Stone's most well-known client, and his casino industry hijinks, including manipulation and sabotage of Native tribes, are infamous. In 2000, Stone pitted the Don against Pat Buchanan for the Reform Party ticket, but the Trumpster backed out after having pointed out, ironically, that fascists were supporting Buchanan's campaign. Later that year, Stone would become infamous for orchestrating the "Brooks Brothers Riot," which shut down the presidential election recount in Miami-Dade, prompting New York Rep Jerald Nadler to call out "a whiff of fascism in the air."

After riding high with Bush, Stone's went in for a change, and he turned to the libertarians, eventually sparking a relationship with libertarian candidate Gary Johnson that would involve Roy Cohn, the mafia, and the white nationalist Tanton network. Continuing forward, Stone went on a neo-fascist media hub called Red Ice Radio hosted by Hitler fan, Henrik Palmgren, to chat about Cohn and the "legitimate threat of domestic communism" during the McCarthy era. Stone's visit came at the tale end of an intense season of guests such as "white man march" activist Kyle Hunt, Norse reconstructionist Stephen McNallen, and Holocaust denier Dennis Wise.

Some of Stone's libertarian intrigues surrounded Scott Israel's campaign for the Sheriff's office of Broward County. Last year, the Sheriff's office told the South Florida Gay News it would cost nearly \$400,000 to release the office's internal homophobic emails. This year, the department faced a major scandal when four Ft. Lauderdale cops were caught regularly sending racist texts including sexualized murder fantasies and creating a promotional Klan

video.

Since leaving the Trump campaign, Stone has pitched a possible run for Senator under his home ticket, the Libertarian Party of Florida. The only other party candidate is a surreal character who calls himself Augustus Sol Invictus—a goat sacrificing, eugenics spewing, fascist-symbol-using Thelemite.

Due to his connections to the extensive “immigration reform” network of John Tanton, there is speculation that, before leaving, Stone left the Don with the numbers of 11 million “illegals” to deport before departing. As the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) explains, Trump’s immigrant policy is “almost indistinguishable from the policy proposals made by John Tanton, a white nationalist who founded the Federation for American Immigration Reform and essentially created the modern nativist movement.” This is the same platform admired by the neo-fascist National Policy Institute’s Richard Bertrand Spencer, Tanton’s close friend, who sees it as a major step toward “peaceful ethnic cleansing.”

Whiff of Fascism?

Beyond simply co-opting the platforms of white nationalists, the Trumpster’s own “whiff of fascism” moment might have been that time when his campaign circulated an add with an American flag just transparent enough to view an image of a Nazi war re-enactment. His campaign apologized and retracted the image, but have remained defensive about most other innuendos and outright threats. For example, at a rally in Rochester, New Hampshire, the Don fielded a question asking, “When can we get rid of [Muslims]?”; infamously responding, “We are going to be looking at a lot of things.” Like a schoolboy, Trump later whined that “it was the first time in my life I got in trouble for not saying anything.”

Or perhaps one could detect a whiff when Trump suppressed journalists like Jose Diaz-Balart in Texas and Jorge Ramos in Iowa, telling the former, “You’re finished” and the latter to “go back to Univision.” When the brutal beating of a Black Lives Matter protestor at a Trump event was met with the statement, “maybe he deserved it,” it seemed as though Trump’s campaign had more clearly presented itself in relation to fascism, defined by journalist Arun Gupta as “a cross-class project of national renewal based on psycho-sexual appeals of racial purity and militarism, aimed against sections of the working class and bourgeoisie alike.”

Stopping Fascist Steps

That Trump has not clarified whether or not the “deportation force” he would use to implement his proposed deportation plan would involve irregular or volunteer enforcers indicates that the presence of fascism in the US through militias would be empowered like never before to carry out the kind of social engineering not seen in the US since the internal colonization process euphemistically referred to as “Indian removal.”

And this is precisely the point. When we discuss US politics, our scope of legitimacy and respectability tends to fall within the last fifty years—since the Civil Rights Act, for example—and for good reason. The idea of *Lebensraum* had direct links to Hitler’s idealization of US Manifest Destiny. He believed that the conquest of Poland and then lands further to the East manifested a kind of conquest over the inferior peoples, toward an Aryan mission of resettling, and furthering the European idea. Indeed, going further back, the man who coined the term “national socialist,” Maurice Barrès declared that the first national socialist was a Frenchman named Marquis de Morès who was intensely interested in the Wild West to the point of briefly venturing into the ranching industry in the Badlands.

To augment the familiar phrase, We should not talk about fascism if we are not willing to also discuss US history before 1941 (or Japanese internment, for that matter). One could argue that fascism is a kind of *force majeure*—the inevitable effect of colonialism, through which Europe effectively colonized itself by attempting to consolidate power over the social and economic under the “national community.” It is perhaps in this context that fascism falls under the narrative of what Roger Griffin calls the “palingenetic ultranationalism,” or the rebirth of a mythical roots of the nation. In this sense, while fascism does rely on various “out-elites,” it also requires a faltering middle class concerned about the rise of organized labor, on one hand, and a xenophobic working class anxious over losing their privileges to foreigners and other disenfranchised populations, on the other.

So Lyons and I agree in the end (I think) that Trump bears important fascist trappings, but the power of movement toward something like “full fascism” is not necessarily all there. In fact, I would argue that it doesn’t have to be. Fascism, in my opinion, and in the opinions of many formative thinkers of fascism, is more like a process, a dynamic, than something that can actually reach a complete or pure form. Already in its first manifestations, fascism manifested a development of colonialism and imperialism (as so many, including Hannah Arendt, have aptly pointed out).

No Scrubs

I once had an unfortunate run-in with Taylor. After penning a piece about the “Fascist Internationale” brewing in Russia, Taylor sent my publisher a rather strongly worded email. I had used from the European New Right “theorist” Guillaume Faye in which he said that “worse than the Jews are... Jews in the mind.” Taylor insisted that the quotation did not occur, and instructed my publishers to view the video of the speech given at American Renaissance in 2005 available at their website. After my publisher dutifully followed up, he wrote to me saying that he had not been able to find the quote. I wrote back expressing my surprise, since the quotation clearly arises in the version of the talk available on Youtube. It appeared that the site scrubbed the quotation, and Taylor attempted to pass a “clean” version off to my publisher to get me into trouble. What can one expect from a guy who makes Robocalls for Trump?

The point is that the line between respectability and racism, US politics and fascism has been extremely blurry for a long time. However, if in 2000 most of us on the left agreed with journalist David Neiwert that Bush, Jr., was not fascist, per se, but was bringing the US closer to that reality, today that stance seems a bit more off-putting.

In his recent piece, Lyons agrees that lines have been blurred between what is known as the “radical right” and fascism. However, Lyons centralizes the point that “it’s a mistake to see such mixed political initiatives as having an inherent tendency to move toward full-fledged fascism.”

As long as the line is blurry, there will remain an element of respectability in politics that will maintain the conventional system. Trump’s own “*épater la bourgeois*” (shock the bourgeois) style serves to re-enforce the rowdiness and violence of his political stance, but Lyons is correct in noting that its challenge to the system is one within an ostensibly democratic milieu.

However, do Dennis’s words not ring a bell in Trump’s “out-elite” style? Isn’t Trump still playing the role of outside elite, coaxing both citizen and government, alike, to do what they want, to exercise their power beyond the strictures of the “system,” and to break the mold not only through a practice that “pins its faith on character, rather than on codes”? As opposed to Bush, whose folksy populism was always in the character of corporate managerial pandering, Trump’s beliefs in “self-interest” and elitism are directed at a white working class that is fed up with the business class.

III

Propaganda Of The Deal

In his 2002 book *Fascist Ideology*, scholar Aristotle A. Kallis presciently wrote, “[Mussolini’s] only programme was to govern and make Italy great again, both domestically and internationally.” That is precisely the rhetoric Trump is grabbing at, as is obvious by the title of his new book, *Crippled America: How to Make America Great Again*. The notion of returning to health, energy, vigor after being hobbled by injury and suffering in degeneracy and decadence is a hallmark of fascist ideology, and Trump’s ridiculing of people with disabilities highlights his sick perception of what vitality might mean to him.

The critique from the left that focusing on Trump gives Hillary a pass seems to miss the fact that recognition of the enemy remains paramount: we can identify Hillary as a neoliberal, because that’s always what she’s represented. Trump is a different beast, and should be analyzed as the kind of figure the US hasn’t seen in popular politics since George Wallace in the 1960s—and even then, Wallace represented traditional conservative politics, which strives to maintain an existing status quo, while Trump and his followers perceive themselves amidst a world of terrible decay that must be set to rights through violence.

Trump’s followers see an epidemic spreading over whiteness, with the white working class stumbling to find a kind of rebirth or new life. Suicides, cancer, drugs, despair is sweeping a white world that in the Reagan years prided itself on humble family values. It would appear to the left that, after decades of the ravages of the big box economy that signaled the gutting of middle America, this bloc of voters would begin acting in “their own class interests,” but the problem is that they do—and that’s what Trump represents.

Class interests are always defined on a complex terrain of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and sexual politics. To unite with other workers in opposition to the ruling class would actually imperil the traditional interests of many white workers, who seem themselves as belonging in a natural, patriotic hierarchy of God and flag. Class interests then take the form of racism and anti-Semitism where privileges enjoyed by white workers over others signal a kind of status elevation, a dignity manifest in tired slogans Trump drags around the country, like “You built this country!”

The image Trump projects is not simply of recovery, but revenge. In the perspicuous words of Sakai, “To the increasing mass of rootless men fallen or

ripped out of productive classes—whether the peasantry or the salariat—[fascism] offers not mere working class jobs but the vision of payback. Of a land for real men, where they and not the bourgeois will be the ones giving orders at gunpoint and living off of others.” With his “mad as hell” rhetoric against Wall Street, his promise to deport 12 million people, and halt immigration of Muslims, Trump promises an official satisfaction for the feelings of resentment and animus of the white working class. His other promises at mollification lead to his position as the only Republican candidate supporting unions and promising to maintain Social Security, placing Trump’s campaign at a junction point between poor whites and a middle class afraid of losing its privileges.

Trump’s prescription for greatness is a kind of economic gangsterism. The promise of Trumpism for those who believe is a militarized economic jolt that will shock the world. He will use the military to “make great deals,” effectively extorting money out of countries like Saudi Arabia and South Korea in exchange for protection. Of course, this is a long standing racket (often called the Mafia Doctrine), but politicians are usually more coy. Trump’s affective economic demagoguery is all the more intense for “Middle-American Radicals” (MARS), bringing about a mixture of middle-class anxiety and raging radical right politics. Instead of telling Middle America that a “belt-tightening” is in their future, as with neoliberals since the 1980s, he seems more intent on the rhetoric of warmongering. The most extreme side of the MARS movement in the US, represented by Jared Taylor of American Renaissance, has called Trump “our last chance”; its avant-garde represented by neo-reactionary RamZPaul, who commends Trump’s “glorious” policy against Muslim immigration, exclaiming, “Hail Trump!”

Making the Deal

It is worth while to investigate the reasons Trump was jeered for using the traditional anti-Semitic figure of the Jew as consummate haggler in his address to the Republican Jewish Coalition. Presumably the audience rightfully observed that Trump’s anti-Semitic rhetoric could simply take on the shade of hatred after his victory. In inter-war Austria, for example, the idea of the Jew as haggler was associated with the *Ostjuden*, or Jew immigrating from the East (Poland or Hungary, for instance). Although there were very few Jews in Austria, comparatively speaking, the common nationalist narrative under Austrofascism insisted that these foreigners moved into Austrian cities and undersold their competitors, so that even local Jews were being forced out of business. Likewise, in inter-war France, the Jew was considered a kind of invader who would weaken the interests of the working class

“in-elite,” instead cajoling the “in-elite” to follow the “out-elite” toward a new outright embrace of the politics of organic leadership through energetic action and strong will.

“Fascism attaches importance only to the guarantee afforded by a spirit of discipline by a consciousness of national solidarity, by a certain sense of *noblesse oblige*, and by the logic of self-interest under a given set-up for those who have power,” Dennis would write in his hopeful tract, *The Coming American Fascism*.

Fascism, in other words, so far as the control of the élite in the national interest or the protection of the people is concerned, pins its faith on character, rather than on codes or on the training and spirit it gives the élite, rather than on the policeman it might put over them. Broadly speaking, the in-élite, as a whole, can be controlled or disciplined only by forces within themselves.

So for Dennis, fascism represented practically a humane turn, a turn of conscience for the elites to admit the control they already maintain over the system, and use that openness to control themselves in the national interest, rather than playing selfish games abroad. At this time in US history, the question of the merits of eugenics, Jim Crow, and xenophobic policy did not merit a discussion—all the intellectual weight of academia and public policy grounded itself on racism.

It is in this tendency of US history, so importantly transformed through the workers’ struggles of the early postwar period and the later Civil Rights movement, that Carto’s own position focused on the decline of Western culture and values. Carto’s ideology rested on what his biographer George Michael describes as “an apartheid type of fascism in which the world should consist of racially separate nations,” and it is this same form of fascism to which people like Jared Taylor and Richard Spencer of the American Policy Institute adhere.

This rings true in antifascist thinker Matthew Lyons’s response to my last piece, in which he takes option with my claim that fascists have always supported segregated caste structure in the US. My phrasing conflated white nationalism with Jim Crow segregation, and while fascists did support segregation up to 1968, the loss of Wallace and the capitulation of Nixon led to much sharper distinctions outlined by Michael in the above quote. However, the attempts by Carto to mount a fascist intrigue into conservatism to change the US from within is not accounted for in the attempts at defining “revolution” in terms of fascist movements, and bears deeper inquiry into the guidelines by which we understand both.

The Old and the New

Of course, this is nothing *particularly* new for US politics. If we turn the page back to George W. Bush, as I mentioned in chapter 2, we find that his campaign enlisted the support of Roger Stone to block the recount in Florida in 2000. However, I failed to mention that during that same campaign, former Knights of the Klan hierarch and current administrator of Stormfront, Don Black, provided “bodies for the pro-Bush protests, and his Web site proudly announced their participation,” at one point driving Reverend Jesse Jackson off stage with disruptions from the audience.

Furthermore, if Woody Guthrie’s recently released writings about his landlord, the Donald’s dad, Fred Trump, seem bad, George W.’s grandfather’s fascist-funding financial adventures are far more important. Turning the page further back to the populist campaign of George Wallace, two Klan leaders in the South were reportedly under the payroll, and the Youth for Wallace wing, along with the American Independent Party itself, broke away into fascism under the control of Willis Carto and his cronies.

However, to truly understand fascism and its role in US politics, we have to go beyond even Carto, himself, whose famous “Cultural Dynamics” essay outlined the acceptable forms of fascist discourse in the postwar period by circumscribing racism within the terrain of cultural relativism. Carto never sought to break down the constitution or “overthrow” the entire edifice of the US government; in fact, just like Trump, he defended the constitution, and sought to insinuate his Yockeyist ideals within the judiciary, legislative, and executive branches of the state.

The Out and the In

Carto’s attempts to weave fascism into the fabric of mainstream conservative discourse were inspired by Lawrence Dennis, a savant who turned from democracy after bringing the marines into Central America to quell the Sandino rebellion in Nicaragua. Dennis’s shift to fascism was indeed a cultural shift toward something he felt would accommodate US interests better than democracy, since the latter appeared unconscionable to the sensibilities of wealth and grandeur. Furthermore, democracy did not prevent oppression, Dennis believed, but strengthened the hand of oppression by maintaining *de facto* ruling elites who could simply transform the laws whenever it suited their desires.

For Dennis, fascism was simply a way of squaring the circle, of rejecting the commonplace entreaty to the “out-elite” to join in with the games of the

with their skills of negotiation. Not only does the anti-Semitic idea of the Jew-as-bargainer brings back painful memories of blaming the victim of dire poverty, but Trump’s image of a “negotiator” in this case bears the implications of a gangster with whom the audience doubtless would rather not have association.

Trump’s attitude of aggressive bargaining power matches what Else Frenkel-Brunswick tracks in a survey of men in *The Authoritarian Personality*. One man seemed to sum up a trend, she wrote, of “successful techniques of ‘driving sharp bargains.’ ‘Certain ordinary ways of doing business,’ he said, ‘are too damn slow for me.’” She concludes, “Being successful by outsmarting others in the competitive struggle is part of the ego-ideal of the prejudiced man.” That Trump projects these traits onto Jews who may be employed in any number of occupations that do not require negotiating (doctors, scientists, musicians, or writers, for instance), speaks volumes to the emptiness of his own powers. It was recently revealed that, had Trump decided not to play the role of a negotiator and simply invested his father’s money in index funds, his fortune would in fact have been far greater than it is today. Perhaps Trump’s own insecurities as a man are the source of his macho, casino-style “deal making” bravado, his misogyny, as well as his prejudicial attitude toward people of other backgrounds, religions, races, and ethnicities.

While Frenkel-Brunswick and associates have been accused of providing an overly-flexible definition of what they call “the pre-fascist personality,” in more concrete terms, the important observations of scholar Zeev Sternhell show that the kind of economic thinking underlying fascism and corporatism does not fight capitalism, but the functionaries, plutocrats, and middlemen seen as clogging and distorting the machine. It represents the will to power and the great “new man” who knows how and when to act. Indeed, numerous early fascists, like Hitler, José Antonio, and Oswald Mosley, were either aristocrats, themselves, or received generous subvention from nobles. The notion that fascism is exclusively consigned to revolutionary strategies of coups and putsches overlooks groups like the Estonian Association of Freedom Fighters, who attained a majority of the electoral vote, as well as the designs of neo-Nazi politicians and organizers like David Duke and Willis Carto to attain victory through the electoral system.

Although scholar Roger Griffin has contradicted this point in his recent writings, I would argue that Trump’s form of populism is what Griffin called in his magnum opus *The Nature of Fascism*, “elitist populism” specific to fascism: “In a mystic version of direct democracy, the representation of the people’s general will in a fascist society would mean entrusting authority to an

elite or (especially in its inter-war versions) a leader whose mission it is to safeguard the supra-individual interests and destiny of the people to whom it (or he) claims to be linked by a metaphysical bond of a common nationhood." This elitism, or "populism from above," as some call it, is essential to the sense of planning and heroic enterprise ideated by Trump.

Hotel America

Artist Roger Peet told me something interesting: Trump wants to run the country "like a Hotel. You have your top level, your middle level, your lower level, and your basement (do we even have that?). And if you have any problems, security will show you the exit. If you're rich, you can leave through the front door; if your poor, you get to find the back door." This seems like a good analogy for Hotel America under Trumpist rule: the House always wins, the working class slides further into the rentier economy as the former promise of the middle class "American Dream" is eroded, and the prison and detention industries skyrocket. Meanwhile dissenters are dealt with in a more brash and brutal fashion than has been seen in generations, as displays of patriotism take the form of military mobilization, an increase in daily patriarchal violence against women, and unimpeded civil violence against people of color scapegoated for economic decay.

Indeed, the Trump vote can be seen as a re-enactment of old-school anti-communist rallies, emerging in virtually symmetrical relation to the rise of the milquetoast challenge emanating from the Sanders campaign. In early-August, one of Trump's advisors called Obama a "Marxist," and in mid-October, Trump denounced Sanders as a "maniac" and "socialist-slash-communist," bringing to the surface a key intersection of anti-communism and anti-immigration. In one comment typical of this current, an anonymous Trump supporter posted the following chilling screed on a Wall Street Journal article:

The White people are becoming minorities in their own countries and are losing their culture and self respect to 'Cultural Marxism.' California alone has 38 million people and over 30% live on welfare brought to you by hard earned tax money from the white middle class. Europe and America must unite and save the fatherland and all countries from international Marxism. Since [World War Two] over 80% of immigration is from 3rd world countries. Mass 3rd world immigration is part of the interlopers agenda to introduce a new advanced genocide of the Aryan people and his qualities that built 90% of everything you touch. What more do white people need to unite and save the country? The problem is that Obama is a international Marxist

V ...Or Get Crushed Every Time

When the USA Freedom Kids took the stage in Pensacola, Florida last week, their strangely off-center routine smashed headlines around the world. Some unsettling combination of off-center choreography, the arrhythmic clapping of the apparently hypnotized crowd, and the brutal lyrics lip-synched by young girls had people throughout the US wondering whether or not they could support the idea, "*Deal from strength or get crushed every time.*"

Immediately, social media erupted with scornful comparisons to the Hitler Youth and Kim Jong-un. Sadly, the USA Freedom Kids paled in comparison to the rigidly choreographed motions of their totalitarian counterparts, but it would seem that Florida is giving it the best its got.

The next grand event of the Trump campaign came with the rant of Sarah Palin as she endorsed Trump's candidacy. Palin's reactionary version of slam poetry seemed to indicate that she wanted to make a youthful, hip invitation to her new life with Trump. The strange rhyming appeared almost a competitive gesture to step out of the shadow of the USA Freedom Kids—a feat nobody could call unsuccessful.

And finally, not to be outdone by the public displays of patriotism, force, and Antigone complexes gone wild, the behind-the-scenes shadow boxing of the white nationalist movement upped the ante by spearheading a Super PAC in the great state of Iowa. Robocalls from the American Third Position... er... I mean... American Freedom Party (AFP) stress to potential voters the urgency of white working class support for Trump.

That's right. Jared Taylor, the head of American Renaissance, is currently urging voters to pitch in and vote for Trump, "because he is the one candidate who points out that we should accept immigrants who are good for America. We don't need Muslims. We need smart, well-educated white people who will assimilate to our culture. Vote Trump."

In truth, however, this was only one small step removed from a couple weeks ago, when the co-chair of Vermont's "Veterans for Trump" group Jerry DeLemus opted to join the Malheur Rebellion. Within a day, DeLemus was quoted in major news sites as complaining of psy-ops campaigns against the Patriots holed up in the Wildlife Refuge. It's only a matter of time before he's joined by a counter-psy-ops mission led by USA Freedom Kids.

Is it not illustrative that Trump's deportation plan was actually developed by a white nationalist Tanton Network, before he got around to integrating it into his platform? Is it not suggestive that white nationalist Richard Spencer calls it "peaceful ethnic cleansing"? This is, at best, the grey area where inter-connection to the fascist movement through the radical right becomes more like hybridization.

Missing the Tree for the Forest

Lyons accurately states, "even if we assume that Trump wants to outlaw elections, shred the Bill of Rights, and make himself president for life, that doesn't make him a fascist." Yet if we acknowledge that Trump explicitly called for a conservative revolution, leads a violently racist and anti-leftist mass-movement to roll back Civil Rights, uses white nationalist policy positions, enlisted Roy Cohn and Roger Stone as lawyer and consultant, respectively, and kept a book of Hitler's speeches by his bedside, perhaps it becomes more necessary to acknowledge the complexity and hybridity discussed by Costa Pinto, Kallis, and Iordachi.

So the claim, in the final analysis, that Trump's campaign is interconnected to fascism, but that Trump, himself, can remain pure and clearly describable as "not fascist" seems inconsistent. To detach the proximity between Trumpism and people like the Leader brothers or Celli so cleanly seems like an error. And that's the main point: the radical right is not as simple as a cluster of autonomous ideologies perfectly honed and starkly differentiated. Those autonomies do exist, but there is more grey area within something like a consolidated mass movement, which is given direction and form by a leader.

So while it's convenient to place the viewable field under the grouping of "interlinked" but distinct ideologies of the radical right, when neo-fascist roots start to show, too often the vagueness of the "radical right" obscures the particularities being faced, and occludes more precise understandings. In effect, a particular species of tree (fascism) is labelled a forest (radical right populism). Although Trumpism may be more comparable to "conservatism with fascist trappings," he remains a kind of "outsider" to the conservative movement. The presence of palingenetic ultranationalism characterized as "revolutionary" by conservatives, as well as a genealogy of connections to the Americanism of Cohn and Stone, indicate that the more Trump's hateful ideology spreads, the more what are considered fascist trappings today will become generalized and hegemonic in a new political era.

and and even the white liberals with no culture that voted for him don't even like him anymore. When you try to pass laws without congress or replace Americans with third world invaders you get MILLIONS of angry white people who feel like they're being taken advantage of. It is no coincidence that only traditionally white countries are being immigrated too [sic]. Ask your self if these immigrants would give you the same rights in their countries and imagine how your country will be when they are the majority. To all white brothers and sisters the time has come when you must put differences aside and unite. This is no longer a choice, this is your duty.

The only thing that distinguishes the rhetoric of this commentator from Trump is the more open usage of the terms "Cultural Marxism" and "Aryan," which simply underline the fascist trend of thought.

Returning to the Question

Much ink has been spilled over the question of whether or not Donald Trump is as fascist as many of his followers. The leftist media seems united in singling out Trump's fascism, with *Salon* and *Truthout* leading the charge, and *Newsweek*, the *LA Times*, and the *Telegraph* joining in. However, many scholars, pundits, and academics have taken a more cautious track.

As someone who has written three articles now identifying the fascist tendencies and roots in Trump's campaign, I have been humbled by some of the more profound responses. Two of the authors who engaged me early on, Chip Berlet and Matthew Lyons, have supplied particularly insightful critiques. Both maintain that Trump is an authoritarian-conservative, however both have added to their original terms in new and insightful ways.

Berlet has produced a useful definition of Trumpism: "Using right-wing populism to mask fascistic appeals to demonize targeted groups." Yet, Berlet stands by his original position that these "fascistic appeals" do not formulate a viable fascist position. At the same time Lyons has cautioned me against using a "teleological" approach to fascism, by which he means that one should not attempt to predict the direction that a populist movement will take, fascist or not.

The latter comment is particularly important, and in fact I concede that Lyons is right—a deterministic view of whether or not Trump's government will become openly fascist in five years does not change the definition by which he should be identified today. However, I think that we will agree that there are red flags and reasons for concern, which ought to give us pause.

Berlet's definition of Trumpism is also deeply insightful, because it touches

on fascism in a kind of second-degree. Professor Mario Sznajder at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem calls this “quasi populism”—“when some populisms adopt certain features of populism without becoming fascist movements, or without having the ‘ineliminable’ features of fascism or reaching a ‘fascist minimum.’” Roger Griffin calls it “parafascism”—“a radical right regime with fascist trappings.” However, I would argue that within this taxonomy we are still watching fascism develop without recognizing it, because we are looking for it to appear in some image of a “full form.”

To deploy the concept of of Julie Thorpe, we should instead look at fascism as a “process” rather than an “outcome,” or as Kallis states, “it is more accurate to describe fascist ideology as a powerful *trend*, appealing to the most utopian and extreme nationalist vision and articulating suppressed energies which had previously no place in the conventional political agenda of either conservative or liberal nationalism.”

To Lyons and Berlet, then, I would concede perhaps that Trumpism as it appears today has the necessary components that make it a fascist ideology, *but it has not manifested full form in power*. This means that, if Trump can be said to manifest what Arun Gupta has called “pre-fascism,” and I would prefer to call “proto-fascism,” it is only in direct relation to fascism, and as an important and necessary stage of *fascism*. Is it then necessary to conceive of Trumpism in the ambit of fascism as the makings of an “ideal type” that are not yet fully assembled?

Bargain Basement Totalitarianism

The greatest problem with the view that Trump seems like an authoritarian conservative who may open the door for increasing fascism in the future, but does not constitute as much yet, is that many analysts expect fascism to present itself from the beginning as a totalitarian dogma when in fact the Italian Fascists did not even use the term totalitarian until years after Mussolini coined the term in 1915, the Nazis only used the term “total state” for a year or so, before it was trumped by the ideology of decisionism, and Spain’s Falange openly rejected the ideology of totalitarianism.

The difference between the “total state” and “decisionism,” as ideated by the crown jurist of Nazism, Carl Schmidt, lies in the former’s creation of a semi-autonomous “people” who operate in homogenous and intuitive relation to the leader, whereas the latter simply follows the dynamic and transformative dictats of the leader. While the difference seems somewhat negligible, and both appear to be aspects of the same broad totalitarianism, it is important that such esteemed scholars as Franz Neumann could write

by Russell Pearce, a man who once sent a white nationalist National Vanguard article about Jewish control over media to his constituents? House to house raids from coast to coast like Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Maricopa County, who has managed to weather federal investigations without appearing to alter his strategy?

Beyond the total violation of human rights required to locate 11 million undocumented people, one does not simply deport 11 million people without sophisticated infrastructure and agency coordination. Airplanes? Buses? Trains? Cattle cars? Whoever could imagine such a horrific enterprise, its immense amount of sophisticated and banal planning, would also employ new human and developmental resources that would not simply dissipate into thin air once the task is accomplished. The very act of the mass deportation would produce a kind of collaborative infrastructure and police effort that would require totalitarian integration.

This is not to say that the US is not an enormous project of social engineering, because that’s what colonies are. What would distinguish mass deportation in the US today from, say, the Trail of Tears, internal colonization, and the Japanese internment camps would likely simply be a new internal process of militarized bureaucracy adding to the weight and capacity of state repression. Yet given the fact that the US’s internal colonization process helped inspire Hitler’s totalitarian project in the first place, and that Trump’s desire for the restoration of a former glory by overthrowing the “political operatives” and establishing an essentially “new” order (in the words of Buchanan), complexities begin to arise.

Ordinarily, mass deportation is accompanied by acts of state violence against those who remain associated with the “gangrene” or “disability” keeping greatness and virility from truly manifesting. There is always auxiliary repression of activists and advocacy organizations attempting to halt the separation of families and the tearing apart of communities. Deportations are also generally accompanied by unofficially sanctioned vigilante or paramilitary violence against both targeted populations and those connected to them. As an example, the National Socialist Movement activist JT Ready remained quite close to the former president of Arizona’s State Senate and sponsor of SB-1070, Russell Pearce, who he called his “father figure.” Yet SB-1070 did not drastically increase deportations, it just dramatically increased the ratio of deportations of those who were caught for non-criminal offenses. In short, it was simply a measure of terror against a population used to tear law abiding mothers away from their children during routine traffic stops. Even SB-1070 is, then, watered down compared to what Trump is proposing.

This is, of course, a long-standing tradition, which is why successors to the Nazis and Fascist Party—the Socialist Reichsparty, the Italian Social Movement, and of course the US's Populist Party—all cast their lot with elections. None of these parties had a particularly impressive “mass movement”—at least not coming close to the size of Trump's campaign. Nor have they proven particularly revolutionary. When David Duke won a seat in the Louisiana State Senate, he did not call for “revolution,” but took gradualist steps to make life much harder for non-whites. Although nobody doubts that Duke is a fascist, he ran a right wing populist campaign; the two are commensurate, and in fact the latter too often provides cover for the former as a hybridized position of fascist creep. Creating a sharp distinction ignores the pesky details.

So the question of whether or not Trump and his violent mass movement is fascist often hinges on the regrettable terms of “revolution.” Part of the dubious nature of the term “revolution” is that the actual outcome of fascist authority was incredibly conservative in terms of labor and social welfare. Taxes on businesses were lowered, wages depressed, the length of the work day increased, food consumption declined, infant mortality rose, and at least until 1935, big businesses had relatively free reign over the economy. For all the rhetoric about syndicalism and socialism, the social wage was slashed, and a conservative emphasis on work and patriarchy ruled.

It is easy to overemphasize the “revolutionary” or even “leftist” elements of fascism in search of an ideal type based on a mixture of ideological doctrines and observable totalitarian outcomes, while accidentally placing ideology and doctrine before the real process. Still, Trump is in favor of unions in managements' pockets, says he'll tax the rich, runs a modernist corporation, and his campaign circulates around his virility and power—characteristics that run against the grain of traditional conservatism and in parallel with more fascist-type leader complexes.

Totalitarian Social Engineering

As for totalitarian social engineering projects, how could the halting of Muslim immigration and deportation of 11 million people on the basis of their immigration status and country of origin (they likely won't be deporting Irish people behind on their visas) be perceived as anything but one of the most totalitarian schemes of social engineering? The only stage beyond mass deportation is genocide, plain and simple. How does Trump intend to locate 11 million undocumented people? Does he hope to bring SB-1070, the notorious “papers please” law sponsored in the Arizona state legislature

in 1942 that “to the extent that political power has increased, the ideology of totalitarian state has been rejected.” Hannah Arendt even denied that Italian Fascism could be considered totalitarian. Regardless, for Italian and German fascism, totalitarianism was always an ideology that never came close to fruition; for Spanish fascism, totalitarianism was rejected outright, even in ideological form.

The Trumpist vision of the “deal making” elite is much closer to decisionism, where accountability to the public is suspended in favor of an inspired power elite who lead not by the concretion of a kind of ideological formalism, but by the example of “low-cost signaling” through which ordinary people can recognize their place in the hierarchy and how to get ahead (the latter is related to fascist leadership by Roger Eatwell and Roger Griffin in *Fascism Past and Present, West and East*). In this way, I would suggest that Trumpism can be seen as a manifestation of sufficient “fascistic” positions to qualify it not just as “proto-fascist” but as part of a process of “fascist creep,” meaning a radicalization of conservative ideology that increasingly includes fascist membership while deploying fascist ideology, strategy, and tactics. As the neo-Nazi Vanguard News Network recently declared, “Trump is beginning to sound like a white nationalist.” The Daily Stormer put the sentiment succinctly: “Hail Trump!”

The other major problem with the perspective that Trump does not represent fascism “yet” is the reliance of many theorists on the “revolutionary” quality of fascism. For a number of thinkers, Trump would have to present something truly “revolutionary,” although that term seems ill defined.

IV

Conservative Revolution

Or, Missing The Tree For The Forest

On October 21, a former plumber from Connecticut named William Celli posted to his Facebook that he was delighted to see Donald Trump on TV, saying, “this guy[']s a great point man[.] I’ll follow this MAN to the end of the world.”

Celli is not simply enthused to follow leaders, but Trump is a point man, the guy to have up front calling the shots and making the decisions. He’s above all else a man, a patriarch who should be followed with the devotion of a kind of prophet—to the end of the world.

Just shy of two months later, on the same day that the New York Times released a report showing a tripling in violence against Muslims after the Paris and San Bernadino attacks, a neighbor telephoned in a tip to the Richmond, California, police about a bomb. After three days, the police finally responded, finding a small bomb-making enterprise on Celli’s premises plausibly made with the intent to attack the local Muslim community.

This kind of xenophobic and racist violence (and the threat of violence) has underwritten the Trump campaign like a bad check that was cut on the night that two brothers in Boston, Scott and Steve Leader, brutalized and urinated on a homeless Latino man in August. After the crime, Scott Leader declared, “Donald Trump was right; all these illegals need to be deported.”

In the midst of a quantifiable, if not palpable, increase in violence and white terrorism, Donald Trump has been the loudest spokesperson for the restriction of human rights against Muslims in the US. Is it therefore possible to connect Trump’s campaign to the increase in white supremacist violence, which has reached mass movement-level proportions?

What separates Trump and other populists from definitive fascism is, for some scholars, the problem that they do not appear to call for a national rebirth on the basis of an anti-democratic revolutionary movement. Aside from leftist pundits like Noam Chomsky calling Trump and the GOP a “radical insurgency,” however, there is more evidence that even the right wing is refusing to turn a blind eye to Trump’s revolutionary leanings.

Earlier this year, journalist Doug Schoen cast Trump as the leader of a new “conservative revolution” in a key article for Forbes. Schoen is not dreaming. In 2012, Trump audibly called for revolution via Twitter after Obama’s

to the leadership of Mazzini and the continuation of the Resurgimiento, which had only officially ended fifty years before Mussolini took power.

For Hitler, the “old order” was Weimar Germany, which was not even 15 years “old” when Hitler took power. Instead, Hitler looked to the Kaiser system established by Bismarck and Wilhelm I less than 50 years before he transformed the German Workers Party in the Nazi Party, although his greatest idol was Frederick the Great who lived during the 18th Century, 150 years before Hitler effectively created the Nazi Party.

Similarly, one could argue that Trump’s “old order” is that of Civil Rights, stretching back roughly fifty years ago to the reforms of the Johnson and Nixon eras. Unlike the right wing populist George Wallace, who wanted to maintain the status quo, Trump uses the same ideological tilt of “energy” as classic Fascism in his rejection of the “political functionaries” of the “old order,” claiming that black people and women lack the same kind of energy that Trumpism provides.

However, Trump’s desire to “make America great again” also hinges on the elimination or at least circumvention of the 14th Amendment, which finally acknowledged equal rights for all US citizens after the Civil War in 1868, roughly 150 years ago. Trump’s vision of national renewal, then, returns to the traditions of the unreconstructed South that purportedly ended in the 1960s and 1970s is this kind of “dog whistle” to the Klan and fascist groups that have always upheld segregation and a racialized caste system as an ultimate ideal.

When is a Revolution a Counter-Revolution?

Aside from openly calling for revolution on at least one occasion, Trump’s attempts to use the electoral process as a tool to overthrow the present establishment of “career politicians” and institute a rebirth and renewal of national greatness is typical of fascist politics.

Pierre Taittinger, the leader of the inter-war French fascist group Jeunesses Patriotes (Young Patriots), put the platform squarely in 1926: “It is not the right to vote that is killing our country, it is the fact that good people are not making use of it. The vote is an imperfect arm, but it is an arm. We concede nothing to our adversaries, either in the streets or at the ballot box.”

Similar sentiments were proclaimed by Mussolini up to 1925, and Nazi propaganda up to 1933. Furthermore, these groups did not openly declare totalitarian intent from the start. They hedged in order to retain support from both conservative and liberal (parliamentarian conservative) sources.

totalitarian ideological “orthodoxy.” This is largely because ideological fluidity is crucial to fascist leadership, as the fascist leader navigates “popular tides and currents” while plotting the course to the destination of a totalitarian “new state.”

“Although people often use the term fascism interchangeably with dictatorship,” Lyons writes, “most dictatorships aren’t fascist, because they’re all about preserving the old order rather than creating a new one, and they generally don’t involve any real populist mobilization.” Yet, as António Costa Pinto and Aristotle Kallis note, the line between dictatorship and fascism must be rethought: “the historiography of fascism and inter-war dictatorship needs to look beyond previously assumed conceptual dichotomies and accept the challenge of embracing complexity.” For instance, Lyons claims that the fascists of the Legion of the Archangel Michael were “co-opted into” the Antonescu regime of Romania in 1940, implying that the Legion was a submissive part of what was essentially a “conservative authoritarian” system. The reality of compromise is more complex, Iordachi argues.

The Legion, also known as the Iron Guard, had always had an “outsider” relationship with the Romanian state. When Antonescu’s military establishment overthrew the King and invited the Iron Guard to form a National-Legionary State, the groups manifested a different model of power sharing as part of a “fluid” process of inheritance and continuity. In fact, it was the Legion’s leader Horia Sima’s refusal to submit to Antonescu’s similar doctrine that resulted in the purging of the Iron Legion and return to a simple, “conservative authoritarian” state.

The complex hybridizations between conservative dictatorship and fascist regimes must be examined closely to find the grey areas in which neither descriptions function to precisely define the terms on their own. Similarly, with Trump’s campaign, the fascist connections that Lyons points out are actually vital to understanding the general character. Otherwise a vague argument of one side overdetermining the other tends to dominate without an eye to clear and consistent movement building.

The “Old Order”

The tricky thing about Trump’s hybridization is that, as Buchanan declares, his platform explicitly seeks an “overthrow” of the “old order” and preservation of the traditions that he views as smoldering within the dying embers of the white American spirit. The “old order” for Mussolini was embodied by prime minister Giolitti, and really less than 30 years “old.” Although Mussolini did link Giolitti to the older tradition of liberalism, he harkened back

re-election. To get a sense of what “conservative revolutionaries” think of Trump today, a visit to paleo-conservative and white supremacist sites like Vdare and Alternative Right, among other neo-fascist sites, is instructive.

On Vdare, paleo-conservative Pat Buchanan states that Trump is a challenge to “the regime”: “the Trump constituency will represent a vote of no confidence in the Beltway ruling class of politicians and press.” Striking the revolutionary chord, Buchanan continues, “People are agitating for the overthrow of the old order and a new deal for America. For there is a palpable sense that the game is rigged against Middle America and for the benefit of insiders who grow rich and fat not by making things or building things, but by manipulating money.” Here, Buchanan distinguishes the producers from the parasites, ending the passage with a gesture to corporatist producerism, “Americans differentiate the wealth of a Henry Ford and a Bill Gates from that of the undeserving rich whose hedge fund fortunes can exceed the GDP of nations.”

So Buchanan states that Trumpism looks to a “new deal” for white America as an overthrow of the old order led by an entrepreneurial class, characterized by the vicious anti-Semite, Henry Ford, and his apparent successor, Bill Gates, who Trump says he will call on to “close that internet up.”

According to Southern Poverty Law Center’s (SPLC) Mark Potok, Trump is similar to Buchanan in many ways: “There is no question we have not seen anything like this since Pat Buchanan. Those two have a lot in common. I am not sure if Trump views himself as a white nationalist, but he has white nationalist positions. When he calls Mexicans rapists and murderers, he is dog-whistling in a very clear way to this far-right constituency... In some ways Trump has taken an even more extreme position than many white nationalists. I have never heard of white nationalists call for the deportation of the U.S. citizens born to people who came here illegally.”

When Trump entered the presidential elections of 2000 under the guidance of Roger Stone, he would point the finger at Buchanan, ironically identifying his base as fused with fascists, perhaps not thinking that in just over a decade, he would be running an even more extreme campaign with an even more conspicuous fascist base and the support of Buchanan, himself.

When the SPLC draws parallels between Trump and Buchanan, and the conservative opinion is that Trump is a “conservative revolutionary,” claims of fascism start to seem more canny. The Stormfront crowd is certainly not afraid to cross over to Trump’s side. In fact, Stormfront has been forced to expand their servers in order to host the 30-40% increase in traffic related

to Trump's outbursts making it quite clear who the subject of Trump's internet censorship would be. Responses generally range from "Hail Trump!" to claims that he may be a Gorbachev-type reformer who leads to the destruction of the union. Either way, the idea is that Trump is a step toward a white nationalist revolution—in other words, neither he is co-opting them, nor they are co-opting him, but the two are engaged in a hybrid movement or trend.

Complexity and Hybridization

In his recent article, Matthew Lyons provides incisive insight regarding Trumpism. At the outset, he notes that if observers accused Bernie Sanders of being a step toward full communism, most people would probably laugh. Similarly, Trump, he claims, is not fascist, but is interconnected to fascism through populist right wing politics.

Significantly, Lyons brings up David Neiwert's article "Donald Trump May Not Be a Fascist, But He is Leading Us Merrily Down That Path," in agreement with the soundness of its logic. Trump is "creating the conditions that could easily lead to a genuine and potentially irrevocable outbreak of fascism." Then, Lyons remarks on chapter three of *Trumpism*, rejecting the notion that Trumpism contains an "inherent tendency to move toward fascism."

It seems a bit strange that Lyons agrees with Neiwert and then disagrees with me with regards to what are, at bottom, similar points. While Neiwert claims that Trump creates the conditions for fascism to emerge, my position is that Trumpism maintains "an important and necessary stage of fascism." My perspective on Trump, to put it succinctly, is that he mobilizes a "conservatism with fascist trappings" to garner the popular support of Middle American Radicals, which brings him closer to the fascist "revolutionary" side than the conservative position advanced by someone like Jeb Bush.

Lyons notes that Trump may be courting white nationalists, and vice-versa, but his fascist bona fides are negated by the absence of both a stylized popular mobilizations in the fashion of Hitler's Nuremberg rallies and some kind of brownshirt or blackshirt paramilitary force. Yet fascists have emerged in the political scene without such qualities. The Italian Social Movement never really had a kind of mass movement that would hold a candle to Trump's gigantic rallies. Nor did they have a paramilitary grouping. Yet they were unquestionably and avowedly the political continuation of Mussolini's Republic of Salò. Closer to the mark, David Duke's Populist Party never retained either a mass movement or a paramilitary force, and the party itself could

even be characterized as "radical right" rather than explicitly fascist; however, both Duke and his handler, Willis Carto, were undeniably fascists.

Moreover, the notion of paramilitaries with armbands has been out of fashion among US fascists since William Pierce's National Alliance, which advocated a militant clandestine resistance that fed into what would become known as "leaderless resistance," as proposed by Texas Knights of the Klan leader Louis Beam. While Trump does not entertain a "brownshirt" following, he is a party to an influx of "lone wolf" or "leaderless resistance" attacks on Muslims, immigrants, and people of color in general, such as the recent roughing up of a protestor as an audience member shouted "sieg heil." Trump finds himself in a two party system where the Republican Party maintains a platform (barely) closer to his own ideology, so he is radicalizing a party that has never needed Trump to create the conditions for fascism, as exhibited by the Tea Party in 2009. Trump is not simply creating the conditions for fascism, his coming to prominence amid the "birther" controversy would suggest that his campaign is actually a product of those conditions.

The Leader as Outsider

Part of what makes Trump "revolutionary" to conservatives is his outsider status. He's a billionaire from New York City, and some of his politics lean toward liberalism. His previous presidential effort came under the Reform Party, and in 2012, he supported both the Republican and Democratic Parties financially. He is more of a leader in the syncretic sense of populism, bringing together different constituents by hybridizing their ideas. As scholar Constanin Iordachi writes, "in politics in particular, the fluid nature of ideologies, the dynamics of the political process, and the multiple social-political factors that generally shape the nature and outlook of political regimes generate hybrid outcomes."

This is why, as opposed to Lyons's premise that fascists "are absolutists who demand ideological purity," Mussolini insisted into the 1920s that Fascism was a heretical and heterodox ideology priding itself on its inconsistencies and contradictions, which has carried over to the more recent "Anarchist Heretics Fair" put on by National Anarchist Troy Southgate. Despite his radical and revolutionary background, Mussolini presented himself as a sincere parliamentarian who wanted to "return to the constitution" in the early 1920s, allowing even the prime minister Luigi Facta to believe Fascism might be controlled through the political process. Only years later, beginning in roughly 1927, and forming through the vast programmatic transformations that took place up to 1935, would Fascism actually harden into a