
Trump: authoritarian, just another neoliberal republican, or both?

Trump: autoritário, apenas outro republicano neoliberal, ou ambos?

Trump: autoritaire, juste un autre républicain néolibéral, ou les deux?

Trump: autoritario, ¿tan sólo otro republicano neoliberal?, ¿o ambos?

Richard Lachmann



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/spp/5340>

ISSN: 2182-7907

Publisher

Mundos Sociais

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 January 2019

Number of pages: 9-31

ISSN: 0873-6529

Electronic reference

Richard Lachmann, « Trump: authoritarian, just another neoliberal republican, or both? », *Sociologia, Problemas e Práticas* [Online], 89 | 2019, Online since 19 July 2019, connection on 17 June 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/spp/5340>

This text was automatically generated on 17 June 2020.

© CIES - Centro de Investigação e Estudos de Sociologia

Trump: authoritarian, just another neoliberal republican, or both?

Trump: autoritário, apenas outro republicano neoliberal, ou ambos?

Trump: autoritaire, juste un autre républicain néolibéral, ou les deux?

Trump: autoritario, ¿tan sólo otro republicano neoliberal?, ¿o ambos?

Richard Lachmann

Introduction

- 1 Donald Trump commands media attention to a greater extent than any US president in memory. His open bigotry, vulgarity, and obvious incompetence for the duties of his office are sources of outrage and despair throughout the world and among a majority of Americans, although Trump's behaviors are seen positively by a core of supporters who, depending on the poll and the moment, range from a third to 40% of US voters. Observing Trump on a day-to-day basis one can get the impression that he and his presidency are sui generis and unprecedented. He is variously seen as the skilled or inadvertent creator of a new majority political coalition (Grunwald, 2017; Wallerstein, 2017; Levenson, 2017; Saunders, 2016), the subverter of his supporters' belief in objective reality (Grunwald, 2017; Kakutani, 2018), the instigator of an American authoritarianism that could become fascism (Gessen, 2016; Snyder, 2016), or the destroyer of US global power and legitimacy (Lake, 2018; Cohen, 2017). Some of these and other authors subscribe simultaneously to more than one of these portraits of Trump.
- 2 Trump and the Republican Party's ability to transform US politics will be decided by the 2018 and 2020 elections. In an earlier article (Lachmann, 2018), I argued that Trump's 2016 victory was largely the fruition of long-standing Republican Party strategies. Rather than assume that, we need to analyze if future Democratic defeats will led to outcomes different than what would have happened under a victorious but Trumpless Republican Party. For that reason, I focus here on Trump's policies and accomplishments in the first year and a half of his administration. Writing from the perspective of summer 2018, I seek

to answer one basic question: to what extent is Trump just another, albeit flamboyant, neoliberal Republican, adopting essentially the same policies as any of his 2016 primary opponents would have done had they won the nomination and presidency, or is he pushing the US toward a level of authoritarianism unprecedented outside of the Southern states during the eras of slavery and segregation? Of course, the answer could be that he is doing both, and we need to remember that Trump's achievements have been determined as much by the level and success of opposition from various sources as by his Administration's own desires and efforts.

- 3 The best way to evaluate Trump is to review his policies in key areas. I begin by looking at Trump's single significant legislative accomplishment, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. I then turn to his appointees' work to overturn regulations enacted under Obama and earlier presidents, and trace the effort to confirm Federal judges. Trade and immigration are the issues Trump discussed most often as a candidate and as president. I seek to disentangle rhetoric from accomplishment in those two areas. I then identify what is new, and what's not, in Trump's foreign policy. Finally, I look at Trump and the Republicans' ongoing efforts to suppress voting rights and to attack opponents in government and the media, while manipulating information. This review of the range of policies is designed to disentangle rhetoric from accomplishment and provide the basis for a conclusion that can specify the extent to which the US has become more authoritarian under Trump and allow for an informed prediction of what is likely to happen in the coming years.

Tax cuts: what's new, what's not

- 4 The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, like the tax cuts passed in 1981 under Reagan and 2001 under George W. Bush, gives the vast majority of its benefits to the wealthiest Americans. In 2018, the first year of implementation, 52.1% of the cuts in individual, corporate, and other Federal taxes go to the top 10% of taxpayers, 20.5% to the top 1%, and 7.9% to the top 0.1%. In 2025, the last year when many of the law's provisions remain in place, those percentages remain the same for the top 10% and 1%, but for the top 0.1% they rise to 10.5%. The provisions that are permanent almost exclusively benefit the rich. So in 2027, 82.3% of the cuts will go to the top 1% and 59.8% to the top 0.1% (Tax Policy Center, 2017). This tilt is, in the last years, greater than in the Bush bill, and significantly greater throughout than for Reagan's tax cuts.
- 5 Business tax cuts consume a third of the cost of the bill (Sherlock and Marples, 2018: table 1). This is a reversal of the trend from Reagan to Bush of devoting a growing fraction of tax cuts to rich individuals rather than corporations. Perhaps the Republican's professed justification for this shift, that it will improve the competitiveness of U.S. firms, is the real motive. However, corporate income is distributed far more unequally than total income so this shift offers a hidden way to further tilt the tax cuts to the rich. In 2018 the top 1% will get 10.6% of the cuts in individual income taxes but 43.8% of those in the corporate tax (Wamhoff and Gardner, 2018). In any case, different sorts of rich benefit from corporate income as opposed to personal income, and it could be that the key members of Congress and the executive who wrote this bill are tied to different economic elites than those who wrote the Bush tax cut bills.
- 6 One unique feature of this bill is that it targets taxpayers who live in states that vote Democratic. The bill caps the ability to deduct local property taxes and state and local

income taxes at \$10,000. Local taxes are substantially higher on average in Democratic states like New York and California than in ones that vote Republican. While this is an unusually, perhaps unprecedentedly, large case of taxing political opponents, virtually all news reports on the writing and negotiating over this bill suggest that Trump and his aides were unengaged on any provision, including this one, other than ones that directly affect Trump's finances such as those that pertain to real estate investments. So if this is a move to authoritarianism in tax policy it is one spearheaded by Congressional Republicans rather than Trump and his aides.

Republican deregulation

- 7 The US has a long history of relatively heavy regulation in comparison with other rich capitalist countries. Beginning with the Carter Administration and accelerating under Reagan, the US has been at the forefront of neoliberal deregulation (Prasad, 2006; Levy and Shapiro, 2004). Clinton did little to reverse the Reagan-Bush I deregulation, and signed legislation, passed by Republican-controlled Congresses, that decisively (and disastrously) deregulated banking and telecommunications. In addition, Clinton signed the 1996 National Securities Markets Improvement Act that required the Securities and Exchange Commission to weigh the impact a potential regulation would have on, among other things, "capital formation" in the financial sector. Clinton's record on the environment was so weak that it was a key motive in Ralph Nader's decision to run as a third party candidate in 2000, throwing the election to Bush.
- 8 Obama stands out as the first Democratic president since Johnson, and the first president since Nixon, to seriously expand the regulatory state, mainly in the areas of environment and health. (In other realms Obama continued the previous Democratic and Republican approach that limited new regulations by imposing cost-benefit analysis and outright rejecting regulations that pro-business government officials asserted would hamper firms from expanding and hiring employees, or that capitalists or their lobbyists simply found objectionable.) Thus, the extent of deregulation under Trump mainly reflects Obama's regulatory energy (which in turn reflected the necessity of relying on Executive Orders when Republicans in Congress blocked proposed legislation to regulate CO₂ emissions as well as other forms of pollution) rather than any serious divergence from past Republican administrations. Certainly Trump himself is motivated by personal animus, based in part on racism, to undo Obama's legacy, but all his deregulatory moves have been carried out by appointees with past records in Republican Federal or state government and are supported by key party backers.
- 9 Of course, regulations shape subsequent corporate investments and strategies and therefore deregulation harms some capitalists who have made investment decisions on the assumption that the regulations are permanent. Not surprisingly, Trump's deregulation favors the fossil fuel industry over green energy. However, while in 2016 fossil fuels employed 1.26 million Americans and green energy only 782,000 in the US, the rate of growth for green energy is far more rapid than for fossil fuels (Department of Energy, 2017: table 1, figure 12). If Trump really wanted to increase American jobs and cut the US trade deficit he would have deepened Obama's green energy regulations, but instead he catered to his supporters in traditional energy firms, most notably the Koch brothers, to a narrow set of workers in coal and oil, and to a broader set of supporters who hear nationalistic and racist tones in Trump's nostalgia for old industries.

- 10 Similarly, Trump's acceptance of the big three US auto firms' demands to reduce the fuel economy standards they agreed to in return for bailouts under Obama will help those firms by reducing the cost of manufacturing cars since fuel efficient engines are more expensive. However, the smaller firms that make auto parts, and that employ four times as many workers as the big three and have invested in the advanced technology needed to make the parts for fuel efficient engines, will find themselves undercut by lower tech foreign firms making the less exacting parts that auto assemblers will be able to use in less efficient engines. The end result of this deregulation will be the transfer of jobs abroad and of profits from smaller firms to the big three (Helper, Miller and Muro, 2018).
- 11 Both parties favor some industries and regions over others, and the inauguration of a new administration brings at least some new capitalists and industries into favored positions and somewhat exiles others. Green energy has won backing almost exclusively from Democrats and fossil fuels came to rely almost entirely on Republicans even before Trump's election. Scott Pruitt, Trump's first Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator, spent his entire career in Oklahoma as a servant of the oil industry, and his selection for the EPA was based on that record. Similarly, Trump and his appointees' efforts to sabotage the Affordable Care Act (aka Obamacare) reflect the party split over health care.
- 12 The Trump Administration stands out for the sloppiness of its deregulatory efforts. The rules for writing, revising, or abolishing rules are elaborate and fixed by past laws, above all the Administrative Procedure Act of 1946. When an administrative agency does not build a sufficiently detailed and accurate record of fact, courts can and do overturn regulatory changes. The process for building a record and writing a rule takes years. Trump's appointees have been ambitious in their goals, but so far have wasted the first eighteen months by not doing the serious work. This is in contrast to both Obama and Bush II. Clinton had little commitment to enhancing regulation in any area, hence the late rush to institute environmental rules in 2000 in response to Nader's candidacy, most of which were easily cancelled by Bush in 2001 since they had not made their way past all the needed regulatory goalposts.

Judges

- 13 Judges ultimately decide whether an administration has met the requirements for regulatory changes. That is one reason judicial selection has become highly partisan. The powerful role judges and especially the Supreme Court play in the American political system has made judicial appointments, at least at the highest level, the subject of Senate battles and at times popular mobilization.
- 14 Until the Reagan Administration, Federal judgeships below the Supreme Court level were controlled by senators who usually could name and almost always veto selections for district judges and for seats on Appeals Courts that were by tradition linked to specific states' senators. Beginning with Reagan, the balance of power shifted as Republican administrations looked to ideological organizations, above all the Federalist Society, for names of vetted nominees. Democratic presidents were less rigid, more willing to defer to senators, and concerned more with nominees' gender and racial balance than with their ideology.

- 15 The key change under Trump comes out of the Senate. In all previous administrations senators were allowed to veto (“blue slip”) nominees for district judgeships in their own state. This gave the minority party some leverage in the states in which they had a senator. Charles Grassley, the Senate Judiciary Committee chair, ended this practice when Trump took office to ensure that while Republicans retain a Senate majority they could push through any nominee. They were aided in this by the Democrats’ decision in 2013 to end the filibuster for district and appeal court judges, lowering the confirmation threshold to 51 from 60 votes.
- 16 Supreme Court appointments historically were highly charged only in periods when the Court was poised to decide (or had decided in ways many found extremely objectionable) issues at the forefront of public contention: slavery, Reconstruction, the New Deal, segregation, prayer in schools, abortion, same sex marriage. Thus, in 1968 a coalition of Republicans and southern Democrats filibustered President Johnson’s nomination of Abe Fortas as Chief Justice, hoping that the new president would be a Republican and select someone who would reverse or at least limit the Warren Court rulings on race, defendants’ rights, and prayer in schools. The gambit worked and Nixon shifted the Court to the right, with the enormous exception of *Roe vs. Wade*, which moved blocs of religious conservatives, who would make abortion and judicial selections their prime voting criteria, into the Republican Party. Beginning with Reagan, Republican Supreme Court choices have been, with the exception of Bush I’s choice of David Souter, uniformly at the right end of justices. The Supreme Court, even after Obama’s two appointments, is the most conservative overall since the period before Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) appointed a majority of justices (Bailey, 2013). In terms of business cases, Alito and Roberts are the two most conservative justices since 1946 and Thomas, Kennedy, and Scalia also were in the top ten in that ranking. Only Sotomayor is among the ten justices least likely to vote for business — all the others at that end of the spectrum were appointed by FDR, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson (Epstein, Landes and Posner, 2013). Trump’s two Supreme Court appointments merely continue the trend from Nixon through Reagan to the Bushes.
- 17 Numerous commentators, and of course Democratic politicians, see Mitch McConnell’s decision to refuse to allow even a hearing, much less a vote, for Obama’s nomination of Merrick Garland to replace the deceased Antonin Scalia in 2016 as unprecedented and a break with Senate custom. Certainly, the refusal to hold hearings was new. However, in substance, the result was the same as the filibuster against Fortas. What is different is that this blockade was exclusively Republican, while Fortas was opposed, and supported, by both Democrats and Republicans. In both 1968 and 2016 the open Supreme Court seat became a central issue in the presidential campaign and both Nixon and Trump exploited that opening with skill to bring out opponents of liberal Supreme Court decisions.
- 18 What has changed are the ideological lines in both the Senate and on the Supreme Court. Senators in the two parties now are almost unanimous in opposing nominees from presidents of the other party, and the senate itself is an anti-democratic institution since states regardless of their population each get to elect two senators. As a result, the 54 senators who voted to confirm Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court in 2017 received 54,098,387 votes in their most recent election while the 45 senators who voted against Gorsuch received 73,425,062 votes in their last election. In the history of the US there are only two other such “minority justices,” Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito (McMahon, 2018).

- 19 Republican appointees are much further to the right now than they were under Nixon, while Obama and Clinton's choices, with the exception of Sotomayor, are less liberal than those of Kennedy and Johnson. This shift to the right, and Republican dominance of past and present Supreme Court nominations, now is affecting the US political system itself. Republican Supreme Court appointees have voted to allow ever more extreme measures (discussed below) by Republican controlled state governments to restrict voting rights and to gerrymander state and Federal districts. In addition the Supreme Court finds that unlimited political spending is a free speech right. These sorts of decisions make possible the move toward authoritarianism I discuss at the end of this article.

Trade wars?

- 20 Trade is one area in which Trump departs from past Republican orthodoxy. His withdrawal, in his first week in office, from the Trans Pacific Partnership marked a break from a string of trade deals dating back to the 1930s that steadily reduced tariffs and eliminated other restraints on international trade, all while positioning the US at the center of the world capitalist system. Trump was both riding and fueling anti-trade fervor, leading Hillary Clinton, who once had called the TPP the "gold standard" of trade deals, to renounce it in her presidential campaign. Whether she would have again reversed her position as president, and if so could she have gained Senate ratification for the treaty, remains unknowable.
- 21 Trump has gone well beyond a halt to further expansion of trade treaties by attempting to abrogate, renegotiate, or undermine existing treaties. Such moves are a real departure from past Republican service to the largest US corporations and banks that look to their government to lubricate entry into markets abroad, even at the cost of US jobs. While open global trade (as opposed to free movement of hot money around the globe) overall adds to economic growth and jobs on a global basis, it also harms distinct groups of workers and some firms as well. Trump spoke to those workers, and the dubious notion that they switched from the Democrats to provide Trump with his margin of victory underlies his political calculations and those of most Republicans and more than a few Democrats.
- 22 It remains to be seen if Trump can continue on a protectionist path as retaliatory trade sanctions cost US firms foreign markets and lead to unemployment in various sectors. Trump certainly has the option, which he took with South Korea, of reaching a deal that give the US little or nothing more than it had before the confrontation and then declaring success for his skills as a negotiator and deal maker. His supporters and most journalists have so little understanding of trade and economics that Trump can sell them on such an interpretation. Conversely, if Trump, by design or the miscalculation of his trade and economic team, which is inexperienced and has little record of past success in any field besides TV entertainment, falls into a trade war we will get a test of capitalists' political power. A trade war would definitely harm most US capitalists, and if they can't force Trump, either directly or through Congressional legislation, to reverse course, that would be a clear sign that Trump has built a populist political base immune from the forces that have set US economic policy since the 1930s at least.

Immigration

- 23 Trump made opposition to immigration the centerpiece of his campaign. His pledge to build a wall and make Mexico pay for it was, along with chants of “lock her up,” the emotional highpoint of his campaign rallies as a candidate and now as president. ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Federal agency with the power to arrest people in the US without legal documents) has removed fewer people from the country in 2017 than in 2016 and 2015, Obama’s last years in office. However, these overall numbers mask a profound shift in who is being deported under Trump.
- 24 Most of those deported under Obama were arrested at the border upon their arrival in the US and then expelled relatively quickly afterwards. Border crossings and arrests have been falling in recent years as Mexico’s improving economy and declining birth rate have sharply reduced the factors pushing people into the US. No matter who was US president in 2017 there would have been fewer arrivals at the border than in past years.
- 25 Trump directed ICE to focus its efforts on undocumented immigrants who have been in the US for years. So while arrests at the border declined, arrests in the interior rose sharply from 65,332 in 2016 to 81,603 in fiscal year 2017, which since it includes the last four months of Obama’s presidency underplays the magnitude of the policy shift (Valverde, 2017). The interior arrests are of people who often have relatives (spouses, children, parents) who are US citizens or legal residents and who have jobs and homes in the US and have been established in the country for years. Such arrests and deportations are likely to increase in 2018 and subsequent years as ICE receives more resources and its staff is encouraged by Trump’s rhetoric to switch from Obama’s policy of targeting undocumented aliens with criminal records to removing anyone without legal status.
- 26 In addition, Trump ended “special status” for 45,000 Haitians and 2,500 Nicaraguans in 2017, and for 200,000 Salvadorans, 86,000 Hondurans, and 9,000 Nepalis in 2018. Special status was created in 1990 under a law signed by Bush I to allow people fleeing wars or natural disaster to remain in the US until conditions at home improved. Although the hurricane that justified Hondurans special status was in 1999, efforts to make their US residency permanent have foundered on the inability to pass immigration reform legislation. Trump now has exploited the temporary nature of special status to expel people who have lived in the US for decades and who, even more than those arrested in the interior, are likely to have family who are US citizens as well as homes and jobs.
- 27 Trump’s policy of deliberately separating parents from their children when ICE apprehends families is unprecedented in the history of US immigration enforcement. This deliberate cruelty appeals to a hard core of Trump supporters who value abuse of non-white immigrants. The announced rationale, that it will deter undocumented immigrants from attempting to enter the US, seems unsupported by the evidence, and if it in fact were effective would not in any way diminish the cruelty of the policy.
- 28 Trump’s efforts to terrorize undocumented aliens and to imprison those arrested and to separate parents and children harken back to previous episodes throughout US history of anti-immigrant rage and repression. Most recently, in 1991, more than 12,000 Haitians fleeing the military dictatorship that overthrew elected president Jean Bertrand Aristide were intercepted at sea and diverted to Guantanamo. Only 300 were judged to be bona fide refugees and offered asylum, but when the majority of those were found to be HIV

positive they were kept at Guantanamo along with their children and not allowed entry to the US (Paik, 2016).

- 29 Perhaps the closest parallels to Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric and actions came at the end of World War I and during the Great Depression. In 1918 Congress passed the Sedition Act and an Immigration Act. Together these two bills made it easy for the government to deport non-citizens who were leftists or opposed to World War I. The Palmer Raids of 1919-20 were made possible by these two acts. From 1929 to 1936 hundreds of thousands of Mexican immigrants as well as US citizens with Mexican sounding names were deported in an effort, begun under Hoover and continued under FDR, to open jobs to Anglo Americans (Balderrama and Rodriguez, 2006). Both waves of deportations were accompanied by efforts on the part of government officials to induce anti-immigrant hysteria and to play off racist tropes.

Is Trump accelerating America's loss of global hegemony?

- 30 Various authors (e.g. Lake, 2018; Cohen, 2017) argue that Trump is destroying the US's dominant position in the world with variously deliberate, or ignorant and therefore inadvertent, attacks on allies and institutions that have undergirded American hegemony. This is one realm in which Trump's policies break with past Republican and Democratic presidents. In his rhetoric and in his budget proposals Trump tracks Bush II, Reagan, and John F. Kennedy in pushing for increased military spending. However, that is combined with a professed willingness to make peace with America's enemies and abstain from military solutions. In his presidential campaign Trump repeated the lie that he had opposed the Iraq war from the start, and he justifies his openings to Putin and Kim with lines such as "Getting along with Russia, and getting along with China and getting along with other countries is a good thing... not a bad thing" (quoted in Cochrane, 2018).
- 31 It remains to be seen if Trump actually is able to negotiate accords with any country. However, it is impossible to imagine Congressional Republicans holding still if Obama or any Democrat, and perhaps any other Republican, had honored a North Korean dictator with a summit while receiving not a single concession. Similarly, Republicans in Congress so far have been silent as Trump threatens to cancel trade agreements and imposes tariffs, when in the past almost all Republicans were enthusiastic supporters of trade agreements. More broadly, Trump's unpredictability and his suggestions that he is not committed to NATO or other military alliances have yet to be challenged by any Republican in more than words, such as by withholding their votes in Congress on an item important to Trump.
- 32 Trump's trade and foreign policies are tests of the power that capitalists and the military elite wield over the government. Marxist and elitist theory both predict that capitalists as a class or as managers of the largest firms and banks hold a veto over economic policy, including trade, even if they don't set the policy themselves. Similarly, C. Wright Mills (1956) and a few (e.g. Lachmann and Schwartz, 2018; Cox, 2018) but not most of his successors see the military high command along with the heads of spy agencies like the CIA as a distinct elite that controls decisions to deploy troops, build weapons, and form and maintain military alliances. We will see if these powerful actors are able to block Trump's moves to engage in a trade war and to undo treaties and military alliances.

Economic and military elites work through Congress as much as with the executive, and if they are unable to deflect Trump's attacks on existing trade and foreign policies that would be a sign that elites' usual bases of leverage over Congress as well as the presidency have been disrupted. That in itself would be a measure of authoritarianism, a clear indication that capitalists' feeding of populist bigotry and jingoism had spun out of their control, giving Trump unusual room to initiate new policies. As Marx wrote about the fate of the bourgeoisie after Louis Bonaparte's 1851 coup: "Out of enthusiasm for its moneybags it rebelled against its own politicians and literary men; its politicians and literary men are swept aside, but its moneybag is being plundered now that its mouth has been gagged and its pen broken" (1935 [1852]: 60).

Voter suppression and attacks on truth

- 33 All the policies we have reviewed so far, whether Trump-initiated or extensions of longstanding Republican positions, are supported by only a minority of Americans. Hacker and Pierson (2016), who offer the best overview and analysis of polling data, ask how can a party win elections while taking unpopular positions. Hacker and Pierson argue that the GOP (Republican Party) has the motive and means for its rightward shift in a base that reliably votes Republican in elections at all levels and has been pushed ever further to the right by three forces: "Christian conservatism, polarizing right-wing media, and growing efforts by business and the wealthy to backstop and bankroll Republican politics." Christian conservatives give "the GOP a substantial base of middle-income voters who side with the party for mostly noneconomic reasons" but go along with the party's shift to the right on economic issues (idem, 2016: 251-252).
- 34 Hacker and Pierson note but do not explain why Christian conservatives vote on "social" issues like race and abortion rather than on economic issues, and why Republicans vote more often than do Democrats. Both those tilts predate Trump, even though he won the election thanks to them. Five factors, all of which began years if not decades before Trump's election, explain the widening gap in voter turnout between the Republican and Democratic parties' core constituencies. Let us look at how (1) voter suppression, (2) vulgarity, (3) obstructionism, (4) money, and (5) attacks of truth undermine US democracy.

Voter suppression

- 35 The twenty-first century Republican Party, like the southern Democratic Party from Reconstruction until passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, has sought to overcome the unpopularity of its policies with a strategy of ensuring that its opponents are unable to vote. For the southern Democrats those undesirable voters were the former slaves and their descendants and also poor whites. For today's Republicans, the goal is to keep African Americans, Latinos, the young, and the poor away from the polls while distorting the information that they get about candidates and the operation of government. The most common methods for suppressing the vote are "photo identification requirements, proof of citizenship requirements, laws that introduce restrictions on voter registration, restrictions on absentee and early voting, and restrictions on participation by felons" after they are released from prison (Bentele and O'Brien, 2013: 1095). Such "restrictive-access legislation" is enacted in Republican-controlled states "where African-Americans

and poor people vote more frequently, and there are larger numbers of non-citizens” (ibidem: 1098). The effect of such legislation is racist, but the goal is strategic: to ensure that Republicans achieve undisputable control over states where their previous electoral margins were narrow.

- 36 The Supreme Court and lower Federal courts have been essential to the Republicans’ voter suppression strategies. Judges allow a broadening array of methods that make it difficult for the young and poor, who are more likely to be non-white, to vote. Voters are required to show identification when they vote, and in an obvious ploy to favor their own voters Republicans in Texas passed a law that accepts a concealed handgun permit but not a university ID as proof of identity. A growing number of states purge their voter rolls. In Ohio, “After skipping a single federal election cycle, voters are sent a notice. If they fail to respond and do not vote in the next four years, their names are purged from the rolls.” In 2018, the Supreme Court in a 5 to 4 decision, with the Republican appointed justices in the majority, ruled such purges were permissible (Liptak, 2018).
- 37 The Supreme Court’s 2013 decision in *Shelby County vs. Holder*, again with only the five Republican appointed justices in the majority, eliminated the section of the Voting Rights Act that required states and localities (mainly in the South) with histories of racial discrimination to receive preclearance from the US Department of Justice for any changes in voting laws. This opened the floodgates, as Republican controlled states rushed to enact provisions that make it harder to vote. Polling sites in African American neighborhoods were closed, forcing voters to travel further to vote. Early voting was restricted.
- 38 Most significantly, state legislatures were given free rein to engage in gerrymandering, drawing Congressional and state legislative district lines in ways that favor one party. Since Republicans gained control of a majority of state governments in the 2010 election, they were able to draw district lines after the 2010 census that favor their party for the rest of the decade. *Shelby County vs. Holder* ended the possibility of using the Voting Rights Act to block gerrymandered district maps on grounds of racial discrimination. However, even before that Supreme Court ruling, gerrymandering was fostered by a devil’s bargain between the George H. W. Bush Administration and a few career African American southern politicians following the 1990 census. Until then the 1965 Voting Rights Act was understood to ban practices that diluted African American voting strength, including “packing” black voters into a few districts. The Bush Justice Department proffered a new interpretation: that African Americans could only have representation in Congress and state legislatures if they were represented by black politicians rather than officials of various races who owed their election to black voters. This interpretation was accepted by Federal judges, a majority of whom by then had been appointed by Republican presidents, and blacks were packed into a few districts, thereby pulling out black voters who had provided the margins of victory for numerous white legislators throughout the South while elevating a few African American state legislators into safe Congressional seats (Berman, 2015: chapter 7; Daley, 2016: chapter 7; Zweigenhaft and Domhoff, 2018: 122-124). This was the turning point that sharply reduced Democrats in southern state legislatures and made possible the Republican takeover of the House in the 1994 election, leading to ever more Republican state legislatures that engaged in ever more extreme forms of gerrymandering in the following decades.

- 39 The Trump Administration is adding another voter suppression tactic. It seeks to add a question concerning citizenship to the 2020 census. The goal is to discourage non-citizens, who would fear the census being used by ICE to expose and deport them, from filling out census forms. This would have the effect of reducing the population count in states, and in areas within states, with large immigrant populations. That, in turn, would shift representatives (and also the allocation of Federal funds that are distributed on the bases of census data) from Democratic to Republican areas (Riley, Emigh and Ahmed, 2018).

Vulgarity

- 40 The increasing harshness and vulgarity of election campaigns and of Republican officeholders once in office has repelled many voters (Pacewitz, 2016: 248 and passim). Conservative true believers and racists, motivated by rightwing media, still turn out to vote. Indeed, after years of failing to get substantive benefits from government, such voters will find racist showmen like Trump more attractive and worthy of the effort of voting than sober rightwing technocrats like Romney. For such diehard Republican voters, the bluster and bigotry are features not bugs. The Republican Party's base of supporters is concentrated in the former Confederate states and in other locales with histories of racial conflict.
- 41 Trump's openly bigoted and vicious campaign and presidency are a culmination of long-term trends, not a break with past Republican campaign practices. In a 1981 interview, Lee Atwater, the manager of George H. W. Bush's successful 1988 presidential campaign, summarized the modern transformation of racism as follows:
- 42 You start out in 1954 by saying, "Nigger, nigger, nigger." By 1968 you can't say "nigger" — that hurts you, backfires. So you say stuff like, uh, forced busing, states' rights, and all that stuff, and you're getting so abstract. Now, you're talking about cutting taxes, and all these things you're talking about are totally economic things and a byproduct of them is, blacks get hurt worse than whites... "We want to cut this," is much more abstract than even the busing thing, uh, and a hell of a lot more abstract than "Nigger, nigger" (quoted in Perlstein, 2012).
- 43 Vulgarity and thinly veiled racism so far have disgusted younger and more liberal voters as well as citizens without links to either party who are the least informed rather than those who consistently vote Republican. There is limited evidence, from the few special elections that have occurred since Trump became president, that his extreme vulgarity and open racism are energizing nominal Democratic voters and discouraging Republicans. If that trend holds for 2018 or 2020 then Trump will have undermined the previously successful, because it was subtle enough, racist pillar of Republican rhetoric.

Obstructionism

- 44 People vote in hopes that if their candidates are successful they will be able to implement their electoral promises. Republican obstructionism in Congress discourages committed Democrats who are less likely to vote after harsh campaigns and with the prospect that public policy will not change even if Democrats win smashing victories as they did in 2008. Both Mitch McConnell and Bob Dole, who were the leaders of the Republican Senate minorities during the Obama and Clinton presidencies respectively, openly admitted that

their strategies were to block as much of those presidents' agendas as possible. They were aided in those efforts by economic elites' successes in obstructing progressive reforms under Obama. Dole, working under a smaller Democratic Senate majority, was more successful. Clinton had no significant legislative accomplishments during his eight years as president, and the Republicans recaptured both the House and Senate after two years.

- 45 McConnell faced a larger Democratic majority and was unable to prevent passage of the Affordable Care Act, the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, and other less sweeping legislation. The Democrats held the Senate for the first six years of Obama's presidency but lost the House after two, which meant that any further action had to be accomplished by executive orders and other administrative actions that now are in the process of being reversed under Trump.

Money

- 46 Political campaigns are privately financed in the US, giving capitalists enormous leverage over candidates and then elected officials. The magnitude of money that the rich can invest in campaigns has been magnified by two Supreme Court decisions. In 2010, it ruled in *Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission* that the Constitution gives corporations, non-profits, and labor unions the right to spend money without limits on campaigns provided those expenditures are not directly coordinated with candidates' campaigns. The Supreme Court in its 2014 *McCutcheon vs. FEC* decision struck down the existing limits of \$48,600 on the amount an individual could spend on contributions to candidates, plus a \$74,600 total on contributions to political parties and committees. Both those decisions were 5 to 4, with the Republican justices in the majority and the Democrats in the minority.
- 47 Few Americans are wealthy enough to take advantage of either decision, and the flood of money allowed by the Supreme Court has overwhelmed the more limited amounts that labor unions can afford to spend on campaigns. Below the presidential level, campaigns are financed almost entirely by very rich individuals. So far, in the 2017-18 campaign cycle 0.28% of Americans have accounted for 68.3% of contributions to candidates (OpenSecrets.org, 2018). Those contributions will be overwhelmed, as they were in past election cycles, by independent spending, mainly from corporations and extremely wealthy individuals, that in accord with the *Citizens United* decision is formally independent of candidates' campaigns.
- 48 Privately financed campaigns offer an inherent advantage for Republicans, the party that openly adopts pro-rich policies. Democrats face a choice of either aping Republican positions in hopes of getting campaign contributions from the rich (some of whom do give to Democrats, mainly on the basis of their positions on social issues such as abortion) and thereby disillusioning their working class base, or of championing policies that are in fact if not name social democratic. The latter was the New Deal strategy adopted by FDR and continued to a lesser extent from Truman through Johnson. Such a strategy was feasible because Democrats could count on campaign financing and volunteers from labor unions, which included more than a quarter of the US labor force until the mid-1970s. Democrats also could count on receiving money from capitalists who adopted the pragmatic strategy of donating to incumbents, which benefited Democrats while they remained in the majority in Congress until 1980.

- 49 As they lost elections in the 1980s and since, Democrats shifted to the former strategy. Thus, even the programs they sought to pass over Republican obstructionism offer only limited benefits to their actual and potential voters as they guard capitalists' profitmaking opportunities. Obamacare is emblematic: millions of uninsured Americans got access to healthcare through a cumbersome system that was designed to enhance private insurance companies' profits at the expense of both the Federal budget and escalating payments and complexity for the newly insured. On other issues Democrats adopt neoliberal positions in their effort to attract contributions from the rich, leading many voters to believe that the differences between the two parties are too small to justify the effort of voting or to override their cultural affinity with Republicans who present themselves as anti-elitist.
- 50 Such outcomes lead the poor, the young, the nonwhite, and others to question why they should go to the trouble of obtaining an approved form of identification, wait in long lines on Election Day, and overcome their disgust at issueless and crude campaigns if all they will receive, should the Democrats win, is access to complex programs that provide only limited assistance of the sort that Hillary Clinton promised in 2016 or Obama delivered in 2009-10. Now the openness and viciousness of Trump's attacks on existing programs have had the unintended effect of showing voters what they gained from Obamacare, Dodd-Frank, and other legislation. We will see if that is enough to bring out more Democratic voters in 2018 and 2020.

Attacks on truth

- 51 Trump is more extreme than any previous president, and perhaps than any holder of a major US office, in the brazenness and frequency of his lies and the extremity with which he denounces journalists. Yet what Trump is doing is a matter of degree, not something new. Nixon and Agnew both denounced the press and presented journalists as alien and un-American. Presidents Johnson and Nixon both told lies; Johnson's more obvious and easily refuted than Nixon's. George W. Bush used the term "fuzzy math" as a response to Al Gore's attempts to expose the fraudulent numbers behind Bush's tax and budget proposal in their 2000 presidential campaign. Reagan frequently made up stories. Among the ones he repeated most often were racist fictions about a "strapping young buck" who used Food Stamps to buy expensive steaks, and a "Chicago welfare queen [with] eighty names, thirty addresses, [and] twelve Social Security cards [who] is collecting veteran's benefits on four non-existing deceased husbands. She's got Medicaid, getting food stamps, and she is collecting welfare under each of her names. Her tax-free cash income is over \$150,000" (Haney-Lopez, 2014).
- 52 What is different now is the polarization of the media. Nixon and Agnew pushed back against three television networks that all presented a similar, coherent centrist Cold War perspective of the world. There were radio stations and newspapers and magazines then that were more conservative, but all stations were constrained by the Fairness Doctrine, a Federal Communications Commission rule that required radio and TV stations to give equal time to the range of opposing political viewpoints contained within the Democratic and Republican parties. That rule, which prevented the emergence of doctrinaire networks, was abolished under Reagan, making possible both Fox and the Sinclair network of rightwing radio and TV stations.

- 53 Trump supporters are able to live in a closed media environment in which the TV and radio they hear, and the newspapers, magazines, and websites they read, all present a single viewpoint. Even within the rightwing world, the stories Trump and his enablers tell change frequently and have enough internal inconsistencies that it should be possible to realize that what he is saying is fantasy and lie, but so far his supporters have discounted or ignored the signs that Trump is untrustworthy. His supporters instead look to the angry and anguished responses to Trump's behavior and actions from women, non-whites, immigrants, environmentalists, and others and see those reactions as evidence that Trump is doing the right thing by attacking "elites." So far, most of Trump's voters have yet to benefit from or be directly harmed by his policies and so either ignore detailed analyses of tax cuts, deregulation, etc., or assume that if people they hold in contempt are upset, it means Trump's is doing right by previously "forgotten" white Americans.
- 54 Trump and his appointees use false evidence to support their policies and proposed regulatory changes. In the past, fraudulent or even unsupported claims were grounds enough for courts to block changes in policy. It is too early to know how much Republican appointed judges will let Trump get away with in this regard. The first signs are bad. The Supreme Court upheld, again 5 to 4, Trump's Muslim ban because his Administration asserted, in the face of Trump's repeated statements as a candidate and president that he wanted a "total shutdown" of Muslim immigration to the US, it had other reasons for stopping travel from eight countries, six of which are almost entirely Muslim.
- 55 To the extent to which Trump is able to convince Americans that there is no objective truth, just points of view or what, when he was selling gaudy real estate, he once called "truthful hyperbole," it will become impossible to evaluate his or any other official's record in office or the meaning of proposed and enacted policies. This sort of attack on truth is different from overt censorship, which Trump has not as yet attempted. Instead, the goal is to devalue the impact of investigative journalism and of coherent analyses of the inconsistencies, falsehoods, and failures of policies put forward by Trump and the Republicans.
- 56 Reality eventually caught up with past liars. The Tet offensive revealed the fantasy of Johnson's claims about Vietnam. Nixon was exposed by investigations into the Watergate scandal. The low approval ratings with which Bush left office in 2009 suggest that the less conclusive challenges to his claims eventually convinced a majority of Americans. We do not yet know if any of the investigations of Trump's long history of fraud will reach fruition (see Chait, 2008, for a plausible though largely unsupported argument that Trump has been a Soviet/Russian agent since 1987). Certainly if Trump dismisses Mueller or uses his presidential pardon authority to free his criminal associates from legal jeopardy that would be a profound break with all past presidential practice and, if Congress let him get away with that without removing him from office, a clear move toward authoritarian rule.

The future: weak democracy or authoritarianism?

- 57 All of Trump's efforts to undermine American democracy so far build on existing Republican strategies and accomplishments, which reinforce each other. Restrictions on voting rights and gerrymandering, which give Republicans victories even when a

majority of those who vote or want to vote favor the Democrats, combine with Republican obstructionism and vulgarity to demoralize voters, further reducing the electorate. Unlimited political spending by the rich mix with the distortions of networks like Fox and Sinclair and the lies that Trump tells to convince ever more citizens that there is no way to objectively evaluate public officials and their programs' performance. Republican domination of the presidency and Senate allow them to appoint Federal judges who allow all of these anti-democratic practices.

- 58 If Trump's efforts to restrict voting rights, degrade public discourse, and call into doubt the very existence of objective truth succeed, he will have advanced US politics further along a road toward weaker democracy that was paved by other Republican politicians. The solid five justice conservative majority following confirmation of Trump's second Supreme Court nominee will ensure that existing and most conceivable future efforts to restrict voting rights and gerrymander districts will continue, and that the rich will be able to inject unlimited amounts of money into political campaigns.
- 59 Even if the Democrats retake the House in 2018, and the Senate and presidency in 2020, US democracy will continue to weaken, as it did during the Obama years. Only if Democrats occupy the presidency for a long period and there is a string of amazing actuarial good luck — 85 year old Ruth Bader Ginsburg and the other three liberal judges surviving past 2020 and Thomas or another reactionary justice dying — would there be a liberal Supreme Court majority. Democratic Party control of government would not in itself do anything to reverse the fundamental forces that weaken democracy. The Democratic Party as currently constituted has shown no interest in strengthening labor unions: each time Democrats controlled Congress they failed to pass legislation undoing the provisions of the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act that allows states to ban closed union shops or that prevent unions from investing the pension funds of their members in socially valuable ways (McCarthy, 2017). Nor have Democrats succeeded, with the exception of Obamacare, in passing any program that could convince potential voters of the need to turn out for that party in presidential, let alone Congressional and local, elections. Even Obamacare did not boost voting enough to save Democratic majorities in Congress or to elect Hillary Clinton as president.
- 60 American democracy could be revived by the emergence of popular mobilization as happened among workers and farmers in the 1930s and African Americans and students in the 1960s. Such popular eruptions are unpredictable and today would have to develop in a country that lacks the nationally-linked community level organizations that existed in those earlier eras (Skocpol, 2003). Social movement scholars are unable to identify conditions that necessarily or even usually lead to upsurges in mobilization, so there is no guarantee or even likelihood that another economic crisis as bad or worse than that of 2008, a natural disaster to which the government fails to respond, or even defeat in war would fundamentally affect US politics. We also can't be sure if left mobilization would push elites to see an authoritarian Trump as the best way to counteract labor strikes, demands for social programs, women's and other civil rights, and opposition to a militaristic foreign policy. However, since the 1930s US elites have responded to protests with concessions and thus could see advantage in returning Democrats to power in hopes that their victory would quiet the left even as they don't take steps that endanger capitalist power.
- 61 Could Trump lead the US past weak democracy toward an authoritarian or fascist future? There is a cottage industry, with Masha Gessen and Timothy Snyder (cited above) as the

most successful current practitioners, of writers who draw on their particular expertise about dictatorships past and present to create jumbled, ad hoc lists of “lessons” and signs of impending tyranny. There is very little reflection in such work on the nature of the societies they compare or efforts to identify the differences that mattered or might matter in determining authoritarian outcomes.

- 62 Gessen and Snyder focus on the strong man form of authoritarianism in which a single ruler undermines democracy and his party plays only a supporting role. Hitler is the archetype. Putin, Orban, Erdogan, and Chavez fall into this category. Chavez did create a party that continues to rule after his death. It remains to be seen if the others create any structures that will endure after their retirements or deaths. But there is another pattern in which a party builds authoritarian rule and the ruler has only a marginal effect on the political structure. The Soviet Union after Stalin, much of Eastern Europe, and the PRI in Mexico fit this pattern. The US Republican Party’s success in undermining democracy and Trump’s limited effect on policy fit this party-directed authoritarian pattern.
- 63 If we want to determine if Trump is creating or building upon the preconditions for fascism we would do well to begin with Michael Mann’s (2004) definition of fascism in terms of five elements: *nationalism*, *statism*, *transcendence* of class and ethnic conflicts, accomplished in part by *cleansing* the nation of enemies through *paramilitarism*. Mann finds that these elements developed most powerfully, not where there was a serious threat from the left, but where “old regime conservatism, which (more than liberal or social democracy) was fascism’s main rival...[was] weakened and factionalized” (ibidem: 364).
- 64 Mann shows that the “populist” parties of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries express nationalism and want a cleansing (mainly of immigrants). Trump’s turn away from the Republican Party’s endorsement of immigration (albeit to meet capitalists’ desire for cheap labor) and ICE’s current brutality meet the definition of cleansing. However, contemporary extreme rightist parties including the Republicans do not have significant paramilitaries, which in interwar Europe initially were composed of veterans. In Europe today there are almost no veterans since most of the continent abolished conscription decades ago and has not fought any significant wars in the lifetimes of almost all living citizens. “In 2016, 7% of U.S. adults were veterans, down from 18% in 1980” (Bialik, 2017). Young people, who in the 1930s fortified the first fascists of the 1920s, now are the least nationalistic cohorts and the ones most open to multiculturalism in both Europe and the US.
- 65 Most significantly, the right in America, and to a lesser but still significant degree in Europe, is opposed to statist policies except for the military and law enforcement. Mann’s analysis suggests that neoliberalism in fact immunizes societies against fascism by delegitimizing and foreclosing statist social welfare programs (though not increased spending and powers for the military or the police), even as milder forms of authoritarianism can thrive under neoliberalism. The Republicans do not offer a statist program. While Trump hinted at statism in his 2016 campaign, as we saw in our review of his policies above he has not acted on any of those tendencies, and the current Republican majorities in Congress show no sign of wanting to enact any sort of statist programs. More broadly, as Dylan Riley (2017: 21) shows, “Trump lacks a party organization [independent of the longstanding Republican Party], a militia and an ideology; his foreign policy as so far announced is isolationist, rather than revanchist — and indeed, what territorial losses could the US wish to reverse?”

- 66 Of course, the absence of fascism does not mean Trump or his European allies don't aspire to or won't be able to impose authoritarianism. Yet, the most authoritarian rightwing governments in Europe are in (no surprise) the places with the newest and weakest democratic institutions: Turkey and the former Soviet bloc countries. Among these, Turkey and to a lesser extent Russia stand out in their ability to imprison, terrorize, and kill opponents rather than, as the other countries do, confining their efforts (so far) to weakening their rivals' ability to win elections. Thus, up to now, the opportunities to create authoritarianism are just where we'd expect them. That is why it is just as unanalytic to look to Putin's Russia or Orbán's Hungary for lessons that apply to the US, as it is to look to Hitler's Germany. Even if there were proof that Trump is trying to copy Putin's or other authoritarians' techniques, that in itself would not tell us much about the likelihood that such methods would succeed in the US.
- 67 Trump's descriptions of himself and his rhetoric at his rallies certainly point to a desire to become an authoritarian leader. However, with the significant exception of his government's treatment of immigrants, Trump has been unable so far to limit civil liberties in any way. Yet, authoritarianism has two sides: repression and violation of the rule of law. Usually authoritarians attempt both, but do not necessarily succeed in both equally or at the same time. As I noted above, if Trump is allowed to end investigations of his possible crimes, or if the Supreme Court ultimately allows Trump to pardon himself or his associates in criminal activities, then the rule of law will be fatally undermined in the US. It is possible that judges will allow such self-serving behavior even as they uphold civil liberties.
- 68 The good news is that because Trump has not built the paramilitaries or independent political movements that have allowed other authoritarian wannabes to override systemic and customary limits on an elected head of government's power, he remains dependent on the existing Republican Party to decide how far he can go to aggrandize himself and what policies he can implement. That party and the economic elites that support it will calculate whether they will be better able to remain in office and, for economic elites, to pursue their broader interests, by allowing Trump to increase his personal power or by forcing him to conform to existing legal norms. Such calculations can vary from one policy area or one set of legal constraints to another. Ultimately, such calculations will be affected by the extent of popular mobilization and by the degree to which ordinary citizens use the ever-narrower terrain of American electoral democracy to challenge Trump, the Republican Party that empowers him, and elites that benefit from Republican rule and policies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bailey, Michael A. (2013), "Is today's Court the most conservative in sixty years? Challenges and opportunities in measuring judicial preferences", *Journal of Politics*, 75 (3), pp. 821-834.

Balderrama, Francisco, and Raymond Rodriguez (2006), *Decade of Betrayal. Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press.

Bentele, Keith, and Erin O'Brien (2013), "Jim Crow 2.0? Why states consider and adopt restrictive voter access policies", *Perspectives on Politics*, 11 (4), pp. 1088-1116.

Berman, Ali (2015), *Give Us the Ballot. The Modern Struggle for Voting Rights in America*, New York, Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Bialik, Kristen (2017), "The changing face of America's veteran population", Washington, DC, Pew Research Center, available at: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/10/the-changing-face-of-americas-veteran-population/> (last access in October 2018).

Chait, Jonathan (2008), "Will Trump be meeting with his counterpart — or his handler?", *New York Magazine*, available at: <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2018/07/trump-putin-russia-collusion.html> (last access in October 2018).

Cochrane, Emily (2018), "Trump assails critics and mocks #MeToo: what about Putin? 'He's Fine'", *The New York Times*, July 5, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/05/us/politics/trump-montana-rally-warren-tester.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=first-column-region®ion=top-news&WT.nav=top-news> (last access in October 2018).

Cohen, Eliot A. (2017), "How Trump is ending the American era", *The Atlantic*, October, available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/10/is-trump-ending-the-american-era/537888/> (last access in October 2018).

Cox, Ronald (2018), "Corporate interests and U.S. Foreign Policy", in G. William Domhoff et al., *Studying the Power Elite. Fifty Years of Who Rules America?*, New York, Routledge, pp. 126-142.

Daley, David (2016), *Rat F**ked. The True Story Behind the Secret Plan to Steal America's Democracy*, New York, Liveright.

Department of Energy (2017) *U.S. Energy and Employment Report*, Washington, DC, Department of Energy, available at: https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2017/01/f34/2017%20US%20Energy%20and%20Jobs%20Report_0.pdf (last access in October 2018).

Epstein, Lee, William M. Landes, and Richard A. Posner (2013), "How business fares in the Supreme Court", *Minnesota Law Review*, 97, pp. 1431-1472.

Gessen, Masha (2016), "Autocracy: rules for survival", *The New York Review of Books*, November 10, available at: <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2016/11/10/trump-election-autocracy-rules-for-survival/> (last access in October 2018).

Grunwald, Michael (2017), "Donald Trump is a consequential President: just not in the ways you think", *Politico*, December 30, available at: <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/12/30/rating-donald-trump-year-one-2017-216199> (last access in October 2018).

Hacker, Jacob S., and Paul Pierson (2016), *American Amnesia. How the War on Government Led Us to Forget What Made America Prosper*, New York, Simon & Schuster.

Haney-Lopez, Ian (2014), "The racism at the heart of the Reagan presidency", *Salon*, January 11, available at: https://www.salon.com/2014/01/11/the_racism_at_the_heart_of_the_reagan_presidency/ (last access in October 2018).

Helper, Susan, Jason Miller, and Mark Muro (2018), "Why undermining fuel efficiency standards would harm the U.S. auto industry", Washington, DC, Brookings Institution, available at: https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2018/07/02/why-undermining-fuel-efficiency-standards-would-harm-the-us-auto-industry/?utm_campaign=Brookings%20Brief&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=64219138 (last access in October 2018).

Kakutani, Michiko (2018), *The Death of Truth. Notes on Falsehood in the Age of Trump*, New York, Tim Duggan Books.

Lachmann, Richard (2018), "Trump: how did he happen and what will he do", *Sociologia, Problemas e Práticas*, 86, pp. 9-25, available at: <http://revistas.rcaap.pt/sociologiapp/article/view/13532/10325> (last access in October 2018).

Lachmann, Richard, and Michael Schwartz (2018), "The life and times of who rules America? And the future of power structure research", in G. William Domhoff et al., *Studying the Power Elite. Fifty Years of Who Rules America?*, New York, Routledge, pp. 70-85.

Lake, David A. (2018), "International legitimacy lost? Rule and resistance when America is first", *Perspectives on Politics*, 16 (1), pp. 6-21.

Levenson, Zachary (2017), "Articulating Trumpism, or, thanks, Obama!", *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, available at: <http://berkeleyjournal.org/2017/04/articulating-trumpism-or-thanks-obama/> (last access in October 2018).

Levy, Martin, and Martin Shapiro (Eds.) (2004), *Transatlantic Policymaking in an Age of Austerity*, Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press.

Liptak, Adam (2018), "Supreme Court upholds Ohio's purge of voting rolls", *The New York Times*, June 11, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/11/us/politics/supreme-court-upholds-ohios-purge-of-voting-rolls.html> (last access in October 2018).

Mann, Michael (2004), *Fascists*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Marx, Karl (1935 [1852]), *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Moscow, Progress Publishers.

McCarthy, Michael A. (2017), *Dismantling Solidarity. Capitalist Politics and American Pensions since the New Deal*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

McMahon, Kevin (2018), "Is the Supreme Court's legitimacy undermined in a polarized age?", *The Conversation*, July 7, available at: https://theconversation.com/is-the-supreme-courts-legitimacy-undermined-in-a-polarized-age-99473?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20July%207%202018%20-%20105879372&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20July%207%202018%20-%20105879372+Version+A+CID_e9e0e7cc653944372504031e0271e8a1&utm_source=campaign_monitor_us&utm_term=Is%20the%20Supreme%20Courts%20legitimacy%20undermined%20in%20a%20polarized%20age (last access in October 2018).

Mills, C. Wright (1956), *The Power Elite*, New York, Oxford University Press.

OpenSecrets.org (2018), "Donor demographics", Washington, DC, Center for Responsive Politics, available at: <https://www.opensecrets.org/overview/donordemographics.php?cycle=2018&filter=A> (last access in October 2018).

Pacewitz, Josh (2016), *Partisans and Partners. The Politics of the Post-Keynesian Society*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

Paik, A. Naomi (2016), *Rightlessness. Testimony and Redress in U.S. Prison Camps since World War II*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press.

Perlstein, Rick (2012), "Exclusive: Lee Atwater's Infamous 1981 interview on the Southern Strategy", *The Nation*, November 13, available at: <https://www.thenation.com/article/exclusive-lee-atwaters-infamous-1981-interview-southern-strategy/> (last access in October 2018).

Prasad, Monica (2006), *The Politics of Free Markets. The Rise of Neoliberal Economic Policies in Britain, France, Germany, and the United States*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

- Riley, Dylan (2017), "American Brumaire?", *New Left Review*, 103, pp. 21-32.
- Riley, Dylan, Rebecca Emigh, and Patricia Ahmed (2018), "Back to the future? The National Origins Act as a potential model for Trump's census policy", *Policy Trajectories*, available at: <http://chs.asa-comparative-historical.org/back-to-the-future-the-national-origins-act-as-a-potential-model-for-trumps-census-policy/> (last access in October 2018).
- Saunders, George (2016), "Who are all these Trump supporters?", *The New Yorker*, July 11.
- Sherlock, Molly, and Donald Marples (2018), *The 2017 Tax Revision (P.L. 115-97). Comparison to 2017 Tax Law*, Washington, DC, Congressional Research Service, available at: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R45092.pdf> (last access in October 2018).
- Skocpol, Theda (2003), *Diminished Democracy. From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press.
- Snyder, Timothy (2016), "20 Lessons from the 20th century on how to survive in Trump's America", *In These Times*, November 21, available at: <http://inthesetimes.com/article/19658/20-lessons-from-the-20th-century-on-how-to-survive-in-trumps-america> (last access in October 2018).
- Tax Policy Center (2017), *Distributional Analysis of the Conference Agreement for the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act*, Washington, DC, Urban Institute & Brookings Institution, available at: <https://www.taxpolicycenter.org/publications/distributional-analysis-conference-agreement-tax-cuts-and-jobs-act/full> (last access in October 2018).
- Valverde, Miriam (2017), "Have deportations increased under Donald Trump? Here's what the data shows", *Politifact*, December 19th, available at: <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/article/2017/dec/19/have-deportations-increased-under-donald-trump-her/> (last access in October 2018).
- Wallerstein, Immanuel (2017), "The falsity of false consciousness", *Commentary* #445, March 17, available at: <https://www.iwallerstein.com/the-falsity-of-false-consciousness/> (last access in October 2018).
- Wamhoff, Steve, and Matthew Gardner (2018), "Federal tax cuts in the Bush, Obama, and Trump years", *Analysis*, July 18, Washington, DC, Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, available at: <https://itep.org/wp-content/uploads/0710-Federal-Tax-Cuts-in-the-Bush-Obama-and-Trump-Years.pdf> (last access in October 2018).
- Zweigenhaft, Richard, and G. William Domhoff (2018), *Diversity in the Power Elite. Ironies and Unfulfilled Promises*, Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield (3th edition).

ABSTRACTS

I review Donald Trump's actions as president to evaluate the extent to which he differs from longstanding Republican Party policies. I find that except for trade and immigration he has furthered existing Republican desires in the fields of tax cuts, deregulation, weakening labor unions, and the appointment of rightwing judges. I then turn to the question of whether Trump is an authoritarian. I show that while his rhetoric is an escalation of previous Republican racial demagoguery, Trump benefits more than he adds to his party's decades-long strategy of suppressing minority and young voters, vulgarizing political discourse and normalizing brazen lying by candidates and officials, obstructing Democratic officeholders, and allowing unlimited campaign spending by rich people and corporations. I conclude that Trump is now the head of an

increasingly authoritarian political party rather than a self-generated strongman. This reduces the insights one can gain from comparisons with rulers like Hitler, Putin or Erdogan.

Revêm-se as ações de Donald Trump enquanto presidente para avaliar até que ponto ele difere das linhas políticas duradouras do Partido Republicano. Com exceção do comércio e da imigração, ele promoveu os desejos republicanos já existentes nos campos de cortes de impostos, desregulamentação, enfraquecimento dos sindicatos de trabalhadores e nomeação de juízes de direita. De seguida, aborda-se a questão do autoritarismo de Trump. Mostra-se que enquanto a sua retórica é uma escalada da anterior demagogia racial republicana, Trump beneficia mais do que acrescenta à estratégia de décadas do seu partido de reprimir os eleitores jovens e as minorias, vulgariza o discurso político e normaliza a insolência de candidatos e funcionários, obstrui os funcionários democratas e permite gastos de campanha ilimitados por pessoas ricas e por corporações. Conclui-se que Trump é agora o líder de um partido político cada vez mais autoritário em vez de um homem forte autoproduzido. Isto reduz a percepção que se pode obter das comparações com governantes como Hitler, Putin ou Erdogan.

Cet article passe en revue les actions de Donald Trump afin de voir à quel point il s'éloigne des lignes politiques durables du Parti Républicain. Hormis le commerce et l'immigration, on observe une augmentation des désirs républicains déjà existants en ce qui concerne les baisses d'impôts, la déréglementation, l'affaiblissement des syndicats de travailleurs et la nomination de juges de droite. L'article aborde ensuite la question de l'autoritarisme de Trump. Il montre que tant que sa rhétorique est une escalade de la démagogie raciale républicaine existante, Trump bénéficie, plus qu'il n'y ajoute, de la stratégie poursuivie pendant des décennies par son parti de réprimer les électeurs jeunes et les minorités, il vulgarise le discours politique et normalise l'insolence des candidats et des fonctionnaires, fait obstruction aux fonctionnaires démocrates et permet des dépenses de campagnes illimitées financées par de riches particuliers et des groupes économiques. L'étude conclut que Trump est aujourd'hui le leader d'un parti politique de plus en plus autoritaire au lieu d'un homme fort qui ne doit sa réussite qu'à lui-même. Cela réduit la perception que l'on peut obtenir des comparaisons avec des gouvernants tels que Hitler, Putin ou Erdogan.

Se revisan las acciones de Donald Trump como presidente para evaluar hasta qué punto él difiere de las líneas políticas duraderas del Partido Republicano. Con excepción del comercio y de la inmigración aumentaron los deseos republicanos ya existentes en términos de recortar impuestos, desreglamentar, debilitar los sindicatos de trabajadores y nominar jueces de derecha. A continuación, se aborda la cuestión del autoritarismo de Trump. Se muestra que mientras su retórica es una versión aumentada de la anterior demagogia racial republicana, Trump beneficia más de lo que aporta de la estrategia de décadas de su partido de reprimir a los electores jóvenes y de las minorías, vulgariza el discurso político y normaliza la insolencia de candidatos y funcionarios, obstruye a los funcionarios demócratas y permite gastos de campaña ilimitados a personas ricas y a corporaciones. Se concluye, que Trump es ahora el líder de un partido político cada vez más autoritario en vez de un hombre fuerte autoproducido. Esto reduce la percepción que se puede obtener de las comparaciones con gobernantes como Hitler, Putin o Erdogan.

INDEX

Mots-clés: Trump, Parti Républicain, impôts, déréglementation, autoritarisme, néolibéralism

Keywords: Trump, Republican Party, taxes, deregulation, authoritarianism, neoliberalism

Palabras claves: Trump, Partido Republicano, impuestos, desregulación, autoritarismo, neoliberalismo

Palavras-chave: Trump, Partido Republicano, impostos, desregulamentação, autoritarismo, neoliberalismo

AUTHOR

RICHARD LACHMANN

Professor at State University of New York at Albany, College of Arts and Sciences, Sociology Department, 1400 Washington Ave, Arts & Sciences, 351, Albany, New York 12222. E-mail: rlachmann@albany.edu