

**DEFENDING THE ESTABLISHMENT:
IDENTIFYING THE FORCES THAT UNDERMINE AMERICA'S POLITICAL
ORGANIZATIONS**

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A thesis submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in Government

Baltimore, Maryland
December 2022

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ABSTRACT

Academic analysis of the 2016 United States presidential election often credits political polarization for Donald Trump’s victory. But scholars have dedicated less attention to the electorate’s widespread and growing distrust of the nation’s political institutions. Trump both capitalized on and contributed to Americans’ skepticism of longstanding establishment institutions, including the media, political parties, and administrative agencies. In the same year, Bernie Sanders (I-VT) nearly won the Democratic presidential primary by calling for a political revolution.

In the leadup to the election, the term “fake news” gained widespread popularity. Many modern voters consider political parties corrupt organizations that prevent government from operating efficiently. Millions of Americans came to believe a “deep state” of bureaucrats covertly control government. These ideas did not suddenly arise in 2016. They developed through decades of technological, social, and political changes that created an environment hostile to insiders.

The United States remains one of the most stable, secure, and prosperous nations in the world. Americans should exercise caution before undermining the peripheral establishment institutions that organically developed to help build, stabilize, and structure the national purpose. This thesis considers why government distrust gained momentum over the last fifty years and how it impacts society. Anti-establishment rhetoric frequently goes unchallenged. This thesis defends the establishment.

Reviewers:

Professor Richard Skinner
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1 OVERVIEW.....	5
CHAPTER 2 OVERVIEW.....	8
CHAPTER 3 OVERVIEW.....	11
CONCLUSION.....	13
CHAPTER I: BLURRED LINES.....	16
Introduction.....	16
Fake News Defined.....	18
The Internet's Impact.....	21
Polluting the Information Environment.....	25
New Media in 2016.....	30
Conclusion: Alternative Facts.....	35
CHAPTER II: PARTY OVER.....	38
Introduction.....	38
What Parties Do.....	43
Evolving Party Structures.....	46
Internet: The New Frontier.....	50
Populism Rises.....	55
Populist Leaders.....	60
Conclusion: The New Jacksonians.....	64
CHAPTER III: GOING DEEP.....	68
Introduction.....	68
What Makes a State?.....	72
What Makes a Deep State?.....	75
The Administration's Role.....	79
Administrative Overreach.....	84
Government Distrust and Bureaucracy.....	88
Conclusion: The Steady State.....	93
CONCLUSION.....	96
Summary.....	96
COVID-19 in the United States and Denmark.....	99
Institutional Design Protects Elections.....	105
Limitations.....	107
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	109

INTRODUCTION:

Weakened Political Institutions and the 2016 and 2020 Presidential Elections

Academic analysis of the 2016 United States presidential election often centers on the nation's rising political polarization. Many scholars argue that Donald Trump used contentious rhetoric to exploit divisive issues such as immigration, gun control, and abortion.¹ While polarization certainly impacted the election's outcome, it does not fully explain why Americans chose an inexperienced novice to occupy the nation's most powerful position. Throughout the 2016 campaign and his presidency, Trump also capitalized on the American public's growing distrust of their government and its political institutions.

This thesis examines the diminished standing of three of America's most important establishment institutions: the press, political parties, and executive agencies. The social sciences do not uniformly define exactly what constitutes an "institution."² Therefore, this paper uses the terms "political institutions" or "establishment institutions" to differentiate media, parties, and agencies from formal institutions such as the president, legislature, and judiciary. Political institutions operate through a less constitutional framework and developed organically over centuries to help American citizens interact with their government and society.

Academics have extensively studied the 2016 presidential election and conducted thorough research into explaining its results. However, few observers have viewed these data through the lens of weakened establishment institutions. The information needed to analyze establishment decline already exists, but little scholarship has connected the dots to demonstrate how weakened political institutions directly led to Trump's victory in the 2016 election and his continued impact

¹ Mastroianni, Adam M., and Jason Dana. "Widespread misperceptions of long-term attitude change." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 119, no. 11 (2022): p. 1.

² Ondrová, Alena. "What Are Political Institutions?" WYGOP. October 12, 2020.

on American politics. Further, this paper does not seek to present specific solutions to the issues it identifies. Instead, it extensively focuses on the problem and explains the changes that impacted the media, political parties, and the administrative state over the last several decades that led to institutional decline.

Trump referred to the press as “fake news” and “the enemy of the American people.”³ He labeled elected representatives who disagreed with his agenda part of the corrupt “Washington swamp.”⁴ Government employees that questioned his presidential authority or leaked information represented a “deep state.” Trump convinced his supporters that officials and journalists who criticized the administration’s “America First” platform corrupted the political process.⁵ On the contrary, political institutions represent essential components of America’s government system and were carefully advanced to check presidential authority.

The electorate cannot “Make America Great Again” by undermining and attacking the establishment institutions that helped build the United States. Before Americans embrace an anti-establishment agenda, they should consider how political institutions contribute to and safeguard their system of government. The media communicates information that helps audiences understand society and politics.⁶ Political parties interact with voters and candidates to organize ideas, develop necessary reforms, and build coalitions.⁷ Administrators form the practical end of government that

³ Van Dalen, Arjen. "Rethinking Journalist–Politician Relations in the Age of Populism: How Outsider Politicians Delegitimize Mainstream Journalists." *Journalism* (2019): p. 17-18.

⁴ Schaffar, Wolfram. "'Trust Me, I Am the One Who Will Drain the Swamp': An Interview With Walden Bello on Fascism in the Global South." *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies* 11, no. 1 (2018): p. 153.

⁵ Finkelhor, David, Gerald T. Hotaling, and Andrea Sedlak. *Missing, abducted, runaway, and throwaway children in America: First report, numbers and characteristics national incidence studies: Executive summary*. DIANE Publishing, 1990: p. 553.

⁶ Tandoc Jr, Edson C., Zheng Wei Lim, and Richard Ling. "Defining 'Fake News': A Typology of Scholarly Definitions." *Digital Journalism* 6, no. 2 (2018): p. 148.

⁷ Issacharoff, Samuel. "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed Out Political Parties." *Houston Law Review* 54 (2017): p. 4-5.

implements policy and mobilizes resources to assist and protect citizens.⁸ Each serves a unique and vital role indispensable to national stability.

Over the last several decades technological and social developments deteriorated each political institution's capacity. The internet democratized news, enabling amateurs to participate in journalism without undertaking the rigorous process of verifying facts.⁹ This led to an explosion of misinformation that blurred the line between truth and fiction.¹⁰ Primaries and internet fundraising empowered outsider candidates to operate without the consolidating force of party leadership. Candidate-centric campaigns skewed more extreme and populist while fighting the parties they hoped to represent.¹¹ Government distrust intensified beginning in the 1970s as many Americans began to view government itself as a problem.¹² Executive departments now face hostility from the people they vow to serve.

Trump's attacks on these establishment institutions climaxed in January 2021. Joe Biden, an insider politician who worked in Washington for fifty years defeated Trump in the 2020 election. Trump disregarded the results and accused the deep state of rigging the election in Biden's favor.¹³ He organized a demonstration outside the White House on January 6, the day Congress met to certify the electoral college results.¹⁴ While speaking at the rally, Trump raised his corruption accusations to an existential threat, saying, "If you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore."¹⁵ The crowd left the rally, broke into the U.S. Capitol, and attempted

⁸ Wilson, Woodrow. "The Study of Administration." *Political Science Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (June 1887): p. 197-198.

⁹ Purcell, Kristen, Lee Rainie, Amy Mitchell, Tom Rosenstiel, and Kenny Olmstead. "Understanding the Participatory News Consumer." *Pew Internet and American Life Project* 1 (2010): p. 20.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Magleby, David B., ed. *Financing the 2016 Election*. Brookings Institution Press, 2019: p. 13.

¹² Eisenstadt, Michael. "Government is the problem: Symbolic trajectories of the contemporary conservative movement." PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2018: p. 22.

¹³ Luke, Timothy W. "Democracy under threat after 2020 national elections in the USA: 'stop the steal' or 'give more to the grifter-in-chief?'" *Educational Philosophy and Theory* (2021): p. 3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Smith, Michael. "Trial by Combat in the Modern World." *Barry L. Rev.* 27 (2022): p. 73.

to disrupt Congress' election certification. The ensuing riot resulted in five deaths, looting, and property destruction.¹⁶ The truth precisely opposes Trump's assessment. An accurate analysis would state, "If you fight these political institutions, you won't have a country anymore."

Weakened credibility prevented the press, political parties, and administrative agencies from effectively countering Trump's election rigging accusations. Trump supporters consider the media dishonest and therefore disregarded the information it presented. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and House Minority leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) both stated that Biden legitimately won the election, but party leadership could not hold voters or elected Republicans to their party-line messaging.¹⁷ Many of the state governments that control the election process suffered from widespread government distrust.

The following chapters consider why establishment trust deteriorated and how it impacts the United States government and its population. Each chapter unfolds in a similar manner: First, it defines the establishment institution and considers its role in the American political system. Second, it contrasts the establishment institution with a real-world alternative. Third, it documents technological, political, economic, and social changes that impacted its control, efficiency, and influence. Finally, it examines how Trump exploited the establishment's diminished capacity to achieve electoral success.

Chapter I, entitled, "Blurred Lines: Identifying the Forces that Undermine Establishment Media" examines the free press in the United States. First, it develops a usable definition of "news" and explains journalists' role in society. Second, it contrasts news with "fake news." Third, it considers how technological innovations such as the internet and portable devices changed the

¹⁶ Smith, "Trial by Combat in the Modern World," p. 73.

¹⁷ Astor, Maggie. "Kevin McCarthy Says No One Is 'Questioning the Legitimacy' of the 2020 Election. That's Not True." *The New York Times*. May 12, 2021.

way Americans interact with information and how it led to unaccountable media sources collecting more influence over the political narrative. Finally, it describes Donald Trump's exploitation of the new media landscape to condemn media institutions and win the 2016 election.

Chapter II, entitled, "Party Over: Identifying the Forces that Undermine Political Parties" examines the diminished role of political parties in modern campaigns. First, it explains the need for political parties in modern democratic government. Second, it contrasts party-based political systems with populism that attacks "elite" control over party apparatus. Third, it analyzes how twenty-first century technology and various court decisions enabled candidate-centric campaigns to win elections while undermining the parties they hoped to represent. Finally, it considers the Trump and Bernie Sanders strategy in light of weakened party structures in the 2016 election.

Chapter III, entitled, "Going Deep: Identifying the Forces that Undermine Government Administration" examines the public's growing distrust of administrative agencies. First, it explains why a strong state apparatus developed in the United States. Second, it uses Turkey's Derin Devlet to exemplify a deep state and its illegitimate authority. Third, it considers why strong executive departments benefit modern democracy, but also investigates when bureaucracy grows too powerful. Finally, it explains how Trump exploited government distrust to convince supporters that a deep state actively combated his presidential goals.

Chapter I – Blurred Lines: Identifying the Forces that Undermine Establishment Media

News means the communication of facts from one party to another party.¹⁸ The American Society of News Editors (ASNE) says journalists serve the public welfare by enabling audiences to make judgements on issues facing their communities so they can develop into self-reliant and

¹⁸ Gelfert, "Fake News: A Definition," p. 87-88.

productive citizens.¹⁹ Responsible journalists protect freedom of speech, ensure accuracy, and maintain impartiality while scrutinizing officials and identifying impending problems.²⁰ Trustworthy outlets gain credibility as authoritative sources of information that offer a range of opinions on various political and social matters.²¹

News impacts politics through agenda-setting, framing, and priming. By discussing an issue reporters can add it to the public's agenda. Alternately, they can ignore stories and thereby fail to inform consumers about important matters.²² Framing considers how news organizations talk about issues. Outlets can use positive or negative words and phrases to frame the public's perception of a topic.²³ Priming combines agenda-setting and framing to alter the population's view of political candidates and parties.²⁴

The First Amendment Law Review defines fake news as journalistic output that appears truthful but knowingly includes empirically verifiable false assertions.²⁵ Fake news therefore must 1) Purposely mimic real news 2) Include provable misinformation and 3) Intentionally deceive audiences. Legacy news outlets substantiate every factual statement reported in their publications, even in opinion and satire.²⁶ Failure to perform factchecking amounts to negligence and fails

¹⁹ "ASNE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES," ASNE, <https://members.newsleaders.org/asne-principles>.

²⁰ Gunter, Barrie, and Maria Touri. "News Blogs: Strengthening Democracy Through Conflict Prevention." In *Aslib Proceedings*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2009: p. 171.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 170-171.

²² Iyengar, Shanto, and Adam Simon. "News Coverage of the Gulf Crisis and Public Opinion: A Study of Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing." *Communication Research* 20, no. 3 (1993): p. 366.

²³ Field, Anjalie, Doron Kliger, Shuly Wintner, Jennifer Pan, Dan Jurafsky, and Yulia Tsvetkov. "Framing and Agenda-setting in Russian News: a Computational Analysis of Intricate Political Strategies." p. 3.

²⁴ Severin W. J., & Tankard J. W. *Uses of Mass Media*. In *Communication Theories: Origins, Methods, and Uses in the Mass Media* (4th ed.). New York: Longman, 1997: p. 226.

²⁵ Calvert, Clay, and Austin Vining. "Filtering Fake News Through a Lens of Supreme Court Observations and Adages." *First Amend. L. Rev.* 16 (2017): p. 158-159.

²⁶ Tandoc, Zheng, & Ling, 'Defining 'Fake News' A Typology of Scholarly Definitions,' p. 142-143.

ASNE's principles.²⁷ Recent years have witnessed an explosion of different outlets that disregard accuracy standards.²⁸

Three novel changes exacerbated this problem. First, satellites and smartphones led to portable news consumption. Audiences now access immediate information from virtually anywhere in the world at any time.²⁹ Second, social media and algorithms created personalized news. Users customize news feeds that filter information and only access stories that reinforce their biases.³⁰ Third, people actively participate in journalism by sharing stories with their peers and uploading unique images and videos.³¹ Average citizens with no news training now drive coverage as much as professionals. When people participate in news, they gain a stake in a story's perception and refuse to change their views.³²

These changes manifest in a misinformed society unable to engage in civic reasoning.³³ A study by *Communication Monographs* found that most Americans think they can detect misinformation but more than half believed at least one fake news story from the 2016 election cycle.³⁴ In the month before the election over sixty-five million Americans visited a fake news website and over a tenth of political social media posts contained disinformation.³⁵ Only 14 percent of today's grade school students can distinguish between facts and opinion.³⁶ Since two-thirds of

²⁷ Quandt, Thorsten, Lena Frischlich, Svenja Boberg, and Tim Schatto-Eckrodt. "Fake News." *The International Encyclopedia of Journalism Studies* (2019): p. 2.

²⁸ Pariser, Eli. *The Filter Bubble: How the New Personalized Web is Changing What We Read and How We Think*. Penguin, 2011: p. 84.

²⁹ Purcell, et. al, *Understanding the Participatory News Consumer*, " p. 20.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ McGrew, Sarah, Teresa Ortega, Joel Breakstone, and Sam Wineburg. "The Challenge That's Bigger than Fake News: Civic Reasoning in a Social Media Environment." *American Educator*. 41, no. 3 (2017): p 7-8.

³⁴ Walter, Nathan, and Sheila T. Murphy. "How to Unring the Bell: A Meta-Analytic Approach to Correction of Misinformation." *Communication Monographs* 85, no. 3 (2018): p. 437.

³⁵ Guess, Nyhan, and Reifler, "Selective Exposure to Misinformation: Evidence from the Consumption of Fake News During the 2016 US Presidential Campaign," p. 4.

³⁶ Link, Chris, "Fighting Fake News in the Classroom - EdSurge News," EdSurge. December 30, 2019.

Americans consume most of their political information through social media,³⁷ these findings create concerns.

In 2016 Donald Trump capitalized on the new landscape to run a campaign that demonized mainstream media. He eschewed traditional media strategies and embraced social media to speak directly to supporters.³⁸ In doing so, he set his own agenda, framed stories for his benefit, and primed opponents on his terms. Since Trump supporters distrusted establishment media, news outlets could not effectively respond. For example, Trump claimed millions of dead people and illegal immigrants voted in the 2016 election.³⁹ More than half of Trump supporters believed his assertions were “definitely” or “probably” true.”⁴⁰ Trump’s communicative strategy succeeded because technological, social, and political shifts weakened legacy media’s influence.

Chapter II – Party Over: Identifying the Forces that Undermine Political Parties

The Constitution never references political parties and many American founders feared factions harmed society.⁴¹ But early American politicians could not accomplish much without an organizing force.⁴² Policy implementation requires coalition-building and legislative bodies without structure devolve into a ponderous stalemate. Parties help politicians refine complex ideas through compromise and collective action. Voters then use partisanship to understand divergent viewpoints and establish accountability.⁴³ Despite the founders’ initial reluctance, political parties

³⁷ McGrew, et al., "The Challenge That's Bigger than Fake News: Civic Reasoning in a Social Media Environment." p. 4.

³⁸ Smith, Jacob D. "Political Priming and Agenda Setting in Twitter for the 2016 Presidential Election." PhD diss., 2017: p. 5.

³⁹ Holman, Mirya R., and J. Celeste Lay. "They see dead people (voting): Correcting misperceptions about voter fraud in the 2016 US presidential election." *Journal of Political Marketing* 18, no. 1-2 (2019): p. 31.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Issacharoff, Samuel. "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed Out Political Parties." *Houston Law Review* 54 (2017): p. 4.

⁴² Ibid., p. 11.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 11-12.

formed at the genesis of the United States and today's two-party system solidified by the end of the Civil War.⁴⁴

Historically, American political parties controlled candidates through patronage.⁴⁵ Office-seekers relied on parties for ballot access, funding, and voter outreach as party bosses directly chose the candidates that would appear on general election ballots.⁴⁶ In return, winning candidates supported party policies to maintain good relations with leadership.⁴⁷ Congress eventually developed committees to facilitate the legislative process. Committee heads blocked or championed bills based on a representative's standing.⁴⁸ Thus, disregarding the party's goals jeopardized a politician's future.

Eighteenth and early nineteenth century political parties consisted of loose state and local coalitions. New York Democrats often held different views than South Carolina Democrats.⁴⁹ Most voters primarily considered local concerns and seldom engaged with federal issues. By the late nineteenth century railroads freely moved people and goods around North America and nationalized the economy.⁵⁰ Newspapers enjoyed wider circulation which led to higher literacy. By the early twentieth century more Americans accessed and understood political literature. Citizens began to express federal policy preferences and even develop opinions on matters facing other states, which led to more homogenic party platforms.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Issacharoff, "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed Out Political Parties," p. 4.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Gerber, Elisabeth R., and Rebecca B. Morton. "Primary Election Systems and Representation." *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization* (1998): p. 314.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Issacharoff, "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed out Political Parties," p. 9.

⁴⁹ Schleicher, David. "The Seventeenth Amendment and Federalism in an Age of National Political Parties." *Hastings LJ* 65 (2013): p. 1063.

⁵⁰ Mutch, Robert E. *Buying the Vote: A History of Campaign Finance Reform*. Oxford University Press, 2014: p. 48.

⁵¹ Schleicher, "The Seventeenth Amendment and Federalism in an Age of National Political Parties," p. 1060.

Better-informed citizens felt disenfranchised by party leadership and pushed government to institute reforms. In the 1890s several states sanctioned primary elections that enabled party voters to choose which candidates would represent their party in local, state, or national elections.⁵² By 1915 more than half of states followed suit and by 1972 both major parties embraced primaries or caucuses nationwide.⁵³ Primaries changed the political landscape since candidates needed to court primary voters instead of party leaders. However, primary turnout remains low and those who participate disproportionately consist of activists and single-issue voters.⁵⁴ Therefore, primaries tilted candidates to the extreme ends of the political spectrum.

Two changes to campaign finance further diminished party power. First, a series of Supreme Court decisions struck down laws requiring donation limits and disclosure.⁵⁵ Second, the internet facilitated a large number of small donors to contribute directly to campaigns.⁵⁶ These developments freed candidates from party funding and enabled them to solicit donations for their own sake. Both large and small donors skew more radical than primary voters. With this new funding structure, campaigns began to abide by donors' activist desires rather than party leadership's moderate policies.⁵⁷

Historically, party leaders blunted extremist candidates by denying them patronage. Today, primaries and self-funding allow outsiders to control their own campaigns.⁵⁸ Incumbents increasingly face difficult primary challenges from radicals who run against party establishment

⁵² Issacharoff, "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed out Political Parties," p. 28.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Wihbey, John, and Denise-Marie Ordway. "Voter Participation in Presidential Primaries." *The Journalist's Resource*. December 5, 2020.

⁵⁵ Boatright, Robert G., Michael J. Malbin, and Brendan Glavin. "Independent expenditures in congressional primaries after *Citizens United*: Implications for interest groups, incumbents and political parties." *Interest Groups & Advocacy* 5, no. 2 (2016): p. 124.

⁵⁶ Magleby, David B. *Financing the 2012 Election*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2014: p. 91.

⁵⁷ Issacharoff, "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed out Political Parties," p. 16.

⁵⁸ Neider, Madeleine. "Trump, Twitter and the Death of the American Political Party: A Discussion of the Fate of the American Party System Before, During, and After the Presidential Election of 2016." (2017): p. 54.

and attack Washington's political processes.⁵⁹ In noncompetitive districts, officeholders encounter more strident competition during the primary than the general election.⁶⁰ Even when centrist incumbents win, their challengers force them to move towards the fringe of the political spectrum. As a result, Americans increasingly choose between two polarizing candidates.⁶¹

In 2016 Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders' self-funding and organization models appealed to populist voters who historically disassociated with major parties. Trump ran for president as a Republican even though he changed his political affiliation at least five times and admittedly supported Democrats and Republicans equally throughout his business career.⁶² Sanders ran as a Democrat despite never belonging to the party during forty years of government service.⁶³ Those who voted for Trump or Sanders varied across age, ethnic, and religious demographics. The strongest indicator for supporting either candidate centered on government distrust.⁶⁴ Trump overtook the Republican Party. Sanders lost to establishment candidate Hillary Clinton, but his influence continued into the general election. Both succeeded because of changes that weakened party leadership's ability to control their own processes.

Chapter III: Going Deep: Identifying the Forces that Undermine Government Admin.

"State" remains a somewhat ambiguous term but studying the United States founding documents helps draft a definition. The *Declaration of Independence* explains America's philosophy but does not create a legal system to protect its ideals. In 1777 delegates from the

⁵⁹ Neider, "Trump, Twitter and the Death of the American Political Party: A Discussion of the Fate of the American Party System Before, During, and After the Presidential Election of 2016," p. 54.

⁶⁰ Steger, "Do Primary Voters Draw from a Stacked Deck? Presidential Nominations in an Era of Candidate-Centered Campaigns." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2000): p. 730.

⁶¹ Boatright, et al., *Independent expenditures in congressional primaries after Citizens United: Implications for interest groups, incumbents and political parties*," p. 126.

⁶² Goertzel, "Protest Cycles in the United States: From the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street to Sanders and Trump," p. 184.

⁶³ Schjønberg, Inger-Marie. "My heart is in Burlington: the US Socialist Senator: A Biographical Analysis on Bernard 'Bernie' Sanders and his Road to the US Senate 2006." Master's Thesis, 2010: p. 60.

⁶⁴ Dyck, Joshua J., Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz, and Michael Coates. "Primary Distrust: Political Distrust and Support for the Insurgent Candidacies of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the 2016 Primary." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51, no. 2 (2018): p. 352.

colonies attempted to create American government when drafting *The Articles of Confederation*.⁶⁵ Since the colonists feared centralized authority, they designed a weak federal government unable to collect taxes, mobilize the army, or regulate commerce.⁶⁶ This proved so ineffective that delegates met again in 1787 develop the United States Constitution which featured much stronger institutions.⁶⁷ The Constitution remains America's principal legal document today.

The failure of the Articles of Confederation and the strength and durability of the Constitution exemplify state necessity. A state is an official framework under which to organize government and society. States create legal government institutions that employ officials beholden to consistent law.⁶⁸ These institutions deliver citizens collective security, justice, and prosperity. Democratic states hold elected representatives accountable to voters to ensure sovereignty and protect against tyranny.⁶⁹

In order to enjoy the state's protection, citizens must carry out certain obligations. When people pay taxes, they buy into their government and earn the right to participate in decision-making.⁷⁰ The public needs to remain informed in order to make intelligent choices in elections.⁷¹ Further, people must respect government decisions they disagree with. Ignoring or fighting against electoral, judicial, or legislative results undermines the citizen-state relationship.⁷²

The term "deep state" derives from its Turkish counterpart "Derin Devlet."⁷³ Derin Devlet (literally Turkish for "deep state") refers to a secret group of Turkish soldiers that worked with the

⁶⁵ McLaughlin, Andrew Cunningham. *The Confederation and the Constitution, 1783-1789*. Vol. 10. Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1905: p. 179.

⁶⁶ Smith, Douglas G. "An Analysis of Two Federal Structures: The Articles of Confederation and the Constitution." *San Diego L. Rev.* 34 (1997): p. 263.

⁶⁷ Smith, "An Analysis of Two Federal Structures: The Articles of Confederation and the Constitution," p. 263.

⁶⁸ Dumouchel, Paul. "Political violence and democracy." *RitsILCS_23*. 4pp (2012): p. 121.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Lister, Ruth, Noel Smith, Sue Middleton, and Lynne Cox. "Young people talk about citizenship: Empirical perspectives on theoretical and political debates." *Citizenship studies* 7, no. 2 (2003): p. 238.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 242.

⁷² Lincoln, Abraham. "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision." *Teaching American History*. June 26, 1857.

⁷³ Filkins, Dexter. "The Deep State." *The New Yorker* 12 (2012): p. 40.

United States Department of Defense to combat Soviet aggression in the Middle East.⁷⁴ It carried out covert operations without the knowledge of even high-ranking government officials and held no legal authority nor accountability from democratic forces.⁷⁵ Instead of taxpayer funding, it raised revenue through illegal actions such as drug trafficking.⁷⁶ This example helps define the deep state. Legitimate government officials operate through legal, formal, transparent institutions. Deep state bureaucrats operate through illegal, informal, secret organizations.⁷⁷

The presence of strong administrators that differ with elected leaders does not always implicate deep state activity. In fact, administrators help check government corruption. Modern democracy depends on expert bureaucrats to enact policy and implement reforms.⁷⁸ Administrators often work in their roles for years or decades and add stability to the executive branch.⁷⁹ Because of their expertise, bureaucrats can inform elected representatives about complicated subjects.⁸⁰ Moreover, executive officials can identify when politicians pursue illegal or corrupt policies.⁸¹ The ability to hold leaders accountable proves vital in a country as large as the United States. What Trump and his supporters call “the deep state” should simply be called “the state.”⁸²

Government distrust exploded in the 1970s but reached record levels in the last decade. A 2020 *Ipsos/NPR* poll found that nearly 40 percent of Americans and more than half of Republicans believed an American “deep state” tried to prevent Trump from accomplishing his goals.⁸³ Mainstream Republicans like Senators Ted Cruz and Josh Hawley continue to engage in this sort

⁷⁴ Söyler, Mehtap. "Informal institutions, forms of state and democracy: the Turkish deep state." *Democratization* 20, no. 2 (2013): p. 316.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Filkins, "The Deep State," p. 45.

⁷⁷ Söyler, "Informal institutions, forms of state and democracy: the Turkish deep state," p. 311.

⁷⁸ Michaels, Jon D. "The American deep state." *Notre Dame L. Rev.* 93 (2017): p. 1664.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1668.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 1655.

⁸³ Newall, Malloroy. "More than 1 in 3 Americans believe a 'deep state' is working to undermine Trump." *IPSOS*. December 30, 2020

of conspiracy rhetoric.⁸⁴ Rightwing news outlets push the deep state narrative, which further entrenches Trump supporters into antiestablishment views.⁸⁵ In doing so, they undermine important executive departments. Elected leaders should face some administrative pushback from policy experts. When the public distrusts those administrators they cannot provide their necessary check on executive power. The divide between Americans and their executive institution threatens to further diminish the citizen-state relationship.

Conclusion

The concluding chapter applies these ideas to two recent events to demonstrate how weakened establishment institutions negatively impact society.

Combating a public health crisis like *COVID-19* requires strong leadership and robust political institutions. Media should communicate information to the public, political leaders need to develop comprehensive policy, and administrators must immediately mobilize resources. Growing skepticism towards establishment institutions prevented the United States government from successfully coordinating a sufficient plan to mitigate the pandemic's impact.

Further, people who trust establishment institutions fare better when dealing with devastating events like pandemics for two reasons.⁸⁶ First, those who trust establishment advice are more likely to follow their recommendations.⁸⁷ Second, trust in political institutions benefits a person's mental well-being.⁸⁸ In Denmark, a strong citizen-state relationship enabled Danish political institutions to act quickly and effectively while citizens mostly followed their medical

⁸⁴ Kranish, Michael. "Inside Ted Cruz's Last-Ditch Battle to Keep Trump in Power." The Washington Post. March 29, 2022.

⁸⁵ Horwitz, Robert B. "Trump and the 'deep state'." Policy Studies 42, no. 5-6 (2021): p. 482.

⁸⁶ Li, Shuangshuang, Yijia Sun, Jiaqi Jing, and Enna Wang. "Institutional Trust as a Protective Factor during the COVID-19 Pandemic in China." Behavioral Sciences 12, no. 8 (2022): p. 252.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 251.

establishment's guidelines.⁸⁹ Moreover, conspiracy theories commonly reported in American media are virtually nonexistent in the Danish press.⁹⁰

Election corruption allegations exposed voter distrust in their government. The American founders created the electoral college to limit corruption in presidential elections. This federalist system significantly reduces the likelihood of widespread voter fraud since states control their own electoral processes and assign electors as they choose.⁹¹ Voter fraud on a the level that could impact a president election would need to occur in thousands of different localities run by thousands of election officials.⁹²

Still, many Republicans continue to assert the 2020 election suffered from a lack of security, with some even accusing a deep state of effectively rigging the election. Vote rigging allegations without evidence severely undermine democracy and add to political institution distrust.⁹³ Even those who do not believe an individual election was rigged become less confident in elections generally.⁹⁴ If people generally trusted their establishment institutions to adequately secure elections, they would not become so susceptible to these allegations.

⁸⁹ Olagnier, David, and Trine H. Mogensen. "The Covid-19 pandemic in Denmark: big lessons from a small country." *Cytokine & growth factor reviews* 53 (2020): p. 10.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Nguyen, Anh Duy. "'Whose Electors? Our Electors!': Due Process as a Safeguard against Legislative Direct Appointment of Presidential Electors after an Election." *BCL Rev.* 63 (2022): p. 408.

⁹² Eggers, Andrew C., Haritz Garro, and Justin Grimmer. "No evidence for systematic voter fraud: A guide to statistical claims about the 2020 election." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118, no. 45 (2021): e2103619118.

⁹³ Albertson & Guiler, "Conspiracy theories, election rigging, and support for democratic norms.," p. 2.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

CHAPTER I: BLURRED LINES

Identifying the Forces that Undermine Establishment Media

Abstract

The American founders considered journalism important enough to enshrine its protection in the Constitution's First Amendment. In the twenty-first century, antagonistic political movements increasingly demonize establishment media organizations while elevating independent, partisan, and often inaccurate news outlets. This chapter analyzes the rise of alternative media and its impact on American society by differentiating its output from establishment journalism. New technology empowers nonprofessional journalists to undermine trusted sources of information. These new sources push misinformation to wide audiences, resulting in Americans holding extreme views detached from reality. A citizenry ill-equipped to understand their government cannot effectively participate in democracy or engage in civic reasoning. Legacy media works hard to preserve truth and accuracy, while social media blurs the line between truth and fiction.

Introduction

During the 2016 United States presidential election, Republican nominee Donald Trump branded American media “the fake news” and “the enemy of the American people” while encouraging his supporters to perpetuate those ideas.⁹⁵ Post-election surveys revealed nearly half of Americans found Trump more trustworthy than mainstream news outlets.⁹⁶ The other half believed Trump used the term “fake news” to eschew negative coverage.⁹⁷ These developments led *The Oxford Dictionary* to choose “post-truth” as its 2016 *Word of the Year*, defined as a system where, “Objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion.”⁹⁸

It should alarm Americans when the president calls the free press, “the enemy of the people,” and the dictionary defines the modern era as “post-truth.” The founders considered journalism a critical element of the American ethos. The First Amendment separately identifies

⁹⁵ Ross, Andrew S., and Damian J. Rivers. "Discursive Deflection: Accusation of “Fake News” and the Spread of Mis-and Disinformation in the Tweets of President Trump." *Social Media + Society* 4, no. 2 (2018): p. 2.

⁹⁶ Rose, Jonathan. "Brexit, trump, and post-truth politics." (2017): p. 555.

⁹⁷ Ross and Rivers, "Discursive Deflection: Accusation of “Fake News” and the Spread of Mis-and Disinformation in the Tweets of President Trump," p. 4.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

freedom of speech and freedom of the press to protect both spoken and written dialogue.⁹⁹ Reporting even helped catalyze the American Revolution through Thomas Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense*.¹⁰⁰ Benjamin Franklin called Paine's words more influential than military force¹⁰¹ and George Washington used the pamphlet to boost soldiers' morale.¹⁰²

Misinformation disseminated from political campaigns since the dawn of the country,¹⁰³ but twenty-first century technology adds novel developments to the fake news problem. Americans increasingly use social media as their primary source of political information while spreading stories that reinforce their opinions and disregarding those that offer counterarguments.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, the extreme disparity between how Republicans and Democrats respond to Trump's media attacks threatens to deepen political divisions.

On the other hand, those in power have spread disinformation for centuries.¹⁰⁵ American history is wrought with widespread belief in mistruths, from the Colonial Era's Salem Witch Trials to scientific defenses of racial segregation.¹⁰⁶ Politicians from Andrew Jackson to Richard Nixon held adversarial relationships with the media.¹⁰⁷ Today, the internet offers a vehicle to factcheck information and investigate the credibility of news reports from various viewpoints.¹⁰⁸

⁹⁹ Nimmer, Melville B. "Introduction--Is Freedom of the Press a Redundancy: What Does it Add to Freedom of Speech." *Hastings Law Journal* 26 (1974): p. 639-640.

¹⁰⁰ Michael J. Hogan, and Glen Williams, "Republican Charisma and the American Revolution: The Textual Persona of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 86, no. 1 (2000): p. 5.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁰³ Farrar-Myers, Victoria A., and Justin S. Vaughn, eds. *Controlling the message: New media in American political campaigns*. New York, NY: NYU Press, 2015, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ Guess, Andrew, Brendan Nyhan, and Jason Reifler. "Selective Exposure to Misinformation: Evidence from the Consumption of Fake News During the 2016 US Presidential Campaign." *European Research Council*. 9, no. 3 (2018): p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ Burkhardt, Joanna M. "History of fake news." *Library Technology Reports* 53, no. 8 (2017): p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ Higdon, Nolan. "What is Fake News? A Foundational Question for Developing Effective Critical News Literacy Education." *Democratic Communiqué* 29, no. 1 (2020): p. 8-10.

¹⁰⁷ Karpowitz, Christopher F. "What Can a President Learn from the News Media? The Instructive Case of Richard Nixon." *British Journal of Political Science* (2009): p. 765.

¹⁰⁸ Flanagin, Andrew J., and Miriam J. Metzger. "Perceptions of Internet Information Credibility." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 77, no. 3 (2000): p. 517.

Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign took advantage of technological developments to set a public agenda and frame stories for his benefit. The internet allowed the Trump campaign to circumvent legacy media and present a personalized version of news to supporters. Does Trump's strategy in the 2016 election represent a watershed event that permanently blurs the lines between truth and fiction? Or perhaps fake news in 2016 symbolizes the latest incarnation of a centuries-old problem. What, if anything, made the relationship between misinformation, politicians, and American citizens unique during the election cycle?

To answer these questions, this paper examines how fake news and contemporary technology distinguished 2016 from previous elections. First, it specifies a usable definition of fake news. Second, it examines how unique aspects of modern technology led to a portable, personalized, and participatory media landscape. Third, it investigates how increased disinformation pollutes the judgement of news consumers. It concludes by exploring President Trump's 2016 campaign and its interactions with these new developments.

Fake News Defined

No universally agreed-upon definition of "fake news" exists.¹⁰⁹ The concept predates America's founding, yet its meaning has fluctuated in the last several years.¹¹⁰ Deciphering a working definition of "fake news" first necessitates a definition of "news."

News means the communication of facts from one party to another party¹¹¹ or simply *the output of journalism*.¹¹² The American Society of News Editors (ASNE) provides insight into how

¹⁰⁹ Gelfert, Axel. "Fake news: A Definition." *Informal Logic* 38, no. 1 (2018): p. 93-94.

¹¹⁰ Tandoc Jr, Edson C., Zheng Wei Lim, and Richard Ling. "Defining 'Fake News' A Typology of Scholarly Definitions." *Digital Journalism* 6, no. 2 (2018): p. 148.

¹¹¹ Gelfert, "Fake News: A Definition," p. 87-88.

¹¹² Oreskes, Michael. "News: A Bit Hard to Define." *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 5, no. 3 (2000): p. 102.

journalists view themselves by stating its principles clearly on its website. ASNE says journalists, “Serve the general welfare by informing the people and enabling them to make judgments on the issues of the time.”¹¹³ Their principles include a responsibility to protect freedom of the press, uphold standards of truth and accuracy, avoid conflicts of interest, and maintain impartiality and fair play.¹¹⁴ Adherence to these principles enables journalists to help people understand their society and develop into free, safe, self-reliant, and productive citizens.¹¹⁵

As news outlets develop trust with audiences, they gain credibility as authoritative sources of accurate information.¹¹⁶ In free democracies journalists inform the public of their government’s actions by scrutinizing officials, exposing corruption, and identifying impending problems.¹¹⁷ Good journalists offer a range of opinions about matters facing the community¹¹⁸ to accelerate necessary reforms and prevent foreseeable conflicts from materializing.¹¹⁹

While these idealized versions of news standards bear value, journalists inevitably insert subjective elements into their reporting. Decisions involving what stories to cover or ignore and what details to incorporate or omit can leave consumers underinformed.¹²⁰ Furthermore, news media has expanded into a multi-billion dollar business, causing market forces to impact its behavior.¹²¹ Large news organizations sometimes make decisions based on profits, ratings, and the needs of their investors, advertisers, and shareholders.¹²²

¹¹³ “ASNE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES,” ASNE.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Tandoc, Zheng, & Ling. Defining ‘Fake News’ A Typology of Scholarly Definitions," p. 148.

¹¹⁶ Gelfert, "Fake News: A Definition," p 87.

¹¹⁷ Gunter, Barrie, and Maria Touri. "News Blogs: Strengthening Democracy Through Conflict Prevention." In Aslib Proceedings. Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2009: p. 171.

¹¹⁸ Tandoc, Zheng, & Ling. Defining ‘Fake News’ A Typology of Scholarly Definitions," p. 148.

¹¹⁹ Gunter and Touri. "News Blogs: Strengthening Democracy Through Conflict Prevention," p. 170-171.

¹²⁰ Tandoc, Zheng, & Ling, “Defining ‘Fake News’ A Typology of Scholarly Definitions," p. 148.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Konieczna, Magda. Journalism Without profit: Making News When the Market Fails. Oxford University Press, 2018: p. 6.

Americans frequently use “fake news” as a catch-all term for everything from satire to opinion journalism,¹²³ but a useful description requires more specificity. Reporting impacted by markets or human bias does not necessarily implicate news as fake. *The First Amendment Law Review* proposes the following definition:

“(Output) that suggest(s), by both (its) appearance and content, the conveyance of real news, but also knowingly include(s) at least one material factual assertion that is empirically verifiable as false and that is not otherwise protected by the fair report privilege.”¹²⁴ (Calvert & Vining, 2017)

The European Commission further characterizes fake news as containing an element of “intentional disinformation.”¹²⁵ Thus, fake news requires a purposeful attempt to mimic real news. The noun “news” exerts equal relevance as the adjective “fake.”¹²⁶ Satire and parody include implicit understandings between the creator and the audience and lack the intentional deception component needed to qualify.¹²⁷

Fabrication formulates another characteristic of fake news.¹²⁸ Fabrications contain *falsifiable disinformation*¹²⁹ defined as “provably incorrect statements masquerading as facts.”¹³⁰ Opinion journalism frequently fails to meet this criteria.¹³¹ Large news agencies clearly identify creators of opinion pieces as directly accountable for the views expressed.¹³² Still, legacy news outlets thoroughly vet opinion journalism to ensure the veracity of falsifiable facts.¹³³ Failure to

¹²³ Gelfert, “Fake News: A Definition,” p. 94-101.

¹²⁴ Calvert, Clay, and Austin Vining. “Filtering Fake News Through a Lens of Supreme Court Observations and Adages.” *First Amend. L. Rev.* 16 (2017): p. 158-159.

¹²⁵ Alemanno, Alberto. “How to Counter Fake News? A Taxonomy of Anti-Fake News Approaches.” *European Journal of Risk Regulation* 9, no. 1 (2018): p. 2.

¹²⁶ Calvert and Vining, “Filtering fake news through a lens of Supreme Court observations and adages,” p 159.

¹²⁷ Tandoc, Zheng, & Ling, “Defining ‘Fake News’ A Typology of Scholarly Definitions,” p. 142-143.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Volkova, Svitlana, and Jin Yea Jang. “Misleading or Falsification: Inferring Deceptive Strategies and Types in Online News and Social Media.” In *Companion Proceedings of the The Web Conference 2018*, p. 576

¹³¹ Tandoc, Zheng, & Ling, “Defining ‘Fake News’ A Typology of Scholarly Definitions,” p. 150.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 150-151.

perform the diligence needed to verify accuracy falls short of ASNE's principles. Such negligence misleads consumers by adding or omitting key details in its reporting.¹³⁴

The sum of these concepts provides the definition of fake news this paper uses. Fake news must 1) Contain provable mistruths 2) Disguise itself as real news and 3) Intentionally or negligently deceive the audience.

The Internet's Impact

The amount and diversity of political news a person consumes correlates with his or her political interest.¹³⁵ Those most interested in politics engage with more political news more frequently from a greater variety of sources.¹³⁶ Yet the tools used by Americans to absorb news remain similar regardless of their political interest or partisan leanings.¹³⁷

Modern technology has developed three characteristics unique to twenty-first century news consumption. News has become *portable*, meaning users can access it from virtually anywhere in the world at any time of day.¹³⁸ It has become *personalized*, where users customize homepages and follow social media accounts that offer stories most likely to spark their interest.¹³⁹ Finally, news has become *participatory*, where nonprofessional news consumers actively share stories and contribute to journalistic output.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ Quandt, Thorsten, Lena Frischlich, Svenja Boberg, and Tim Schatto-Eckrodt. "Fake News." *The International Encyclopedia of Journalism Studies* (2019): p. 2.

¹³⁵ Prior, Markus. *Post-Broadcast Democracy: How Media Choice Increases Inequality in Political Involvement and Polarizes Elections*. Cambridge University Press, 2007: p. 118.

¹³⁶ Strömbäck, Jesper, and Adam Shehata. "Media Malaise or a Virtuous Circle? Exploring the Causal Relationships Between News Media Exposure, Political News Attention and Political Interest." *European Journal of Political Research* 49, no. 5 (2010): p. 576.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Purcell, Kristen, Lee Rainie, Amy Mitchell, Tom Rosenstiel, and Kenny Olmstead. "Understanding the Participatory News Consumer." *Pew Internet and American Life Project* 1 (2010): p. 20.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

Smartphone technology allows for *portable* news, granting instantaneous access to real-time information from anywhere in the world. In 2010, about a third of Americans consumed political news on mobile devices.¹⁴¹ In 2015, mobile devices accounted for half of the time Americans spent with digital political media.¹⁴² By 2018 almost three-quarters of all digital news consumption occurred on those same devices.¹⁴³ In less than eight years, portable news developed from a novelty to a conventional aspect of American life.

People generally use mobile devices in otherwise unoccupied parts of their day¹⁴⁴ leading to short-bursts of engagement instead of sustained periods of immersive study.¹⁴⁵ Headlines and graphic banners impact the perception of a story more than any other element of reporting.¹⁴⁶ When presented with the exact same information under different headlines, about a fifth of respondents interpreted the information differently.¹⁴⁷ Subsequently, those reading or watching news through mobile platforms often fail to comprehend the full substance of a story or retain its information.¹⁴⁸

The internet, mobile technology and social media have also led to *personalized* news. In the middle of the twentieth century, Americans had fewer options from which to collect national political information. Therefore, more people consumed the same content from the same sources.¹⁴⁹ By 2015 millions of news articles and blog posts, hundreds of millions of social media posts, and billions of emails were uploaded through electronic devices every day.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴¹ Purcell, et. al., "Understanding the Participatory News Consumer," p. 20.

¹⁴² Molyneux, Logan. "Mobile News Consumption: A Habit of Snacking." *Digital Journalism* 6, no. 5 (2018): p. 643.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 645.

¹⁴⁴ Molyneux, "Mobile News Consumption: A Habit of Snacking," p. 644.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Kamoen, Naomi, Jasper Van de Pol, André Krouwel, Claes de Vreese, and Bregje Holleman. "Issue Framing in Online Voting Advice Applications: The Effect of Left-Wing and Right-Wing Headers on Reported Attitudes." *PloS One* 14, no. 2 (2019).

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Prior, *Post-Broadcast Democracy: How Media Choice Increases Inequality in Political Involvement and Polarizes Elections*. Cambridge University Press, p. 130.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Pariser, Eli. *The Filter Bubble: How the New Personalized Web is Changing What We Read and How We Think*. Penguin, 2011: p. 84.

Users customize homepages and social media accounts to cipher through an increasing volume of online information.¹⁵¹ Internet search engines and social media sites further employ information filtering to recommend content based on browsing history and purchasing habits.¹⁵² Unless a person actively searches for information that counters their political beliefs they usually consume news through filters that reinforce their opinions.¹⁵³ This breaks from the uniform nature of television and newspaper journalism in the recent past when most Americans consumed general information from a few sources.

The ability for average citizens to *participate* in reporting represents the third unique development of twenty-first century political media. Americans' trust in mainstream news outlets diminished over the past several decades as political participation migrated to the internet.¹⁵⁴ Simultaneously, trust in "citizen journalists" – average citizens who create and upload content to internet sites and social media accounts – has steadily risen.¹⁵⁵

Citizen journalism benefits audiences by offering new perspectives and otherwise uncapturable images and video. On the other hand, the internet requires a lower cost of entry for new competitors who feel less pressure to adhere to the journalistic principles regarded by ASNE.¹⁵⁶ Much of the information shared on social media does not undergo the thorough verification required by traditional news agencies.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, when a person reports or shares a story, it alters their perception of its importance and gives them a stake in its outcome.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵¹ Purcell et al, "Understanding the Participatory News Consumer," p. 23

¹⁵² Liu, Jiahui, Peter Dolan, and Elin Rønby Pedersen. "Personalized News Recommendation Based on Click Behavior." In Proceedings of the 15th International Conference on Intelligent User Interfaces (2010): p. 32-33.

¹⁵³ Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: How the New Personalized Web is Changing What We Read and How We Think*, p. 84.

¹⁵⁴ Ardèvol-Abreu, Alberto, Catherine M. Hooker, and Homero Gil de Zúñiga. "Online News Creation, Trust in the Media, and Political Participation: Direct and Moderating Effects Over Time." *Journalism*. 19, no. 5 (2018): p. 615.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 618.

¹⁵⁶ Lazer, David MJ, Matthew A. Baum, Yochai Benkler, Adam J. Berinsky, Kelly M. Greenhill, Filippo Menczer, Miriam J. Metzger et al. "The Science of Fake News." *Science* 359, no. 6380 (2018): p. 1094.

¹⁵⁷ Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: How the New Personalized Web is Changing What We Read and How We Think*, p. 10.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Those injured by inaccurate reporting possess a path for recourse against legacy news outlets. For example, in January 2019 two opposing political rallies in Washington, D.C. resulted in a confrontation between a Native American activist and a teenage Donald Trump supporter.¹⁵⁹ Several outlets such as *CNN* and *The Washington Post* reported the teen initiated the altercation through racially charged language.¹⁶⁰ But later-developing facts confirmed the Native American activist started the conflict and race did not enter into the conversation.¹⁶¹ The teen sued outlets that misreported the story and received millions of dollars in damages.¹⁶²

Alternatively, in the lead-up to the 2016 United States presidential election a scandal alleged the Democratic National Committee (DNC) operated an illegal sex trafficking ring out of a pizza parlor in Washington, D.C.¹⁶³ The story resulted from a 2016 Wikileaks document dump that publicized thousands of internal DNC emails from hacked computer servers.¹⁶⁴ Anonymous message board users believed they uncovered “codewords” connecting the scandal to Democratic figures such as Hillary Clinton and John Podesta.¹⁶⁵ Most traditional news outlets largely ignored the story other than occasionally debunking its validity.¹⁶⁶

Legacy news organizations pay a hefty price for making factual reporting errors, but Hillary Clinton and John Podesta had no recourse against citizen journalists spreading mistruths that damaged their public image. The speed and scope of the internet make it impossible to confirm

¹⁵⁹ Joseph A. Wulfsohn, “Washington Post Settles Nicholas Sandmann Defamation Lawsuit in Covington Catholic High School Controversy,” Fox News (FOX News Network, July 24, 2020).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Maynard, David Charles. “Engagement Beyond Fact-Checking: Ciceronian Stasis Theory as a Response to Fake News.” *The Liminal: Interdisciplinary Journal of Technology in Education*. 1, no. 1 (2019): p. 1.

¹⁶⁴ Debies-Carl, Jeffrey S. “Pizzagate and Beyond: Using Social Research to Understand Conspiracy Legends.” *Skeptical Inquirer*. 41, no. 6 (2017).

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Maynard, “Engagement Beyond Fact-Checking: Ciceronian Stasis Theory as a Response to Fake News,” p 8.

the original sources of certain stories.¹⁶⁷ Further, sharing news on social media implicitly endorses its information or ideas, but the sharing party rarely possesses legal culpability.¹⁶⁸

Polluting the Information Environment

A proper definition of fake news required a proper definition of news. Likewise, understanding fake news' impact requires an understanding of the news media's impact. Three ways the media influences the public's perception of news stories include: *agenda-setting*, where coverage of an issue elevates its importance in the mind of the public;¹⁶⁹ *framing*, which determines how stories are covered;¹⁷⁰ and *priming*, which combines agenda setting and framing to alter the way audiences view political candidates.

News often impacts society through *agenda-setting*. By deciding what stories to cover or ignore the media alerts or fails to alert the public to political issues.¹⁷¹ People believe the importance of widely reported fake news stories even if they do not believe any of the specific disinformation.¹⁷² Furthermore, the relationship between agenda-setting and public consciousness occurs unidirectionally. While media attention usually leads to more public concern about an issue, more public concern does not always lead to more media attention.¹⁷³

Framing involves *how* the media covers stories and influences audience viewpoints. The news frames issues by highlighting certain aspects of a story or focusing on specific arguments.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁷ Lazer et al, "The Science of Fake News," p. 1094.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Iyengar, Shanto, and Adam Simon. "News Coverage of the Gulf Crisis and Public Opinion: A Study of Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing." *Communication Research* 20, no. 3 (1993): p. 366.

¹⁷⁰ Field, Anjalie, Doron Kliger, Shuly Wintner, Jennifer Pan, Dan Jurafsky, and Yulia Tsvetkov. "Framing and Agenda-setting in Russian News: a Computational Analysis of Intricate Political Strategies." p. 3.

¹⁷¹ Vargo, Chris J., Lei Guo, and Michelle A. Amazeen. "The Agenda-Setting Power of Fake News: A Big Data Analysis of the Online Media Landscape from 2014 to 2016." *New Media & Society* 20, no. 5 (2018): p. 2029.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Iyengar and Simon, "News Coverage of the Gulf Crisis and Public Opinion: A Study of Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing," p. 366.

¹⁷⁴ Field, et al, "Framing and Agenda-setting in Russian News: a Computational Analysis of Intricate Political Strategies," p. 3-4.

A study of news network transcripts in the first several months of the 2003 Iraq War demonstrates framing's impact. Conservative cable channel Fox News used pro-war phrases such as "sacrificing for others" in their graphic banners or in the body of the story almost 70 percent of the time.¹⁷⁵ They used anti-war phrases such as "needless suffering of civilians" in about 30 percent of those same stories.¹⁷⁶

Conversely, more liberal networks like ABC, CBS and NBC used pro-war phrases in about 60 percent of their broadcasts and anti-war phrases in about 40 percent.¹⁷⁷ As a result, network news viewers opposed the war in Iraq more frequently than Fox News viewers.¹⁷⁸ Those predisposed to supporting the war increasingly changed their habits to watch Fox News and vice versa.¹⁷⁹ Since portability causes Americans to spend less time considering a story's substance, partisan framing presents challenges to public discourse.

Priming uses agenda-setting and framing to alter the methodology voters use to evaluate political candidates.¹⁸⁰ Most candidate-specific information gets communicated to voters through news outlets rather than directly from the candidate or their campaign.¹⁸¹ Priming allows the media to connect individual politicians to positive, negative, or neutral reporting. Once voters connect a candidate to an idea it subconsciously alters their thoughts about that candidate.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁵ Harmon, Mark, and Robert Muenchen. "Semantic Framing in the Build-Up to the Iraq War: Fox v. CNN and Other US Broadcast News Programs." *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* (2009): p. 19-20.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Severin W. J., & Tankard J. W. *Uses of Mass Media*. In *Communication Theories: Origins, Methods, and Uses in the Mass Media* (4th ed.). New York: Longman, 1997: p. 226.

¹⁸¹ Smith, Jacob D. "Political Priming and Agenda Setting in Twitter for the 2016 Presidential Election." PhD diss., 2017: p. 5.

¹⁸² Dillman, Carpentier, Francesca R., David R. Roskos-Ewoldsen, and Beverly B. Roskos-Ewoldsen. "A Test of the Network Models of Political Priming." *Media Psychology* 11, no. 2 (2008): p. 187.

For instance, same-sex marriage evolved into a central issue in the 2004 political agenda.¹⁸³ Americans generally disfavored same-sex marriage, especially in 2004 swing states.¹⁸⁴ Both President Bush and Democratic challenger John Kerry consistently opposed same-sex marriage throughout the 2004 campaign.¹⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the news media framed the issue as a Democratic versus Republican battle, with Democrats largely favoring same-sex marriage.¹⁸⁶ Exit polling revealed voters linked John Kerry with pro-same-sex marriage positions which caused undecided voters disfavoring the practice to break in favor of Bush.¹⁸⁷ Even though Kerry and Bush communicated similar messaging on the issue, media priming lost Kerry crucial votes.

About sixty-five million Americans – over 27 percent of the population – visited a fake news website in the month before the 2016 election.¹⁸⁸ When media outlets debunk fake news, only a quarter of those who consumed the original story become aware of factchecking.¹⁸⁹ Just 45 percent of that group trust fact-checkers as much as the original source.¹⁹⁰ News stories that reinforce a person's views strengthen their beliefs while counterevidence rarely sways them to change their mind.¹⁹¹ Underinformed citizens can educate themselves to eventually reach informed conclusions, but misinformed citizens stubbornly hold onto inaccurate beliefs despite counterevidence.¹⁹²

¹⁸³ James Dao, "Same-Sex Marriage Issue Key to Some G.O.P. Races," *The New York Times* (The New York Times, November 4, 2004)

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Loughlin, Sean, "Gay Support for Kerry on Display at Convention." CNN. Cable News Network, July 29, 2004.

¹⁸⁶ Donovan, Todd, Caroline J. Tolbert, and Daniel A. Smith. "Priming Presidential Votes by Direct Democracy." *The Journal of Politics* 70, no. 4 (2008): p. 1220.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Guess, Nyhan, and Reifler, "Selective Exposure to Misinformation: Evidence from the Consumption of Fake News During the 2016 US Presidential Campaign," p. 4.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁹¹ Shermer, Michael. *The believing brain: From Ghosts and Gods to Politics and Conspiracies---How we Construct Beliefs and Reinforce Them as Truths*. Macmillan, 2011.

¹⁹² Kuklinski, James H., Paul J. Quirk, Jennifer Jerit, David Schwieder, and Robert F. Rich. "Misinformation and the Currency of Democratic Citizenship." *Journal of Politics* 62, no. 3 (2000): p. 792.

2016 political campaigns used the internet as their primary means of fundraising and communicating with supporters.¹⁹³ Several campaigns exploited social media and internet forums as marketplaces for strategic communications by testing ideas and gaging their reception.¹⁹⁴ Anonymous campaign conduits calling themselves “entertainers” posted policy proposals, ideas or scandalous misinformation online and analyzed how audiences responded.¹⁹⁵ Traditional audience reaction studies required investments into focus groups or scientific polling. In 2016 it only required an internet connection.

Unlike focus groups, this method of message testing results in fake news spreading beyond the participants of individual studies. When disinformation spreads rapidly online it becomes difficult to rescind, leading to *information pollution*.¹⁹⁶ Information pollution involves spreading fake news to pollute the overall data available to audiences.¹⁹⁷ In 2016, 65 percent of American voters said contradictory stories they encountered online confused their analysis of current events.¹⁹⁸ 84 percent of Americans trust they can detect fake news, but polling indicates over half of the public believed at least one fake news story during the 2016 election.¹⁹⁹ 23 percent of respondents in a 2019 survey admitted to knowingly spreading misinformation to benefit their preferred candidate or party.²⁰⁰

Digital journalists concurrently produce content for multiple platforms as news agencies demand reporters create shorter pieces to appeal to mass audiences.²⁰¹ Since online revenue

¹⁹³ Persily, Nathaniel. "The 2016 US Election: Can Democracy Survive the Internet?." *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 2 (2017): p. 66.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 66-67.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ Wardle, Claire, and Hossein Derakhshan. "Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making." Council of Europe Report 27 (2017): p. 10.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁹⁸ Ireton, Cheryl, and Julie Posetti. *Journalism, fake news & disinformation: handbook for journalism education and training*. UNESCO Publishing, 2018. p. 7.

¹⁹⁹ Walter, Nathan, and Sheila T. Murphy. "How to Unring the Bell: A Meta-Analytic Approach to Correction of Misinformation." *Communication Monographs* 85, no. 3 (2018): p. 437.

²⁰⁰ Levi, Lili. "Real fake news and fake fake news." *First Amend. L. Rev.* 16 (2017): p. 257.

²⁰¹ Ireton et al, *Journalism, fake news & disinformation: handbook for journalism education and training*, p. 58.

generates from individual website visits regardless of the amount of time spent with the source, brief reports lead to more revenue than longer, more in-depth analysis.²⁰² Furthermore, the twenty-four-hour news cycle of the early 2000s dwindled into a six-hour news cycle by 2016.²⁰³ Stories published earlier in the day often prove irrelevant by the evening.²⁰⁴ Therefore, many major news outlets push their newsrooms to publish a new story every ten minutes.²⁰⁵ Since the increased number of media actors has politically, economically, and structurally fragmented the press, the news media struggles to collectively respond to fake news.²⁰⁶

When the line between truth and fiction blurs, it threatens citizens' ability to engage in *civic reasoning*.²⁰⁷ Just 14 percent of today's American grade school students can properly distinguish between facts and opinions in video and print media.²⁰⁸ Further complicating matters, about 15 of the population recollected seeing placebo fake news headlines in the 2016 election.²⁰⁹ When two-thirds of Americans consume most of their news through social media²¹⁰ these findings demonstrate a cause for concern.

Agenda-setting, framing, and priming also play a role in political polarization.²¹¹ The past two decades have seen an exponential increase in internet-based partisan news outlets.²¹² Overtly partisan news agencies purposely ignore or overreport sensationalized scandals in an attempt to

²⁰² Ireton et al, *Journalism, fake news & disinformation: handbook for journalism education and training*, p. 58.

²⁰³ Himma-Kadakas, Marju. "Alternative Facts and Fake News Entering Journalistic Content Production Cycle." *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 9, no. 2 (2017): p. 31.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Walter and Murphy, "How to Unring the Bell: A Meta-Analytic Approach to Correction of Misinformation," p. 437.

²⁰⁷ McGrew, Sarah, Teresa Ortega, Joel Breakstone, and Sam Wineburg. "The Challenge That's Bigger than Fake News: Civic Reasoning in a Social Media Environment." *American Educator*. 41, no. 3 (2017): p 7-8.

²⁰⁸ Chris Link, "Fighting Fake News in the Classroom - EdSurge News," *EdSurge*. December 30, 2019.

²⁰⁹ Allcott, Hunt, and Matthew Gentzkow. "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31, no. 2 (2017): p. 217.

²¹⁰ McGrew, Ortega, Breakstone, & Wineburg. "The Challenge That's Bigger than Fake News: Civic Reasoning in a Social Media Environment," p 4.

²¹¹ Vargo et al, "The Agenda-Setting Power of Fake News: A Big Data Analysis of the Online Media Landscape from 2014 to 2016," p. 2030.

²¹² Ibid.

add them to the national agenda.²¹³ Partisan reporting frames hard numbers concerning the economy or crime differently when their party is in power, causing Americans to develop different opinions on the same information.²¹⁴ Democrats and Republicans are both 15 percent more likely to read a story if the headline aligns with their ideological beliefs, and more likely to share the story if the information benefits their political perspective.²¹⁵ The resulting homogenous media diet entrenches people into partisanship and reduces tolerance for alternative views.²¹⁶

New Media in 2016

Trump rose to political prominence several years before running for office by questioning President Barack Obama's American citizenship.²¹⁷ In April 2011 Trump appeared on news programs and talk shows to challenge Obama to publicly display his birth certificate.²¹⁸ A March 2011 poll revealed that 72 percent of Americans believed Obama was born in the United States.²¹⁹ After Trump's media assault only 58 percent of respondents believed Obama was born in America.²²⁰ Among Republicans, the number diminished from 52 percent in March 2011 to 36 percent in April 2011.²²¹

Trump primed Obama as an inauthentic American unfit to serve as president by putting his citizenship on the agenda and framing the issue to imply Obama hid the location of his birth. Obama eventually exhibited his birth certificate in April 2011.²²² In May 77 percent of Americans

²¹³ Swire, Briony, Adam J. Berinsky, Stephan Lewandowsky, and Ullrich KH Ecker. "Processing Political Misinformation: Comprehending the Trump Phenomenon." *Royal Society Open Science* 4, no. 3 (2017): p. 3.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ Lazer et al, "The Science of Fake News," p. 1096.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ Kellner, Douglas. "Donald Trump and the Politics of Lying." In *Post-Truth, Fake News*. Springer, Singapore, 2018: p 90.

²¹⁸ Alana Abramson, "How Donald Trump Perpetuated the 'Birther' Movement for Years," ABC News (ABC News Network, September 16, 2016).

²¹⁹ Klinkner, Philip. "The Causes and Consequences of Birtherism." In Unpublished paper. Presented at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association. 2014: p. 7-8.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

and 72 percent of Republicans believed Obama was born in the United States,²²³ but by January 2012 only 60 percent of Americans and 30 percent of Republicans still trusted his citizenship.²²⁴ Trump's priming lasted longer in the public's mind than Obama's official documentation, particularly among those predisposed to disfavoring Obama.

These actions foreshadowed Trump's campaign strategy. He utilized Twitter to frame issues with the exact phraseology at the exact time of day that suited him which diminished third party ability to dilute or misrepresent his message.²²⁵ Because of the six-hour news cycle, Twitter thwarted any need to rely on television news schedules. He consistently and aggressively primed political opponents by branding them with nicknames emphasizing their perceived weaknesses.²²⁶ Jeb Bush's lack of energy led to the nickname "Low-energy Jeb."²²⁷ Ted Cruz became "Lyin' Ted," a caricature of the robotic inside the beltway politician.²²⁸ Marco Rubio gained success as a fresh-faced young candidate, so Trump facilitated the image of "Little Marco": the little brother not ready for prime time.²²⁹ Hillary Clinton's nickname "Crooked Hillary" connected her to numerous political scandals.²³⁰

In 2016 the number of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram users linked to a candidate's accounts reliably predicted how that candidate would perform before each primary contest and in the general election.²³¹ Higher traffic for candidates on social media resulted in higher candidate-

²²³ Klinkner, "The Causes and Consequences of Birtherism," p. 10.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²²⁵ Enli, Gunn. "Twitter as Arena for the Authentic Outsider: Exploring the Social Media Campaigns of Trump and Clinton in the 2016 US Presidential Election." *European Journal of Communication* 32, no. 1 (2017): p. 55.

²²⁶ Kira Hall, Donna M. Goldstein, and Matthew Bruce Ingram, "The Hands of Donald Trump: Entertainment, Gesture, Spectacle," *Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6, no. 2 (2016): p. 81.

²²⁷ Paola Chavez and Veronica Stracqualursi, "Donald Trump's Nicknames," ABC News (ABC News Network, May 11, 2016).

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ Kira, et al, "The Hands of Donald Trump: Entertainment, Gesture, Spectacle," p. 80-82.

²³¹ Tadic, Diana Plantic, Hrvoje Ratkic, and Branka Suput. "Comparative Analysis of Marketing Communication Strategy on Social Networks: Case Study of Presidential Candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton." *Economic and Social Development: Book of Proceedings* (2017): p. 374.

specific voter turnout, particularly among younger voters.²³² Trump held an early and consistent lead over all his opponents in social media connections from the time he announced his candidacy until election night.²³³ Moreover, repetition was crucial to the success of Trump's branding.²³⁴ Social media enabled supporters to constantly repeat and perpetuate the nicknames of Trump's opponents.²³⁵ Users shared Tweets attacking other candidates more than anything else Trump posted.²³⁶ Throughout 2016 increased Twitter traffic led to increased poll numbers while decreased Twitter traffic led to decreased poll numbers.²³⁷

Trump's social media accounts posted less frequently but more effectively than his opponents. Hillary Clinton posted three-hundred-eighteen times on Facebook and averaged twenty-seven Tweets a day between securing the Democratic nomination and the election.²³⁸ Trump posted two-hundred-sixty-seven times and averaged eleven Tweets a day during that same period.²³⁹ The Clinton campaign sent over 70 percent of its official Tweets through Tweetdeck, an application allowing her staff to initiate her messages.²⁴⁰ Conversely, Trump never used Tweetdeck nor allowed anyone to Tweet on his behalf.²⁴¹

Though one in four Americans visited a fake news site in the two weeks before the 2016 election, not everybody visited them in the same capacity.²⁴² Over 40 percent of Trump voters

²³² Boroughs, Bryan, "Social Networking Websites and Voter Turnout," PhD diss., Georgetown University, (2010): p. 8.

²³³ Tadic, et al, "Comparative Analysis of Marketing Communication Strategy on Social Networks: Case Study of Presidential Candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton," p. 374.

²³⁴ Lakoff, George. "Understanding Trump." George Lakoff, August 19, 2016.

²³⁵ Lee, Jayeon, and Weiai Xu. "The More Attacks, the More Retweets: Trump's and Clinton's Agenda Setting on Twitter." *Public Relations Review* 44, no. 2 (2018): p. 204-205.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

²³⁷ Bovet, Alexandre, Flaviano Morone, and Hernán A. Makse. "Validation of Twitter Opinion Trends With National Polling Aggregates: Hillary Clinton vs Donald Trump." *Scientific Reports* 8, no. 1 (2018).

²³⁸ Tadic, et al, "Comparative Analysis of Marketing Communication Strategy on Social Networks: Case Study of Presidential Candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton," p. 374.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 376-377.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² Guess, Nyhan, and Reifler. "Selective exposure to misinformation: Evidence from the consumption of fake news during the 2016 US presidential campaign," p. 2.

visited a fake news site in the leadup to the election, compared to only 15 percent of Clinton voters.²⁴³ 60 percent of visits to fake news websites in 2016 came from the 10 percent of Americans likeliest to consume partisan conservative news.²⁴⁴ The five months preceding the 2016 election saw one-hundred-seventy million Tweets about politics.²⁴⁵ One tenth of all political Tweets contained some level of disinformation, and over 5 percent provided direct links to fake news.²⁴⁶

Trump's supporters overtook the Republican narrative in 2016 by impacting the way conservative outlets covered politics. Stories on Twitter shared by Clinton supporters overwhelmingly followed published reports by left-leaning or center-leaning websites.²⁴⁷ Alternately, professional journalists of right-leaning outlets frequently followed the online activity of Trump supporters.²⁴⁸ Reports from unverified or even removed and/or deleted Twitter accounts predicated activity from right-leaning news outlets such as *Breitbart* or *The Drudge Report*.²⁴⁹ Leftwing media pushed the liberal political narrative to Democratic voters, but rightwing media often followed the information pushed by Trump supporters.

The Trump campaign also used a strategy of attacking *source credibility* by labeling all news outlets that criticized him "fake news" while rarely providing specific evidence to validate those claims.²⁵⁰ The strategy correlates to a cross-examination in a criminal trial. Instead of arguing against the evidence, the fake news label attacks the credibility of the source of the evidence. When

²⁴³ Guess, Nyhan, and Reifler. "Selective exposure to misinformation: Evidence from the consumption of fake news during the 2016 US presidential campaign," p. 4.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Bovet, Alexandre, and Hernán A. Makse. "Influence of fake news in Twitter during the 2016 US presidential election." *Nature communications* 10, no. 1 (2019): p. 1.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Egelhofer, Jana Laura, and Sophie Lecheler. "Fake News as a Two-Dimensional Phenomenon: A Framework and Research Agenda." *Annals of the International Communication Association* 43, no. 2 (2019): p. 108-109.

Trump branded news outlets “fake news,” it significantly reduced trust in mainstream media amongst Trump supporters but had virtually no impact on the opinions of Clinton Supporters.²⁵¹

Though other presidents held combative relationships with the media, none ever disregarded normative standards of presidential behavior.²⁵² Trump publicly and consistently attacked individual reporters and organizations.²⁵³ He denied credentials to outlets that reported unflattering stories about him and refused to take questions from reporters he disfavors.²⁵⁴ Previous presidents faced electoral consequences for attacking the media, but Trump’s strategy unified his base.²⁵⁵ Three-quarters of Republicans believe the news media completely fabricates stories and a third believe the press purposely tries to prevent Trump from achieving his goals.²⁵⁶ Perhaps most damaging, a quarter of all Americans and a majority of Trump supporters endorse the right of a president to impose limitations on the freedom of the press.²⁵⁷

Source credibility usurps the power of agenda-setting, framing, and priming. Those who view Trump as a credible source of information support his media attacks despite the veracity of evidence.²⁵⁸ Since the national press has little credibility amongst Trump supporters it cannot effectively rebuke his criticisms. For example, before the 2016 election, Trump asserted dead people and illegal immigrants would vote in huge numbers.²⁵⁹ He repeated this claim after winning the election by saying voter fraud cost him states he should have won.²⁶⁰ Peter Francia estimated

²⁵¹ Egelhofer et al, "Fake News as a Two-Dimensional Phenomenon: A Framework and Research Agenda," p. 109.

²⁵² Levi, Lili. "Real Fake News and Fake Fake news." *First Amend. L. Rev.* 16 (2017): p. 259.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 279.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

²⁵⁸ Swire, et al, "Processing political misinformation: comprehending the Trump phenomenon."

²⁵⁹ Holman, Mirya R., and J. Celeste Lay. "They see dead people (voting): Correcting misperceptions about voter fraud in the 2016 US presidential election." *Journal of Political Marketing* 18, no. 1-2 (2019): p. 31.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

that these tactics allowed Trump to gain over \$5 billion in free exposure.²⁶¹ As a result, more than half of Republicans and over a third of Democrats believed it “definitely” or “probably” true that “millions of illegal immigrants” voted in 2016.²⁶² Before social media, perpetuating similar ideas would have cost millions of dollars in ad spending and campaign stops.²⁶³ In 2016, Trump merely needed to press “send” on a Tweet.

Conclusion: Alternative Facts

Two days after President Trump took the oath of office to become the forty-fifth President of the United States, his advisor Kellyanne Conway appeared on NBC’s *Meet the Press*. Host Chuck Todd asked Conway why so many of the answers given by White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer amounted to, “provable falsehoods.” Conway replied that Spicer did not lie, but stated, “alternative facts.”²⁶⁴ Alternative facts existed in American politics for centuries, but politicians rarely felt comfortable openly and directly making such statements. For the public to accept the existence of alternative facts, an administration must demonize the media, pollute the information pipeline, and have access to methods that spread competing information quickly.

Franklin Roosevelt utilized radio to communicate with Americans through his *Fireside Chats* while John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan developed television personalities. Trump’s success in 2016 continues to prove that politicians can and must use new technology to communicate with voters. But television and radio remained one-way methods of communication. Propagating information on those mediums required access, resources, and professional reporters

²⁶¹ Francia, Peter L, "Free Media and Twitter in the 2016 Presidential Election: The Unconventional Campaign of Donald Trump." *Social Science Computer Review* 36, no. 4 (2018): p. 440.

²⁶² Holman et al, "They see dead people (voting): Correcting misperceptions about voter fraud in the 2016 US presidential election," p. 31.

²⁶³ Francia, "Free Media and Twitter in the 2016 Presidential Election: The Unconventional Campaign of Donald Trump," p. 441.

²⁶⁴ Blake, Aaron (January 22, 2017). "Kellyanne Conway says Donald Trump's team has 'alternative facts.' Which pretty much says it all". *The Washington Post*.

accountable to the standards of journalistic practice. Today, political information can come from anyone, anywhere, at any time.

Donald Trump used available technology to circumvent the media and demonize professional journalists among half of the country. When the media loses credibility, it cannot effectively reply to disinformation. A portable, personalized, participatory landscape gave Trump the power to set the agenda, frame the issues, and prime his political opponents without relying on legacy news outlets. By simply posting on a social media site or saying something controversial, Trump managed to pollute the data available for mass consumption. In previous eras these tasks required teams of publicists, staffers, journalists, and workers to plan and proactively fight on behalf of an administration. Today, supporters willing to retweet a message form a free publicity machine.

Widespread fake news threatens more than individual actors or individual stories, it impacts the public agenda and alters citizens' ability to engage in civic reasoning. An increasing share of the voting-age public cannot separate truth from fiction or opinion from fact. More Americans cannot remember if a headline from the previous election was real or fabricated. When people lose grasp on reality, they lose the ability to make informed decisions on important issues facing their community and their country.

Americans have always relied on the media to inform them about important issues while upholding standards of truth and accuracy. As the power balance shifts from professional journalists to unaccountable citizen journalists, newsgathering and reporting suffer. With digital media developing into the primary means of communication amongst Americans who consume most of their news through mobile devices, context and detail increasingly evaporate. When

information spread around the country proves false, those injured by inaccurate reporting have no ability to hold those spreading misinformation accountable.

The Framers guaranteed a freedom of the press because they understood its importance. The online generation must figure out how to protect that freedom while upholding the standards of truth and accuracy. The internet entirely changed the scope and scale of political journalism over the last twenty years. Like radio and television, these new platforms present both exciting and frightening developments.

Author Ralph Keys once wrote, “It ain’t so much the things we don’t know that get us into trouble. It’s the things we know that just ain’t so.”²⁶⁵ This quote summarizes the problem with fake news. Not knowing enough is far less dangerous than believing provably untrue narratives. 2016 may represent a landmark event that permanently blurs the lines separating truth and fiction. The first step in preventing misinformation from overtaking journalism is understanding how and why it became so prominent.

²⁶⁵ White, Bill, “Bloopers: Quote Didn't Really Originate with Will Rogers,” *The Morning Call*. March 30, 2019.

CHAPTER II: PARTY OVER

Identifying the Forces that Undermine Political Parties

Abstract

Government depends on political parties to organize, communicate, and implement policy. Parties organically developed in American politics out of necessity and helped stabilize the nation into the twentieth century. Today, Americans hold negative views towards both the Republican and Democratic establishment. In 2016 populist candidates hijacked longstanding political parties by attacking leadership and government processes. Their strategy succeeded because of primaries and technological developments that weakened party leadership's ability to control candidates through patronage. Today, incumbents increasingly face outsider candidates from the extreme ends of the political spectrum, leading to more polarized parties and voters. While many Americans view the two parties as a problem, a careful study of history reveals that parties remain essential to maintaining successful democracy.

Introduction

After a president takes the oath of office interviewers ask them to name their favorite predecessor. The answer helps the media, scholars, and voters develop a framework to analyze the new executive. Most presidents choose an uncontroversial historical figure or someone they personally knew. Barack Obama identified Abraham Lincoln from his home state of Illinois.²⁶⁶ George W. Bush named Ronald Reagan, under whom his father served as vice president. Bill Clinton called a childhood meeting with John F. Kennedy a foundational moment in his political development.²⁶⁷

Donald Trump chose Andrew Jackson, an unusually controversial choice that surprised journalists.²⁶⁸ Contemporary Americans both revered and reviled Jackson, and opinions on his legacy range from heroic to villainous. Working-class Americans lionized Jackson for his humble origins despite (or because of) his adversarial relationship with the Washington establishment.²⁶⁹ As president he expanded voting rights, defeated the *Second Bank of the United States*, and became

²⁶⁶ Hornick, Ed. "For Obama, Lincoln Was Model President." CNN. January 18, 2009.

²⁶⁷ Johnson, Jenna, and Karen Tumulty. "Trump Cites Jackson as His Hero - and a Reflection of Himself." The Washington Post. March 15, 2017.

²⁶⁸ Schonfeld, Zach. "Why Is Trump so Obsessed with Andrew Jackson?" Newsweek. May 7, 2017.

²⁶⁹ Sellers, Charles Grier. "Andrew Jackson Versus the Historians." The Mississippi Valley Historical Review 44, no. 4 (1958): p. 617.

the first and only president to fully pay down the national debt.²⁷⁰ However, he also vetoed more legislation than all previous presidents combined and constantly fought with Congress and governors.²⁷¹ His *Trail of Tears* policy forcibly removed over one-hundred thousand people from their Florida land and killed thousands of Native Americans.²⁷² During his tenure the economy boomed and crashed.²⁷³

Significant parallels exist between Jackson's and Trump's ascensions to power. Most Americans knew Jackson as a celebrity war figure who gained national recognition through his bombastic personality.²⁷⁴ He lost a contentious 1824 presidential race to John Quincy Adams of the influential Adams political family but questioned the election's integrity and never accepted defeat.²⁷⁵ In an 1828 rematch he hurled insults at Adams to prime him with framing slogans.²⁷⁶ Critics feared his temper and sensitivity to insults could lead to emotional decisions that elevated his personal interests above the country's.²⁷⁷

To achieve electoral success, Jackson mobilized a broad coalition of previously nonpolitical supporters called *Jacksonians*.²⁷⁸ The base of small farmers and lower-class workers supported his protectionist trade policies that mitigated external influence over America's economy.²⁷⁹ Jackson's campaign demonized East Coast bankers, the press, and "insider" politicians to pit American labor against elite forces.²⁸⁰ Despite their contempt for the

²⁷⁰ Temin, Peter, Andrew Jackson, and Amerikai Egyesült Államok. *The Jacksonian Economy*. New York: Norton, 1969.

²⁷¹ Muhammad Nadeem Mirza, Summar Iqbal Babar, Farheen Qasim Nizamani. (2021). Leadership, Idiosyncrasies, and Political Behaviour: Personality Analyses of Presidents Donald Trump and Andrew Jackson. *Global Political Review*. 6(1): p. 13.

²⁷² Sturgis, Amy H. *The Trail of Tears and Indian removal*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007: p. 39.

²⁷³ Temin et. al, *The Jacksonian Economy*.

²⁷⁴ Beggin, Riley. "How Andrew Jackson's Celebrity Paved Way for Donald Trump." ABC News. May 2, 2017.

²⁷⁵ Stenberg, R. R. (1934). Jackson, Buchanan, and the "Corrupt Bargain" Calumny. *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*: p. 61.

²⁷⁶ Forbes, Robert Pierce. *The Missouri Compromise and its Aftermath: Slavery and the Meaning of America*. UNC Press, 2009: p. 328.

²⁷⁷ Muhammad, et al., "Leadership, Idiosyncrasies, and Political Behaviour: Personality Analyses of Presidents Donald Trump and Andrew Jackson," p. 13.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Jones, David Martin, and Nicholas Khoo. "Donald Trump and the New Jacksonians." *Policy: A Journal of Public Policy and Ideas*. 33, no. 1 (2017): p. 43.

establishment, Jacksonians remained fiercely patriotic with little patience for views that did not primarily consider American interests.²⁸¹ Still, they opposed an aggressive foreign policy that tied economic and political policies to entangling alliances.²⁸²

Jackson never adhered to a consistent political ideology. Instead, his campaign emphasized intangible social and cultural values.²⁸³ Jacksonian solutions are simple and direct; the kinds of ideas that could fit on a baseball cap. He espoused an “us versus them” mentality that accused powerful figures of harming everyday Americans.²⁸⁴ Bankers hoodwinked American workers. Career politicians conned American voters. Foreign governments ripped off American businesses. As president, Jackson promised to protect supporters from corrupt elites.

Although Trump’s rhetoric often seems undisciplined, the Jackson-Trump connection developed well before his inauguration. In August 2016 former Republican Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-GA) called Trump a champion for everyday Americans akin to Jackson.²⁸⁵ In November, former Republican Mayor of New York Rudy Giuliani said, “This is like Andrew Jackson’s victory. This is the people beating the establishment.”²⁸⁶ Campaign manager Steve Bannon made the most distinct comparison, saying, “I don’t think we’ve had a speech like (Trump’s Inaugural Address) since Andrew Jackson came to the White House...The new patriotism... (could be) greater than the Reagan revolution — conservatives, plus populists, in an economic nationalist movement.”²⁸⁷

²⁸¹ Jones, et al., “Donald Trump and the New Jacksonians,” p. 43.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ Schonfeld, “Why Is Trump so Obsessed with Andrew Jackson?”

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ Jones, et al., “Donald Trump and the new Jacksonians,” p. 45.

Modern Republican embrace of Jacksonian philosophy seems counterintuitive. Jackson transformed what became the modern *Democratic Party* by *expanding* voter rights.²⁸⁸ In 2016 Democrats represented disenfranchised citizens while Republicans fought to tighten voting laws.²⁸⁹ Furthermore, Jackson's background diverges significantly from Trump's. Jackson was born to poor Irish immigrants in the rural Carolina Territory and orphaned by the age of 14. He did not even know his birthyear or birthplace.²⁹⁰ Before his presidency he fought in the American Revolutionary War and War of 1812 and served as Territorial Governor of Florida, Tennessee Supreme Court Justice, and U.S. Senator.²⁹¹ Trump came from a wealthy New York City family and never served in the military nor held public office.²⁹²

The forty-fifth president connected to the seventh president through emotion and attitude instead of personal background or policy. For Republicans, Trump's ideology mattered less than his ability to mobilize voters and forge new political alliances. He chagrined the family values, religious principles, and small government conservatism that dominated Republican platforms since at least the 1980s. In fact, Trump frequently attacked Republican policies like the 2003 Iraq War, trade agreements, and refusal to spend on infrastructure.²⁹³ By supporting Trump as their 2016 presidential nominee, Republicans risked alienating their donors, special interests, allies, and conservative voter base. Trump's nomination transformed the Republican Party as Jackson's nomination transformed the Democratic-Republicans in 1828.

²⁸⁸ Ratcliffe, Donald. "The Right to Vote and the Rise of Democracy, 1787-1828." *Journal of the Early Republic* 33, no. 2 (2013): p. 248.

²⁸⁹ Hasen, Richard L. "Race or Party: How Courts Should Think about Republican Efforts to Make It Harder to Vote in North Carolina and Elsewhere." *Harvard Law Review*. 127 (2013): p. 58.

²⁹⁰ Burch Jr, John R. "See also: Proclamation of 1763." *Imperialism and Expansionism in American History: A Social, Political, and Cultural Encyclopedia and Document Collection* (2015): 402.

²⁹¹ Parton, James. *Life of Andrew Jackson*. Mason Brothers, 1863: p. 63.

²⁹² Reisert, Joseph. "Knave, Patriot, or Factionist: Three Rousseauian Hypotheses About the Election of President Trump." In *Trump and Political Philosophy*, pp. 163-178. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2018: p. 167

²⁹³ Kaufman, Joyce P. "The US Perspective on NATO Under Trump: Lessons of the Past and Prospects for the Future." *International Affairs* 93, no. 2 (2017): p. 258.

The Democratic Party also faced an outsider challenge during the 2016 cycle. In the Democratic presidential primaries Independent Senator Vermont Bernie Sanders (I-VT) won twenty-three states, 43 percent of the popular vote, and 40 percent of available delegates.²⁹⁴ Like Trump and Jackson, he mobilized new voters who related to his outsider rhetoric that attacked the political establishment. Many Democratic Party leaders opposed his populist message and anti-capitalist positions and fought against his campaign.²⁹⁵ Sanders eventually lost the nomination, but his impact on Democrats permeated into the general election.

The 2016 election saw nontraditional candidates hijack long-standing political parties to great effect. But developments preceding 2016 presented crucial changes to American politics that facilitated outsider candidate success. In the 1950s most voters trusted parties and their leadership.²⁹⁶ By the mid-2000s more than half of voters held an unfavorable view of both Republicans and Democrats.²⁹⁷ Severely eroded public opinion helped Sanders and Trump accumulate greater control over their campaigns despite party disapproval and discouragement.²⁹⁸ Mechanisms that traditionally held candidates accountable to leadership proved ineffective. Various groups used technology to raise unprecedented money, organize candidate-centric coalitions, and spread anti-establishment rhetoric.²⁹⁹

This chapter examines the 2016 anti-party political movement to decipher how outsiders succeeded and their impact on American politics. First, it analyzes United States political parties and how they control politicians and government processes. Second, it identifies important

²⁹⁴ Dyck, Joshua J., Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz, and Michael Coates. "Primary Distrust: Political Distrust and Support for the Insurgent Candidacies of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the 2016 Primary." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51, no. 2 (2018): p. 352.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ Gold, Howard J. "Americans' attitudes toward the political parties and the party system." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (2015): p. 806.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ Dyck, et. al, "Primary Distrust: Support for the Insurgent Candidacies of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the 2016 Primary," p. 352.

²⁹⁹ Magleby, David B., ed. *Financing the 2016 Election*. Brookings Institution Press, 2019: p. 13.

changes to party structure throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that slowly weakened party power. Third, it investigates how modern technology enabled politicians to run candidate-centric campaigns outside party authority. Finally, it describes how economic issues in the 2000s created a landscape for populist rhetoric that paved the road for Trump and Sanders.

What Parties Do

The United States Constitution never mentions political parties. In fact, many American Founders disfavored parties and feared they led to unnecessary government tension.³⁰⁰ George Washington never belonged to a party and distrusted them throughout his presidency.³⁰¹ James Madison and Alexander Hamilton warned against factions in *The Federalist Papers*.³⁰² Regardless, political parties formed before the first contested presidential election in 1796.³⁰³ After Washington, every president and most congresspeople belonged to a party.³⁰⁴ These organizations institutionalized during the 1830s and today's two-party system cemented by the end of the Civil War in 1865.³⁰⁵

Despite initial reluctance the founding generation quickly recognized party necessity. Policy implementation requires coalitions, cohesive operations, organized activities, and coordination between diverse blocs.³⁰⁶ A legislative body without political parties can spiral into a ponderous stalemate since passing budgets and structuring agendas requires organization.³⁰⁷ Party cohesion allows politicians with various levels of expertise in diverse fields to refine policy through collective action. Voters use partisan politics to understand various viewpoints and

³⁰⁰ Issacharoff, Samuel. "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed Out Political Parties." *Houston Law Review* 54 (2017): p. 4.

³⁰¹ Stokes, Susan C. "Political Parties and Democracy." *Annual Review of Political Science* 2, no. 1 (1999): p. 245.

³⁰² *Ibid.*

³⁰³ Issacharoff, "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed out Political Parties," p. 5.

³⁰⁴ Stokes, "Political Parties and Democracy." p. 245.

³⁰⁵ Issacharoff, "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed out Political Parties," p. 5.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

establish responsibility for government successes and failures.³⁰⁸ Thus, parties provide coherence, organization, and force to republican government.³⁰⁹

However, party politics also creates disadvantages. Large political organizations help citizens make sense of government by forming talking points and communicating policy choices, but often convey this information in an adversarial manner that disparages and stereotypes opponents.³¹⁰ Though negative attacks sometimes help candidates win elections, antagonistic political communication hinders the spread of objective information as constituents frequently trust partisan propaganda without independently verifying crucial details.³¹¹ In a country as large and diverse as the United States, parties encompass a range of views that evolve over time. Voters can develop loyalty to parties instead of ideologies or policies.³¹²

V.O. Key described American political parties as amalgamations of three crucial components. The *party-in-the-government* involves elected politicians and partisan members of executive departments; the public face that interacts with voters and the media.³¹³ The *professional policy workers* include political staffs and rank-and-file operatives who helm most day-to-day operations.³¹⁴ Their responsibilities include executing legislation, developing policy specifics, brainstorming messaging, and implementing reforms. The *party-in-the-electorate* consists of voters who identify with or belong to a party.³¹⁵ Citizens hold the ultimate power in democracy since they vote candidates into office, but rarely yield authority until election day.

³⁰⁸ Snyder, Jr, James M., and Michael M. Ting. "Electoral Selection with Parties and Primaries." *American Journal of Political Science* 55, no. 4 (2011): p. 783.

³⁰⁹ Issacharoff, "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed out Political Parties," p. 12.

³¹⁰ Ahler, Douglas J., and Gaurav Sood. "The Parties in our Heads: Misperceptions about Party Composition and Their Consequences." *The Journal of Politics* 80, no. 3 (2018): 965-966.

³¹¹ Pariser, Eli. *The Filter Bubble: How the New Personalized Web is Changing What we Read and How we Think*. Penguin, 2011: p. 10.

³¹² *Ibid.*

³¹³ Issacharoff, "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed out Political Parties," p. 8.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Politics continuously evolves, so voters and politicians sometimes transition between parties when they change policies, develop new philosophies, or support divisive candidates. *Policy loyalists* remain devoted to issues and policy specifics regardless of which party supports them.³¹⁶ Former Secretary of State Colin Powell endorsed Democrat Hillary Clinton for president in the 2016 election despite his lengthy service in the Republican Party.³¹⁷ Powell did not believe Donald Trump could keep the country safe and his devotion to national security superseded partisan attachment. *Partisan loyalists* commit to a party without fully endorsing or understanding every policy position.³¹⁸ Political operative Roger Stone has served in the Republican Party for fifty years despite supporting Democratic Party positions such as same-sex marriage, abortion rights, and cannabis legalization.³¹⁹

Historically, American political parties controlled the party-in-the-government through patronage.³²⁰ Those hoping to run for office relied on establishment sources of funding, organization, and ballot access. Winning candidates became indebted to party officials for connecting them with crucial election apparatus. In return, candidates agreed to promote party-favored policies.³²¹ Sometimes party leaders develop national agenda platforms that harm individual candidates in competitive districts.³²² They expect vulnerable candidates to remain supportive of their policies. For partisan loyalists, a disciplined short-term election loss can ultimately lead to long-term patronage benefits.

³¹⁶ Barber, Michael, and Jeremy C. Pope. "Does Party Trump Ideology? Disentangling Party and Ideology in America." *The American Political Science Review* 113, no. 1 (2019): p. 40.

³¹⁷ Diaz, Daniella, and Elise Labott. "Colin Powell Says He's Voting for Clinton." CNN. October 26, 2016.

³¹⁸ Barber and Pope, "Does Party Trump Ideology? Disentangling Party and Ideology in America," p. 42.

³¹⁹ Glenn, Thrush. "Full Transcript: POLITICO's Glenn Thrush Interviews Roger Stone." Politico. April 25, 2016.

³²⁰ Issacharoff, "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed out Political Parties," p. 4.

³²¹ Gerber, Elisabeth R., and Rebecca B. Morton. "Primary Election Systems and Representation." *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization* (1998): p. 314.

³²² Issacharoff, "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed out Political Parties," p. 9.

Over time, Congress developed committee structures to organize and control the legislative process. Committee leaders can block legislation or fast-track it to a vote.³²³ One rogue candidate can lose a congressional majority or destroy partisan cohesion, so committees control talking points to prevent candidates from communicating ideologically extreme positions.³²⁴ When a politician refutes committee orders they jeopardize their political future. Even if the candidate wins his or her election, they cannot enact much policy without party support.³²⁵ Loyal legislators in favor with leadership can elevate a favored policy within the party's agenda. Thus, committees enjoy a large degree of power over the party-in-the-government.

Evolving Party Structures

Before the Civil War, national parties consisted of consolidated state-based coalitions.³²⁶ Loose federal operations helped execute local party mechanics such as distributing ballots, communicating with the press, and implementing district-specific objectives.³²⁷ Americans often identified with their local party through historic, ethnic, religious, and cultural ties.³²⁸ Many voters held no devotion to or even awareness of a party's national agenda. Policies supported by New York Democrats could drastically differ from those supported by South Carolina Democrats.³²⁹ Thus, the party-in-the-electorate consisted of policy loyalists regarding local issues but partisan loyalists regarding federal and foreign affairs. In turn, the party-in-the-government formed cohesive positions on national policy but diverse views on local issues.

³²³ Issacharoff, "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed out Political Parties," p. 10.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

³²⁶ Schleicher, David. "The Seventeenth Amendment and Federalism in an Age of National Political Parties." *Hastings LJ* 65 (2013): p. 1063.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1063-1064.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1062.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1064.

Republicans and Democrats established themselves as America's dominant political parties after the Civil War when the country tackled Reconstruction.³³⁰ Between 1865 and 1890 Americans built millions of miles of railroad.³³¹ Before rail, candidates who traveled to Washington may not return to their district until their term ended since the journey could take days or weeks.³³² Railroads exponentially increased the ability to move people and resources around the nation, including newspapers and other kinds of political literature. Literacy concurrently rose from 70 percent in 1865 to 90 percent by 1900. Among African Americans, literacy soared from 20 percent in 1870 to more than 50 percent by 1900 and 75 percent by 1920.³³³

By the early twentieth century more people could read and understand more widely circulated newspapers. Better-informed citizens engaged with congressional representatives to express federal policy preferences and sometimes held strong opinions on issues facing other states. Local elections increasingly incorporated national concerns, so parties needed to cultivate more communal platforms.³³⁴ Losing favor with party bosses virtually extinguished a candidate's political career, so legislators began to vote along party lines on both local and national legislation.³³⁵ While the two largest national parties consolidated power, third parties all but died. The 1890 Congress included twelve third-party Senators, but by 1903 all Senators belonged to either the Republican or Democratic Party.³³⁶

Technology, literacy, and party cohesion created a nationalized economy with greater income inequality as industry leaders held imbalanced influence over policy.³³⁷ When political

³³⁰ Schleicher, "The Seventeenth Amendment and Federalism in an Age of National Political Parties," p. 1062.

³³¹ Mutch, Robert E. *Buying the Vote: A History of Campaign Finance Reform*. Oxford University Press, 2014: p. 48.

³³² *Ibid.*

³³³ "National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL)." *National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education. NCES.*

³³⁴ Schleicher, "The Seventeenth Amendment and Federalism in an Age of National Political Parties," p. 1060.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1047.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1065.

³³⁷ Mutch, *Buying the Vote: A History of Campaign Finance Reform*, p. 123.

parties centralized power, business interests pivoted from local policy focus towards dealings with federal party bosses. The growing business-government relationship concerned voters and some government leaders. Missouri Senator Charles Shultz noted, “(Industry leaders) ...are called upon by the managers of a political party to contribute large sums of money...for the purpose of carrying the election and then controlling the government for their benefit.”³³⁸

In 1907 Congress passed campaign finance legislation called *The Tillman Act* which outlawed campaign contributions from interstate banks and large corporations.³³⁹ Over the next several years they adopted a series of laws to establish donation limits and require campaigns to disclose donor identities.³⁴⁰ These issues led to the ratification of the Constitution’s *Seventeenth Amendment* in 1913.³⁴¹ The original Constitution empowered state legislators to choose U.S. Senators representing their state, but this system led to intrastate party corruption. Some candidates agreed to suspect policy positions or outright paid state officials to attain Senate appointments. For example, in 1900 Montana Senate hopeful William Clark paid several state legislators to support his Senate bid.³⁴² To counter this corruption, The Seventeenth Amendment enacted statewide popular votes to select Senators which diminished the role of state parties.

Perhaps more significantly, in the 1890s several state parties sanctioned popular elections to nominate candidates for public office. By 1915 more than half of states held *primaries* or *caucuses* which utilized the party-in-the-electorate to choose general election nominees.³⁴³ Primaries empowered voters to control the nominating process and diminished the party’s influence over candidates, policies, and messaging. Instead of courting favor with party leaders,

³³⁸ Mutch, *Buying the Vote: A History of Campaign Finance Reform*, p. 58.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ Schleicher, "The Seventeenth Amendment and Federalism in an Age of National Political Parties," p. 1054.

³⁴² Bybee, Jay S. "Democracy, Federalism, and the Sirens' Song of the Seventeenth Amendment." *Nw. UL Rev.* 91 (1996): p. 500.

³⁴³ Issacharoff, "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed out Political Parties," p. 28.

candidates now appealed directly to voters. As a result, newer candidates could chase independent ballot access and raise money on their own behalf. By 1972 both major American political parties embraced popular nominating systems nationwide.³⁴⁴

Primaries differentiate American elections from most other Western republics. For example, the United Kingdom's Parliament selects candidates through a strict party-control structure.³⁴⁵ Virtually all campaign apparatus funnels through parties, including funding, communication, and organization. Individual candidates cannot stray from the approved ideology and win elections or achieve substantive policy success.³⁴⁶ Alternately, the American primary system galvanizes individual campaigns to oppose party-supported policies when doing so presents opportunity for personal gain.³⁴⁷

The party-in-the-electorate is not more ideologically extreme than the electorate at large, but voter turnout in primaries and caucuses remains low. Recent primary turnout fluctuated between a high of 32 percent in 2008 to a low of 11 percent in 2004 and averages around 20 percent.³⁴⁸ Partisan loyalists do not always understand the minutiae of policy differences between candidates from the same party and many voters lack strong opinions on specific candidates until the general election.³⁴⁹ Primary voters disproportionately consist of highly motivated ideological extremists and issue-specific interest groups dedicated to positions that diminish moderate voices. Therefore, Americans increasingly choose between polarizing candidates in general elections.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁴ Issacharoff, "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed out Political Parties," p. 30.

³⁴⁵ Bennett, Colin J. "Voter Databases, Micro-targeting, and Data Protection Law: Can Political Parties Campaign in Europe as they do in North America?" *International Data Privacy Law* 6, no. 4 (2016): p. 265.

³⁴⁶ Steger, Wayne P. "Do Primary Voters Draw from a Stacked Deck? Presidential Nominations in an Era of Candidate-Centered Campaigns." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2000): p. 726.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Wihbey, John, and Denise-Marie Ordway. "Voter Participation in Presidential Primaries." *The Journalist's Resource*. December 5, 2020.

³⁴⁹ Dyck, et. al, "Primary Distrust: Political Distrust and Support for the Insurgent Candidacies of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the 2016 Primary," p. 355.

³⁵⁰ Issacharoff, "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed out Political Parties," p. 10.

Internet: The New Frontier

Although reform laws and primaries altered how elections operated, candidates still depended on traditional party apparatus to run nationwide and statewide campaigns through the end of the twentieth century. By 2016 two novel developments concurrently diminished party control. The internet enabled candidates to raise unprecedented amounts of money through small donations, and the Supreme Court struck down donation limits. Given these developments, V.O. Key's analysis of political party composition needs updating. A fourth important component of parties has emerged: *the party donors*. Donors have grown to represent an important and disproportionately influential element of American political parties.

The internet fundraising era began in in the 2004 election cycle through Vermont Governor Howard Dean's candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination. Dean utilized his website and email lists to solicit large numbers of small donations online.³⁵¹ In previous eras, campaigns sought small donations through direct mail and door-to-door canvassing. This method involved large teams of planners, intense hours, and heavy legwork. Dean's team used the internet to diminish the resources and staff needed to raise small donations. The front page of his website included a large "donate" button that linked to a form encouraging credit card contributions while simultaneously developing a large database of supporters' email addresses.³⁵² The results proved instantaneously successful. In January 2004, establishment favorite (and eventual presidential nominee), Senator John Kerry (D-MA) raised \$4 million dollars through traditional fundraising methods. Dean's modern approach raised more than \$6 million in the same month.³⁵³

³⁵¹ Wolf, Gary. "How the internet invented Howard Dean." WIRED magazine 12, no. 1 (2004): p. 1.

³⁵² Ibid., p. 1-2.

³⁵³ Wilcox, Clyde. "Internet fundraising in 2008: A new model." In The Forum, vol. 6, no. 1, bepress, 2008: p. 1.

The Vermont governor's success illuminated that people who donate become more involved with political organizing and communication. In a 2004 interview, Dean opined that television-based political campaigns shout at audiences, but the internet enables audiences to shout back.³⁵⁴ Savvy campaigners listen to the audience's input and implement their ideas. This makes donors and supporters feel connected to the candidate which compels them to organize on his or her behalf. Grass-roots political organizing saves the campaign time, energy, and resources. In February 2003, Dean supporters organized eleven meetings around the country through meetup.com.³⁵⁵ After expanding its web-based donation capabilities, the Dean campaign experienced an explosion in independently organized events. By the end of 2003, over 800 monthly meetups were organized outside the Dean campaign's official apparatus.³⁵⁶

Historically, donation limits refuted candidate ability to raise sufficient funds outside partisan channels. Then, in 2010, the United States Supreme Court ruled in the landmark case *Citizens United v. FEC* that contribution limits violate the political expression protected under the *First Amendment* of the Constitution.³⁵⁷ The decision enabled outside political action committees (*Super PACs*) to raise and spend unlimited money from various sources.³⁵⁸ Legally, Super PACs cannot coordinate with campaign managers nor party leaders. In practice, they often work closely with individual politicians.³⁵⁹

The first post-*Citizens-United* presidential election occurred in 2012 when Democrat Barack Obama and Republican Mitt Romney both refused public funding to free their campaigns

³⁵⁴ Wolf, "How the internet invented Howard Dean," p. 2.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁷ Magleby, David B. "A Classification of Super PACs Into Three Types: Candidate, Party and Interest Group." In *State of the Parties Conference*, University of Akron, Akron, OH, 2013: p. 7-8.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

from budgetary constraints and facilitate their own strategic courses.³⁶⁰ Obama's campaign combined Dean's model with the opportunity presented by Citizens United's dismissal of donation limits. It hired, "dozens of engineers, developers, data scientists, and other specialists," to build customized software that solicited donations and collected, stored, and analyzed supporter information.³⁶¹ These databases empowered Obama's team to micro-target advertisements and predict when donors might give again.³⁶² The Obama 2012 campaign perfected the template to build and efficiently disseminate a twenty-first century economic war chest.

Obama's approach severely outraised and outspent opponents. Although some politicians in the twentieth century raised money through direct mail-in donations, the internet exponentially bolstered small donors. More than two-thirds of Obama's funding came in batches of \$200 or less while Romney raised only 13 percent of his money in \$200 blocks.³⁶³ More than 82 percent of Romney's contributions came from Super PAC donations in batches of \$50,000 or more.³⁶⁴ In sum, Obama collected more than \$700 million compared to Romney's \$450 million.³⁶⁵ Furthermore, the Obama campaign used social media and email lists to raise funds quickly at important times. Money solicited through the internet is immediately available as candidates do not need to wait for checks to clear or carriers to deliver mail.³⁶⁶

Internet contributions do not filter through the mediating force of party leadership. When donors support candidates they connect strongly with the person instead of their party or policies. Therefore, a bevy of small donations lends outsider credibility to campaigns.³⁶⁷ If money equals

³⁶⁰ Magleby, David B. *Financing the 2012 Election*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2014: p. 131.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 131.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

³⁶⁶ Devine, Tad. "Obama wins the nomination: How he did it." In *Campaigning for President 2008*. Routledge, 2009: p. 55.

³⁶⁷ Magleby, *Financing the 2012 Election*, p. 91.

power and access then politicians funded by direct donations can legitimately claim indebtedness to their base rather than the party establishment. Those who donate connect with the campaign and attain a stake in its success. Perhaps most importantly, donors are far more likely will show up on election day.³⁶⁸

Unlike the party-in-the-electorate, party donors are more ideologically extreme than the general population. Many donors give to candidates who take strong stances on extremely specific policies.³⁶⁹ Historically, party-centered finance systems blunted the polarizing effect of ideological donors since extremists fared poorly in the general election.³⁷⁰ Business interests gave to national party leadership who strategically distributed funding among the candidates most likely to appeal to broad audiences. Today, dwindling primary participation, abolished contribution limits, and internet donations allow extreme donors and interest groups to hoard greater influence. Consequently, party platforms increasingly develop through a bottom-up approach by candidates reliant on donors that favor narrow, specific policy goals.³⁷¹

After *Citizens United*, incumbents began to face difficult primary challenges from radical candidates funded by ideological donors and groups. In noncompetitive districts, officeholders often encounter more strident competition during a primary than in the general election.³⁷² Challengers increasingly run against the party-in-the-government and support controversial policy specifics that promise to “shake up the system.” With internet fundraising, party leaders are powerless to control such challengers or blunt their campaigns. Even if a centrist incumbent wins

³⁶⁸ Boroughs, Bryan. "Social Networking Websites and Voter Turnout." PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2010: p. 8.

³⁶⁹ Issacharoff, "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed out Political Parties," p. 16.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

³⁷¹ Neider, Madeleine. "Trump, Twitter and the Death of the American Political Party: A Discussion of the Fate of the American Party System Before, During, and After the Presidential Election of 2016." (2017): p. 54.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

reelection, the primary challenge can impact their rhetoric³⁷³ and move them further to the extreme end of the political spectrum.³⁷⁴

These developments also facilitate longshot candidates to harm moderate frontrunners. Historically, most presidential primary campaigns that failed to achieve early success lost funding and withdrew since donors do not want to support losing candidates.³⁷⁵ However, in the 2012 Republican presidential primaries former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-GA) finished fourth in Iowa (the first state to vote) and fifth in New Hampshire (the second state to vote) and won only two states total.³⁷⁶ Still, Republican megadonor Sheldon Adelson spent millions of dollars to support Gingrich's losing campaign until May.³⁷⁷ With donation limits abolished, Gingrich could rely solely on Adelson to support his campaign in perpetuity.

Alternately, Ron Paul (R-TX) won only four states but maintained funding through his committed base of small-donor libertarian enthusiasts.³⁷⁸ On November 5, 2007 Paul raised over \$4 million, virtually all of which occurred through internet fundraising.³⁷⁹ For perspective, Paul raised more money in a single day than John Kerry raised in the entire month of January 2004 while holding less than 1 percent of Republican voter support.³⁸⁰ A steady stream of donations into 2008 enabled Paul to remain in the Republican primaries even after he was mathematically eliminated from winning. Eventual nominee Mitt Romney spent valuable resources to combat both challengers that he could have saved for the general election. Moreover, Republicans splintered

³⁷³ Steger, "Do Primary Voters Draw from a Stacked Deck? Presidential Nominations in an Era of Candidate-Centered Campaigns." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2000): p. 730.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 726.

³⁷⁵ Mutz, Diana C. "Effects of horse-race coverage on campaign coffers: Strategic contributing in presidential primaries." *The Journal of Politics* 57, no. 4 (1995): p. 1015.

³⁷⁶ "Mitt Romney - Election 2012." *The New York Times*.

³⁷⁷ Smith, Jeff, and David C. Kimball. "Barking louder: Interest groups in the 2012 election." In *The Forum*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 80-90. De Gruyter, 2013: p. 81.

³⁷⁸ Malbin, Michael J. "Small Donors, Large Donors, and the Internet." *Campaign Finance Institute* (2009): p. 487.

³⁷⁹ Wilcox, "Internet fundraising in 2008: A new model," p. 1.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

into factions behind Romney, Paul, and Gingrich while Democrats coalesced behind incumbent Barack Obama. By 2008, party donors developed into a powerful force with massive influence over presidential primaries.

Populism Rises

Populism refers to an approach that pits average citizens in a moral battle against society's elites through political or economic conflict.³⁸¹ Other than anti-establishment sentiment, populism does not adhere to consistent ideology nor attempt to offer solutions to all political questions.³⁸² Instead, it attaches itself to other preexisting ideologies forged in distrust of experts, politicians, intellectuals, and standard power structures.³⁸³ Popular opinion can dramatically change when a fickle majority encounters a new problem, so populist thinking not underpinned by reliable philosophy struggles to stabilize government. Periods of economic, political, and social strife that undermine elite control often create an atmosphere susceptible to populism. Events that negatively impact the masses create discontent with the status quo and catalyze the population to seek a strong leader who promises radical change.³⁸⁴

Beginning in the 1990s banks eagerly distributed subprime mortgages for short term profits. Towards the end of 2007 millions of Americans defaulted on their mortgage payments and the resulting foreclosures nearly collapsed the country's lending establishments.³⁸⁵ Between 2008 and 2010 more than one-hundred-seventy thousand small businesses closed as unemployment

³⁸¹ Mansbridge, Jane, and Stephen Macedo. "Populism and Democratic Theory." *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 15 (2019): p. 59.

³⁸² Stecula, Dominik A., and Mark Pickup. "How populism and conservative media fuel conspiracy beliefs about COVID-19 and what it means for COVID-19 behaviors." *Research & Politics* 8, no. 1 (2021): p.2.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁴ Goertzel, Ted. "Protest Cycles in the United States: From the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street to Sanders and Trump." Edited by Moisés Arce and Roberta Rice: p. 82.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

climbed to 10 percent³⁸⁶ and homeowners lost \$13 trillion in net worth.³⁸⁷ Globalization and technology made it easier for companies to ship jobs overseas and rely on foreign markets as China's massive population challenged America's role as the world's economic superpower.³⁸⁸ These factors led to an international financial crisis that compounded security concerns after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.³⁸⁹ Ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq exacerbated political division. As a result, Americans lost confidence in their nation.³⁹⁰

Congress spent over \$700 billion in taxpayer money to save banking institutions deemed "too big to fail."³⁹¹ It sent \$1.5 billion of that money to wealthy CEOs who bought back stock, enhance their pensions, and paid themselves bonuses.³⁹² The electorate largely blamed the lending institutions for the economic downturn and resented politicians using their tax money to bail out bankers. Two political movements sprang from each end of the political spectrum to combat perceived elite corruption. On the right came the *Tea Party* that opposed government overreach into private affairs. On the left came *Occupy Wall Street* that opposed corporatocratic influence on the American political system. These groups shared a common theme: elite special interests harmed average Americans.³⁹³

The Tea Party formed when hedge fund manager Rick Santelli delivered a speech at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange in 2009.³⁹⁴ Santelli blamed high taxes for the economic downturn

³⁸⁶ Kavoussi, Bonnie. "The Recession Killed This Many Small Businesses." HuffPost. July 26, 2012.

³⁸⁷ Bailly, Martin Neil, and Douglas J. Elliott. "The US Financial and Economic Crisis: Where Does it Stand and Where Do We Go from Here?" Brookings Institution, Jun 6, no. 1 (2009): p. 25.

³⁸⁸ Langman, Lauren. "Cycles of Contention: The Rise and Fall of the Tea Party." Critical Sociology 38, no. 4 (2012): p. 474.

³⁸⁹ Dodo, Mahamat K. "My Theory on the Trump's Phenomenon. Why Donald Trump? And Why Now?" Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences 7, no. 4 (2016): p. 603.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Langman, "Cycles of Contention: The Rise and Fall of the Tea Party," p. 471.

³⁹² Bass, Frank, and Rita Beamish. "\$1.6B Of Bank Bailout Went to Execs." CBS News. December 21, 2008.

³⁹³ Laschever, Eulalie. "Are They Not Worthy? How Partisan Political Blogs Legitimize the Tea Party Movement and Occupy Wall Street." Sociological Forum, vol. 32, no. 2, 2017: p. 363.

³⁹⁴ Goertzel, "Protest Cycles in the United States: From the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street to Sanders and Trump," p. 180.

and criticized President Obama's proposed tax increases.³⁹⁵ He called on conservatives to fight big government regulations and administrative rulemaking. The Tea (an acronym for "Taxed Enough Already") Party began to organize protests around the country through social media, online forums, and email. Within a year, the group profoundly influenced Republican elections. By 2010, more than a hundred Tea Party candidates appeared on Republican primary ballots for federal office as thousands more ran for state and local positions.³⁹⁶

Occupy Wall Street began when the Canadian magazine *Adbusters* started the Twitter hashtag #OCCUPYWALLSTREET in February 2011.³⁹⁷ Millions of Americans took the message literally and by October thousands of people created makeshift camps near New York City's Wall Street. Before long, the Occupy protests spread to nine-hundred cities in over ninety countries.³⁹⁸ Protestors demanded the government limit the financial sector's unequal influence over the American economy and lamented the growing wealth gap.³⁹⁹ They argued that corporate executives made billions of dollars from exploitative worker labor and failed to share the wealth.⁴⁰⁰

The Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street rose from opposite ends of the political spectrum but shared important characteristics. Both developed through *horizontal organization*⁴⁰¹ without any official authority structures. Horizontal movements rely on broad coalitions organizing and spreading ideas and information to one another without hierarchical structures. These processes succeeded through communicative technology afforded by the internet. As railroads enabled

³⁹⁵ Goertzel, "Protest Cycles in the United States: From the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street to Sanders and Trump," p. 180.

³⁹⁶ Zernike, Kate. "Tea Party Set to Win Enough Races for Wide Influence." *The New York Times*. October 15, 2010.

³⁹⁷ Goertzel, "Protest Cycles in the United States: From the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street to Sanders and Trump," p. 181.

³⁹⁸ Neider, "Trump, Twitter and the Death of the American Political Party," p. 49.

³⁹⁹ Goertzel, "Protest Cycles in the United States: From the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street to Sanders and Trump," p. 181.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

information to spread throughout the 1800s, the internet allowed information and independent organization to spread in the 2000s.

The internet landscape thrives upon simple messaging, and populist movement succeeded by employing *memes*.⁴⁰² Memes symbolize, “Ideas that spread from person to person within a culture,” usually through broad concepts without lengthy analysis incorporating nuance or historical context.⁴⁰³ Occupy Wall Street and The Tea Party framed American society as a struggle between average citizens and elite forces. The Tea Party’s meme conjures images of the American Revolution’s *Boston Tea Party* when Colonialists protested taxation without representation by tossing tea into the Boston Harbor. It connects supporters to originalist patriotism and harkens to an earlier, idealized era of American history.⁴⁰⁴ The Tea Party meme perpetuates the idea that modern society’s problems occurred because America pivoted from its founding.⁴⁰⁵

Occupy Wall Street’s meme conveyed the opposite: America needs to change its longstanding power structures. Their slogan, “We are the 99 percent,” pitted the vast majority of Americans against the small “1 percent” of corporate elites who control the economy.⁴⁰⁶ The solution centers on progressive policies that diminish the role of corrupt business interests. The Great Depression in the 1930s led America’s government to implement New Deal policies to curb banking influence and empower lower-class workers. New Deal supporters believed, “Necessitous men are not free” and government needed to ensure all citizens maintained a minimum standard

⁴⁰² Goertzel, "Protest Cycles in the United States: From the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street to Sanders and Trump," p. 176.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁴ Langman, "Cycles of Contention: The Rise and Fall of the Tea Party," p. 475.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 493.

⁴⁰⁶ Goertzel, "Protest Cycles in the United States: From the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street to Sanders and Trump," p. 184.

of living.⁴⁰⁷ Occupy Wall Street believed that 2011's wealth gap and financial crisis proved the country needed to move toward similar egalitarianism.⁴⁰⁸

Populist movements absolve average citizens from responsibility by blaming problems on a privileged sect.⁴⁰⁹ Some culpability for the housing crash should rest with those who received subprime loans without conducting the independent research needed to fully understand the burdens of a large mortgage. Likewise, voters ultimately decide who runs the government. Increased suffrage should create more opportunities for better candidates accountable to better-informed voters. If progressives truly represented 99 percent of Americans, they surely had the numbers to enact change through the established political institutions. The apparatus to fix these issues already exists. If voters want change, they should turnout more forcefully in primary elections.

Twenty-first century Americans retained the world's highest standards of living. A 2010 *New York Times* survey found that self-identified Tea Party members were better educated and substantially wealthier than most Americans.⁴¹⁰ When New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg finally ordered police to clear Wall Street camps, many protestors admitted relief.⁴¹¹ They dreaded staying through the winter and welcomed police crackdowns that helped create a victimhood image.⁴¹² Both populist movements sought to destroy government models that created wealth, stabilized the economy, and ultimately benefited their adherents. Instead of taking responsibility

⁴⁰⁷ Stipelman, Brian Eric. "Necessitous men are not free men:" The political theory of the New Deal. *Rutgers The State University of New Jersey-New Brunswick*, 2008.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Langman, "Cycles of Contention: The Rise and Fall of the Tea Party," p. 484.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., p. 475.

⁴¹¹ Goertzel, "Protest Cycles in the United States: From the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street to Sanders and Trump," p. 184.

⁴¹² Ibid.

for the problems that faced their nation, they blamed political party leaders for the nation's financial woes. In the coming years, they would elect candidates who articulated this view.

Populist Leaders

Technological developments and political reforms created opportunities for populist movements in 2016 through internet outlets that facilitated horizontal organization and robust fundraising. Diminished party power enabled candidates to control their rhetoric and monetary sources. Economic and political unrest in the 2000s generated conditions that spread populist dissatisfaction. But even populist movements need leadership in government to achieve reforms and communicate ideas to a wider audience.⁴¹³

In 2016 Trump and Sanders both ran for president by capturing the populist frames developed through The Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street, yet neither candidate could win the presidency outside a major political party. Instead, they challenged party authority. In a prior era, party leadership would thwart their efforts, but the primary system and internet fundraising offered outsider candidates a realistic path to electoral success. Trump ran under the Republican banner even though he changed his political affiliation at least five times and admittedly donated to Republicans and Democrats equally throughout his career.⁴¹⁴ Sanders ran as a Democrat even though he never belonged to the party during forty years of government service.⁴¹⁵

Sanders proclaimed himself a “democratic socialist” – a label the Democratic Party vehemently opposed.⁴¹⁶ He labeled chief rival Hillary Clinton an untrustworthy “establishment”

⁴¹³ Langman, "Cycles of Contention: The Rise and Fall of the Tea Party," p. 478.

⁴¹⁴ Goertzel, "Protest Cycles in the United States: From the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street to Sanders and Trump," p. 184.

⁴¹⁵ Schjønberg, Inger-Marie. "My heart is in Burlington: the US Socialist Senator: A Biographical Analysis on Bernard 'Bernie' Sanders and his Road to the US Senate 2006." Master's Thesis, 2010: p. 60.

⁴¹⁶ Neider, "Trump, Twitter and the Death of the American Political Party," (2017): p. 55.

candidate with too many ties to Wall Street and communicated the need for a “political revolution.”⁴¹⁷ Trump constantly withstood attacks from establishment candidates like John McCain, George W. Bush, and Mitt Romney as traditional party leaders generally opposed his candidacy.⁴¹⁸ In August 2016 Trump replaced campaign manager Paul Manafort with Steve Bannon from the populist media outlet *Breitbart*.⁴¹⁹ Trump viewed Bannon as a vehicle to separate himself from the Republican leadership in voters’ minds.

Both candidates built upon Obama’s fundraising model by separating their donations from Super PACs. Sanders refused to start a Super PAC and used social media to raise money. His average donation amounted to \$27, which became a campaign slogan.⁴²⁰ Super PAC opposition proved so effective that other candidates felt obligated to follow Sanders’ lead. *The New York Times* called rejecting Super PAC money a Democratic “purity test” and Super PACs a “liability as much as a strength.”⁴²¹ Most analysts predicted Super PACs would dominate the 2016 campaign, but Sanders and Trump both raised money through direct donations more effectively than their Super PAC reliant rivals.

Trump used social media to save money normally spent on television ads and structured his campaign around the mobile platform. Campaign operative Brad Parscale addressed rallies by holding up a mobile phone and urging the audience to spread Trump’s message via text message and email.⁴²² Each time, Parscale gained around ten thousand new phone numbers which led to new revenue streams and conduits to spread his message.⁴²³ Jeb Bush, the establishment favorite

⁴¹⁷ Neider, “Trump, Twitter and the Death of the American Political Party,” (2017): p. 56.

⁴¹⁸ Conklin, Audrey. “Bush, Romney, McCain Officials Endorse Biden, Target Trump Ahead of Key RNC Speech.” Fox News. August 27, 2020.

⁴¹⁹ Neider, “Trump, Twitter and the Death of the American Political Party,” p. 51.

⁴²⁰ Munckton, Stuart. “United States: Sanders: ‘The Political Revolution Must Continue’.” Green Left Weekly 1099 (2016): 16.

⁴²¹ Goldmacher, Shane. “2020 Democrats Face a Vexing Issue: Big Money from the Rich.” The New York Times. December 11, 2018.

⁴²² Bykowicz, Julie. “Small Campaign Donors are the Gift That Keeps Giving.” Dow Jones Institutional News. Nov 18, 2018.

⁴²³ Ibid.

going into 2016, raised most of his money through the nation's largest Super PAC.⁴²⁴ His old world thinking fell embarrassingly short of Trump's fundraising totals. Bush eventually dropped out of the primary with little party-in-the-electorate support.

Social media and legacy media form a reciprocal relationship that benefits populist rhetoric. More mentions on television gain more mentions on social media and vice versa.⁴²⁵ By constantly Tweeting, Trump gained television coverage, and constant television coverage resulted in more social media attention. He spoke directly to his supporters at any time of day using the exact phraseology best suited to make his case. The internet provided equal access to audiences and ignored reliance on establishment media television schedules and newspaper delivery times. Further, Trump disregarded traditional media filters that frame stories outside of the candidate's intentions. The targeted use of social media led to higher candidate-specific voter turnout, particularly among younger voters.⁴²⁶

Populist voters exhibited a high degree of loyalty, but instead of partisan and policy loyalty they shifted to *candidate loyalty*. One 2017 study found that 20 percent of Trump supporters endorsed Democratic Party policies when told President Trump supported them and opposed Republican Party policies when told President Trump opposed them.⁴²⁷ Further, Trump could change his stance on a given policy or issue and his base would simultaneously change their stance. When Trump attacked his Republican primary opponents it reduced support for those candidates among the larger Republican base, even those who did not support Trump.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁴ Isenstadt, Alex. "Jeb Bush's \$100M May." POLITICO. May 8, 2015.

⁴²⁵ Hong, Sounman, and Daniel Nadler. "Which Candidates Do the Public Discuss Online in an Election Campaign?: The Use of Social Media by 2012 Presidential Candidates and its Impact on Candidate Salience." *Government Information Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (2012): p. 457.

⁴²⁶ Boroughs, Bryan. "Social networking websites and voter turnout." PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2010: p. 8.

⁴²⁷ Barber and Pope, "Does Party Trump Ideology? Disentangling Party and Ideology in America," p. 44.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

In the internet age, group loyalty proves a stronger predictor for party-in-the-electorate support than ideology.⁴²⁹ Americans increasingly support political candidates to form an identity and can gain “social earning” by broadcasting their preferences on social media. Those least informed about policy issues are most swayed towards political stances supported by their peers.⁴³⁰ Pascale understood this when asking Trump supporters to relay his message. Potential voters may ignore or even despise leaders or media figures but often desire to be part of the same movement as their friends and family. Trump and Sanders came to represent memes through which supporters could gain social earning amongst their peers.

In 2016, many Americans considered anti-government sentiment their foundational political identity. Government distrust represented the strongest indicator for Trump or Sanders support across age, ethnic, and religious demographics.⁴³¹ Trust in government sharply declined beginning in the early 1970s.⁴³² By 2016 approval for Congress, the Supreme Court, and the presidency hit all-time lows.⁴³³ At the end of the Obama administration less than 20 percent of respondents said they trusted the government to “do what’s right.”⁴³⁴ Distrusters support outsider candidates who attack America’s political institutions and undermine the party apparatus and political processes that keep government running. Both Trump and Sanders gained widespread support while running *against* the parties they hoped to lead.⁴³⁵

Support for protest candidates in 2016 centered on dissatisfaction with *process space*. Populist reformers tire of government processes, even when they approve of the policies achieved

⁴²⁹ Barber and Pope, "Does Party Trump Ideology? Disentangling Party and Ideology in America," p. 48.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Dyck, et. al, "Primary Distrust: Political Distrust and Support for the Insurgent Candidacies of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the 2016 Primary," p. 352.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid., p. 353.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

through those processes. In the early 1970s Congress voted on partisan lines about 60 percent of the time.⁴³⁶ By the mid-2010s Congress voted on partisan lines over 90 percent of time.⁴³⁷ Less informed moderate voters strongly dislike partisan bickering and lose patience with government gridlock. They often reject both parties and follow candidates who brand themselves “outsiders.” In 2008, 32 percent of Americans called themselves independents, but after years of gridlock and a 2013 government shutdown that number jumped to 39 percent.⁴³⁸

Ironically, populists who reject process space tend to cause more gridlock when they get into office by refusing to compromise. Tea Party candidates won over forty congressional races in the 2010 midterm elections and formed a group in Congress known as the *Freedom Caucus*⁴³⁹ that opposed the Republican establishment. The Freedom Caucus teamed with Democrats to fight Speaker John Boehner’s 2015 free trade bill.⁴⁴⁰ Raul Labrador (R-ID), a Tea Party Republican, delivered an ultimatum to Boehner, saying, “You have two choices: either you change the way you’re running this place, which you have been unwilling to do, or you step down.”⁴⁴¹ Boehner retired less than a year later.

Conclusion: The New Jacksonians

The populist ends of America’s political spectrum disagree on much, but both distrust party politics and centralized power. A sober study of American history demonstrates that government needs party cohesion to prosper. Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal policies and its conservative

⁴³⁶ Davenport, David. “A Growing Cancer on Congress: The Curse of Party-Line Voting.” *Forbes Magazine*. December 13, 2017.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁸ Dyck, et. al, “Primary Distrust: Political Distrust and Support for the Insurgent Candidacies of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the 2016 Primary,” p. 352.

⁴³⁹ Neider, Madeleine. “Trump, Twitter and the Death of the American Political Party, p. 44.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*

backlash succeeded through party structure rather than around it. The twenty-first century Jacksonian-like attacks on party apparatus stifle government from completing its vital functions.

Andrew Jackson entered office after the 1820's "Era of Good Feelings" when Americans sought unity and coherence after the War of 1812.⁴⁴² His rise to the presidency followed a period of expanded democracy and voting rights and eventually led to technological advances that quickly spread information and enabled citizens to organize outside established structures.⁴⁴³ In the early-to-mid nineteenth century Americans moved west and created new states that began to remove property ownership as a voting requirement.⁴⁴⁴ Concurrently, candidates found expanded access to more literate Americans who increasingly disfavored party leadership.⁴⁴⁵ Jackson capitalized on these movements by portraying himself as an average American that promised to fight the unnecessary and corrupt political establishment.⁴⁴⁶

Jackson left office in 1837 as a banking crisis escalated into a national panic.⁴⁴⁷ The Federalist Party collapsed and the Democratic-Republican Party split into Jacksonian and Anti-Jacksonian wings that ultimately reformed as the Whig Party and Democratic Party and ushered the Second Party System.⁴⁴⁸ The divisive nature of Jackson's tenure and newly formed political rivalries culminated in the Civil War less than three decades after he left office. Populist attacks on America's establishment institutions and widespread hatred of other partisans undermined any sense of shared national interest.

⁴⁴² Silbey, Joel H. "The Incomplete World of American Politics, 1815-1829: Presidents, Parties and Politics in "The Era of Good Feelings"." In *Congress & the Presidency: A Journal of Capital Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 1-17: p. 1.

⁴⁴³ Corbett, P. Scott, Volker Janssen, John M. Lund, Todd Pfannestiel, Sylvie Waskiewicz, and Paul Vickery. "A New Political Style: From John Quincy Adams to Andrew Jackson." *US History* (2014).

⁴⁴⁴ Corbett, et. al. "A New Political Style: From John Quincy Adams to Andrew Jackson."

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁷ Phillips, Kim T. "Democrats of the Old School in the Era of Good Feelings." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 95, no. 3 (1971): p. 364.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

The Trump/Sanders campaigns arrived after another banking crisis. To achieve electoral success, both candidates mobilized broad, loyal, coalitions of previously nonpolitical supporters. They condemned bankers, the press, and “insider” politicians to pit American workers against the “Washington swamp.” During Trump’s presidency, the Executive Office of the President experienced an unprecedented ninety-two percent turnover rate.⁴⁴⁹ Trump regularly fired cabinet officials, battled intelligence agencies, and developed combative relationships with governors.⁴⁵⁰ Although Trump lost his 2020 bid for reelection, he never accepted defeat, and claimed the election had been rigged against him.

Jacksonians dismantled the American party structure dominant in the early nineteenth century. The 2016 election could lead to similar developments. Republicans have not determined how to handle Trump’s lasting influence and the party appears to be splitting into Trumpian and Anti-Trumpian wings. Trump does not adhere to a consistent philosophy, making it difficult to predict what policies Republican platforms might endorse over the next few election cycles. Sanders destabilized the party structure that connected Democrats. Neither candidate formed a third party, but rather infiltrated parties by weakening them from the inside. This occurred through a combination of technological advances, donation laws, and economic problems.

Running against political party leadership proves all too easy in twenty-first century America. Populist candidates do not need party leaders for funding or access to voters. However, once in office, politicians without experience and party backing frequently fail to achieve substantial goals and instead focus their energy on attacking government processes. In office, Trump supported many traditional Republican policies such as tax cuts, deregulation, gun rights,

⁴⁴⁹ Tenpas, Kathryn Dunn, and Ph.D. “Tracking Turnover in the Trump Administration.” Brookings. March 9, 2022.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

and supporting Israel. But he also continuously challenged the party's authority, fought with Republican party leaders, and split the party into competing factions. The party continues to struggle with how to handle Trump's influence into the 2020s.

Before Americans embrace anti-establishment rhetoric, they should study history to understand where populism leads. Americans enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world. Political parties help stabilize the country's security, liberty, and prosperity. Attacking political parties seems intuitive to many Americans. Very few academics, media figures, or even politicians attempt to counter anti-party rhetoric. While not perfect, parties remain as crucial in modern government as in the time of the founders. Andrew Jackson's presidency destroyed the Era of Good Feelings' political stability and general peace. Undermining party authority could lead to similarly devastating consequences.

CHAPTER III: GOING DEEP

Identifying the Forces that Undermine Government Administration

Abstract

President Donald Trump frequently accuses political adversaries of belonging to a “deep state” that controls secret power structures behind the federal government. In the last five years, media reporting on the deep state exploded and more Americans than ever believe in its existence. But bureaucrats who work in government across administrations are generally not malevolent. Most executive department employees work to achieve important goals and carry out the mundane tasks that keep government functioning. Bureaucrats often exhibit more transparent and ethical behavior than elected representatives. Administrators even help check government power by competing for resources with the other branches and exposing illegal behavior. Growing government distrust created heightened tension that undermines executive departments and prevents them from fulfilling their obligations. Before Americans embrace anti-establishment rhetoric, they must understand the importance of administrators in modern democracy.

Introduction

In a 2017 Warsaw speech, United States President Donald Trump spoke of a secret danger plaguing Western governments:

“On both sides of the Atlantic, our citizens are confronted by yet another danger, one firmly within our control. This danger is invisible to some but familiar to the Poles: the steady creep of government bureaucracy that drains the vitality and wealth of the people.”⁴⁵¹ (Stewart, 2017)

Trump referred the large administrative bureaucracy as the “deep state,” loosely defined as, “Unelected...operatives who defy the voters to push their own secret agendas.”⁴⁵² He promised to “drain the swamp” of Washington bureaucrats and protect his supporters from their influence.

Segments within the American population have always believed in secret government operatives, but such theories rarely found support from mainstream politicians. That changed in 2015 when Trump – then the leading candidate for the Republican presidential nomination –

⁴⁵¹ Patrick, Stewart M. “Trump in Warsaw: Introducing ‘Nationalist Internationalism.’” Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations, July 6, 2017.

⁴⁵² Kelly, Casey Ryan. “Donald J. Trump and the rhetoric of resentment.” Quarterly Journal of Speech 106, no. 1 (2020): p. 13.

appeared on the web program *Infowars* with Alex Jones.⁴⁵³ Infowars argues that global elites control the world through invisible power structures and deep-pocketed monetary interests.⁴⁵⁴ Jones accuses the United States government of conspiratorial practices such as orchestrating the 9/11 terrorist attacks and Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting.⁴⁵⁵ He says the government coordinated these and other false flag operations to grow support for policies like gun control and expanded espionage capabilities.⁴⁵⁶

During the interview Jones proclaimed, “Ninety percent of my listeners are Trump supporters.” Trump replied, “Your reputation is amazing. I will not let you down.”⁴⁵⁷ This mutual endorsement both cemented Trump’s backing amongst Jones’ audience and brought Infowars’ message to millions of Trump voters. The phrase “deep state” gained exponential notoriety in the coming years. Major news broadcasts used the term only sixty-four times in 2016, but by 2018 those same programs used it more than five thousand times.⁴⁵⁸ Google searches for “deep state” concurrently exploded between 2015 and 2020.⁴⁵⁹ In a 2020 *YouGov* poll, nearly 70 percent of Republican voters conveyed the view that the deep state actively tried to overthrow the Trump administration.⁴⁶⁰

These fears climaxed in January 2021. Joe Biden, an insider politician who worked in Washington for over fifty years, won the 2020 presidential election. Trump disregarded the results and held a series of addresses that accused the deep state of rigging the election in Biden’s favor.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵³ Van den Bulck, Hilde, and Aaron Hyzen. "Of lizards and ideological entrepreneurs: Alex Jones and Infowars in the relationship between populist nationalism and the post-global media ecology." *International communication gazette* 82, no. 1 (2020): p. 50.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁰ Frankovic, Kathy. "Americans Who Favor Impeachment Want President Trump Removed, Too." *YouGov*. October 16, 2019.

⁴⁶¹ Luke, Timothy W. "Democracy under threat after 2020 national elections in the USA: 'stop the steal' or 'give more to the grifter-in-chief?'" *Educational Philosophy and Theory* (2021): p. 3.

He organized a “stop the steal” rally outside the White house on January 6, the same day Congress met to certify the electoral college results.⁴⁶² A series of speakers riled the crowd, including Rudy Giuliani who told supporters to conduct, “Trial by combat.”⁴⁶³ Trump spoke last, saying, “You have to fight like hell. If you don’t fight like hell, you’re not going to have a country anymore.”⁴⁶⁴ The crowd left the rally, broke into the U.S. Capitol, and disrupted Congress’ election certification. The ensuing riot resulted in five deaths, looting, and property destruction.⁴⁶⁵

The events on January 6 demonstrate the dangerous impact of widespread belief in a deep state. While most Trump supporters did not and would not commit violent acts, a discouraging number believe government bureaucrats rigged the election. *POLITICO* polling found that in October 2020 about 18 percent of Republicans said they could not trust the upcoming election results.⁴⁶⁶ After the Trump lost that number skyrocketed to 64 percent.⁴⁶⁷ Likewise, prior to the election about 35 percent of Republicans expressed the opinion that the election would not be “free and fair.” After the election that percentage jumped to over 70 percent.⁴⁶⁸

Some Republican leaders disavowed Trump’s claims, but too many tacitly supported the election corruption allegations. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) both stated that Biden legitimately won the election.⁴⁶⁹ Chair of the House Republican Conference Liz Cheney (R-WY) led the congressional panel to investigate January 6.⁴⁷⁰ Heading into the 2022 election cycle, McCarthy said Republicans had

⁴⁶² Luke, “Democracy under threat after 2020 national elections in the USA: ‘stop the steal’ or ‘give more to the grifter-in-chief?’” p. 5.

⁴⁶³ Smith, Michael. “Trial by Combat in the Modern World.” *Barry L. Rev.* 27 (2022): 73.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁶ Kim, Catherine. “Poll: 70 Percent of Republicans Don’t Think the Election Was Free and Fair.” *POLITICO*. November 11, 2020.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁹ Astor, Maggie. “Kevin McCarthy Says No One Is ‘Questioning the Legitimacy’ of the 2020 Election. That’s Not True.” *The New York Times*. May 12, 2021.

⁴⁷⁰ Broadwater, Luke. “‘Now the Real Work Begins’: Liz Cheney Lost Her Election but Vows to Dig Deeper into the Jan. 6 Mission.” *The New York Times*. August 17, 2022.

already moved on from the 2020 election, but this statement does not characterize reality.⁴⁷¹ Mainstream Republicans like Senators Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Josh Hawley (R-MO) continue to engage with election conspiracy theories without consequence.⁴⁷² Cheney lost her 2022 Republican House primary to a candidate that supported Trump's claims.⁴⁷³ All told, more than half of the Republican candidates in the 2022 congressional midterm general elections continued to deny the 2020 election results.⁴⁷⁴

For their part, Republicans call Democrats hypocritical for immediately dismissing election security concerns. Four years earlier, Democrats accused the Trump administration of working with Russian operatives to influence the 2016 election against Hillary Clinton.⁴⁷⁵ Bernie Sanders, who finished second in both the 2016 and 2020 Democratic presidential primaries, repeatedly claimed Democratic Party insiders worked against his campaign to support establishment Democrats.⁴⁷⁶ Moreover, Democrats trusted the results far more after their candidate won. In October 2020, about half of Democrats trusted election security. A week after Biden won nearly 90 percent of Democrats expressed the same feeling.⁴⁷⁷

Belief in a deep state poses serious problems for the country. If Americans distrust their national government's operatives, they cease to respect their nation and its political processes. This chapter analyzes deep state belief in the United States and how it impacts American government and its citizens. It first defines "state" by focusing on the philosophical underpinnings of United States' institutions. Second, it formulates a workable definition of "deep state" by examining

⁴⁷¹ Broadwater, "'Now the Real Work Begins': Liz Cheney Lost Her Election but Vows to Dig Deeper into the Jan. 6 Mission."

⁴⁷² Kranish, Michael. "Inside Ted Cruz's Last-Ditch Battle to Keep Trump in Power." *The Washington Post*. March 29, 2022.

⁴⁷³ Broadwater, "'Now the Real Work Begins': Liz Cheney Lost Her Election but Vows to Dig Deeper into the Jan. 6 Mission."

⁴⁷⁴ Gardner, Amy. "A Majority of GOP Nominees Deny or Question the 2020 Election Results." *The Washington Post*. October 12, 2022.

⁴⁷⁵ Boyd-Barrett, Oliver. "Fake news and 'RussiaGate' discourses: Propaganda in the post-truth era." *Journalism* 20, no. 1 (2019): p. 87.

⁴⁷⁶ McCarthy, Michael J. "How a President Bernie Sanders Could Take on Wall Street." *Jacobin* (2019): p. 3.

⁴⁷⁷ Kim, "Poll: 70 Percent of Republicans Don't Think the Election Was Free and Fair."

organizations in Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Third, it analyzes why the United States developed strong institutions and their role within government. Fourth, it considers when administrative authority extends too far and how it impacts administrative reputations. Finally, it combines these concepts to explain how President Trump convinced his supporters they could not trust their state, and how the state responded.

What Makes a State?

Americans celebrate their nation's birth every Fourth of July. On July 4, 1776, the American founders publicized *The Declaration of Independence*, a document that articulates the colonists' reasons for breaking away from the British Empire to form a new country.⁴⁷⁸ Why do Americans hold this day in such high regard? The colonies legally separated from the British two days earlier on July 2.⁴⁷⁹ The American Revolutionary War ended in 1783. The States ratified the Constitution in 1788 and George Washington swore into the presidential office in 1789.⁴⁸⁰ Parts of the nation continued to practice slavery until 1865 and women did not gain the guaranteed right to vote until 1920. Any of these years could symbolize the birth of American democracy.

1776 maintains a special place in the hearts and minds of Americans because it celebrates The Declaration of Independence itself.⁴⁸¹ The state's founding documents represent its heritage more than any other tradition. Unlike many other countries, Americans do not share an ethnicity and celebrate religious diversity. Their history only extends a quarter of a millennium, hundreds or even thousands of years fewer than many nations around the world. In place of ethnic, religious,

⁴⁷⁸ Pencak, William. "The Declaration of Independence: Changing Interpretations and a New Hypothesis." *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 57, no. 3 (1990): p. 225.

⁴⁷⁹ Bomboy, Scott. "When Is the Real Independence Day: July 2 or July 4?" National Constitution Center. National Constitution Center, July 2, 2022.

⁴⁸⁰ Hylton, J. Gordon. "Virginia and the Ratification of the Bill of Rights, 1789-1791." *U. Rich. L. Rev.* 25 (1990): p. 433; 441.

⁴⁸¹ Pencak, "The Declaration of Independence: Changing Interpretations and a New Hypothesis," p. 226.

and historical ties, Americans connect through a belief in the Declaration's ideals: All people are equal before the law. Each person possesses inalienable rights. The citizens of a country ought to govern themselves.⁴⁸²

But the Declaration only expressed a philosophical belief system, it did not establish a means to achieve its goals. Designing a government to protect its principles proved more difficult than declaring independence. The founders' first attempt at forming government began in 1777⁴⁸³ when delegates from the thirteen colonies debated and composed *The Articles of Confederation*, which the states ratified in 1781.⁴⁸⁴ The colonists generally distrusted centralized authority, so the Articles placed more energy in the provincial governments and severely handicapped federal power.⁴⁸⁵ The national government controlled the armed forces but could not compel states to deploy troops, provide resources, regulate commerce, or collect taxes.⁴⁸⁶ It could only appeal for money from the various states who often ignored their requests.⁴⁸⁷

This government proved so ineffective that the states agreed to revamp the system. Delegates from the states reassembled in Philadelphia and by 1787 created The United States Constitution.⁴⁸⁸ The Constitution outlined a much stronger central government with the power to regulate commerce between states, collect taxes, and control the army.⁴⁸⁹ It established institutions such as the judiciary, executive, and Congress. The text begins with the words "we the people" to clarify that Americans citizens always control those institutions.⁴⁹⁰ The new Constitution enabled

⁴⁸² Pencak, "The Declaration of Independence: Changing Interpretations and a New Hypothesis," p. 226-227.

⁴⁸³ McLaughlin, Andrew Cunningham. *The Confederation and the Constitution, 1783-1789*. Vol. 10. Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1905: p. 179.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

⁴⁸⁵ Smith, Douglas G. "An Analysis of Two Federal Structures: The Articles of Confederation and the Constitution." *San Diego L. Rev.* 34 (1997): p. 263.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 254; p. 267.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 251

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 264

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

government to forcefully enact policy while preventing it from infringing on the Declaration's principles. Importantly, it establishes a legal document, not a person or group of people, as the ultimate authority over government.⁴⁹¹

To enjoy these rights Americans would need to uphold certain obligations. For example, government requires revenue to operate effectively. Citizens must pay taxes, an important and misunderstood element of sovereignty.⁴⁹² When people pay taxes, they literally and figuratively buy into their government and earn the right to participate in state decisions.⁴⁹³ To successfully contribute, the population must stay informed about issues facing society and participate in elections.⁴⁹⁴ Voting produces winners and losers, and governments depend upon losers to accept election outcomes. The peaceful transfer of power represents a hallmark of stable democracy.⁴⁹⁵

Citizens must accept their institution's decisions. Otherwise, the state loses credibility as a stabilizing force. For example, modern Americans consider slavery a national sin and an obvious violation of The Declaration of Independence's values. In 1857, the Supreme Court ruled in its controversial *Dred Scott v. Sanford* decision that constitutional protections did not apply to Americans of African descent.⁴⁹⁶ Then Representative Abraham Lincoln from Illinois emphatically condemned the court's ruling but stressed the need to adhere to it. In an 1857 speech Lincoln argued that disregarding the Supreme Court undermines the judicial institution and

⁴⁹¹ Hylton, "Virginia and the Ratification of the Bill of Rights, 1789-1791," p. 468-469.

⁴⁹² Lister, Ruth, Noel Smith, Sue Middleton, and Lynne Cox. "Young people talk about citizenship: Empirical perspectives on theoretical and political debates." *Citizenship studies* 7, no. 2 (2003): p. 238.

⁴⁹³ Wolfe, Martin. "Jean Bodin on taxes: The sovereignty-taxes paradox." *Political Science Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (1968): p. 268-269.

⁴⁹⁴ Lister, et al, "Young people talk about citizenship: Empirical perspectives on theoretical and political debates," p. 242.

⁴⁹⁵ Albertson, Bethany, and Kimberly Guiler. "Conspiracy theories, election rigging, and support for democratic norms." *Research & Politics* 7, no. 3 (2020): p. 1.

⁴⁹⁶ Lincoln, Abraham. "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision." *Teaching American History*. Teaching American History, June 26, 1857.

amounts to revolution. Lincoln encouraged the audience to reverse the court's determination, but only through the legal means outlined in the Constitution.⁴⁹⁷

Although "state" remains a somewhat ambiguous term, the Constitution's durability and Articles of Confederation's failure provide a framework to formulate a definition. A state is an organized legal system under which society can operate. It frequently holds the only legitimate mandate to use violence in order to protect citizens, enforce laws, and imprison criminals.⁴⁹⁸ Modern democratic states operate through legal institutions such as the judiciary and legislature to interpret law and create policy. In the United States those institutions operate underneath a legal document that holds authority over government officials. Through this organization, people can utilize collective sovereignty to create and implement policy beneficial to citizens.

This paper defines the American state through this Constitutional lens. 1) The state must remain subservient to laws or a legal framework. 2) In democracies, citizens hold sway over state functions by voting, staying informed, and paying taxes. 3) A state requires legal institutions to carry out policy and enforce laws. 4) The population must respect those institutions even when they disagree with some of their decisions.

What Makes a Deep State?

In 2017 journalist Jamal Khashoggi entered the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul. He never exited the building.⁴⁹⁹ Saudi Arabia is a monarchy and Khashoggi served as editor of a newspaper that criticized the national power structure, including actions by Crown Prince

⁴⁹⁷ Lincoln, "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision."

⁴⁹⁸ Dumouchel, Paul. "Political violence and democracy." *RitsILCS_23*. 4pp (2012): p. 121.

⁴⁹⁹ Aghamohammadi, Zahra, and Ali Omid. "The Prospect of the United States and Saudi Arabia Relations In light of Khashoggi Murder." *World Sociopolitical Studies* 2, no. 4 (2018): p. 614.

Mohammad Bin Salman.⁵⁰⁰ American intelligence officials later learned that Saudi operatives tortured, killed, and dismembered Khashoggi, possibly acting on the Crown Prince's orders.⁵⁰¹ In Saudi Arabia, the monarchy holds ultimate power without needing to appeal to citizens or a constitution. Many American defense officials believe Bin Salman viewed Khashoggi as a threat and acted to protect his authority.⁵⁰²

The term "deep state" originated in Turkey, the same country where Khashoggi met his fate. Its story begins after World War II when America's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) began to secretly fund and train a group of Turkish soldiers to prevent Soviet aggression in the Middle East.⁵⁰³ Turkey's proximity to the Soviet Union made it an important strategic ally in President Harry Truman's doctrinal policy of containing communism.⁵⁰⁴ By utilizing Turkish security forces Truman helped solidify an ally in the region and develop a check against Soviet power without deploying American troops.⁵⁰⁵

Turkish citizens and politicians never learned of the group nor its connection to the United States.⁵⁰⁶ Then, in the 1970s, Turkey's Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit discovered the agency. Ecevit publicly acknowledged its existence in a 1974 speech, calling it the "Special Warfare Department."⁵⁰⁷ He said its goals centered on supporting and protecting Turkey and the Arab World more broadly from outside threats. In reality, the group carried out covert operations under the direction of unaccountable foreign administrators.⁵⁰⁸ For exposing its existence, the

⁵⁰⁰ Barnes, Julian E., and Eric Schmitt. "'Tell Your Boss': Recording Is Seen to Link Saudi Crown Prince More Strongly to Khashoggi Killing." *The New York Times*. November 12, 2018.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰² Barnes & Schmitt. "'Tell Your Boss': Recording Is Seen to Link Saudi Crown Prince More Strongly to Khashoggi Killing."

⁵⁰³ Filkins, Dexter. "The Deep State." *The New Yorker* 12 (2012): p. 44.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13-14.

⁵⁰⁷ Söyler, Mehtap. "Informal institutions, forms of state and democracy: the Turkish deep state." *Democratization* 20, no. 2 (2013): p. 316.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

organization tried to assassinate Ecevit in 1977.⁵⁰⁹ Over the next two decades the Special Welfare Department receded from public view.

That changed in 1996 when news outlets reported a happenstance car accident involving a known drug trafficker riding alongside a former Istanbul police chief and a contemporary member of the Turkish parliament.⁵¹⁰ The government investigated why establishment political figures rode in the same car as a drug kingpin.⁵¹¹ The investigation uncovered a group called Ergenekon which linked international illegal activity to various Turkish government officials.⁵¹² Between 1996 and 2001 Turkish authorities convicted more than three hundred people connected to Ergenekon, including members of the military and parliament.⁵¹³ Turkish media began to call Ergenekon by the more colloquial name “Derin Devlet,” which literally translates to “deep state.”⁵¹⁴ Turkey’s current head of state Recep Tayyip Erdoğan indicated that the Turkish deep state continues to wield influence. In a 2014 television interview, Erdoğan stated, “(The Derin Devlet) does exist. It always has...it dates back to Ottoman times.”⁵¹⁵

The example of Derin Devlet and the killing of Jamal Khashoggi provide a useful framework from which to define the term “deep state.” As discussed in the previous section, modern democratic states require strong institutions to carry out policy and protect citizens. In a constitutional system, those institutions exercise authority through legal, public, official government channels. A deep state operates through secret, unofficial, and sometimes illegal government channels. Derin Devlet remained invisible and unaccountable to both Turkish citizens

⁵⁰⁹ Söyler, “Informal institutions, forms of state and democracy: the Turkish deep state,” p. 316.

⁵¹⁰ Filkins, “The Deep State,” p. 45.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Ibid., p. 48.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., p. 40.

⁵¹⁵ Kanlı, Yusuf. “The Turkish Deep State.” Turkish Daily News. Turkish Daily News, January 29, 2007.

and government actors. It acquired power and influence through illegal activity and never appealed to state authority.

The difference between formal and informal institutions helps clarify the difference between a state and a deep state. In the United States, the Constitution creates a formal government framework.⁵¹⁶ The state operates through transparent, legal processes to enact policy and accomplish goals. A deep state operates through informal, secret political institutions not beholden to law.⁵¹⁷ Ergenekon held no legal authority and most Turkish citizens and government officials remained completely unaware of its existence. Its funding, composition, and power derived from illegal sources outside Turkish government control and often operated with outright hostility towards Turkey's elected leaders.

Secrecy composes another important aspect of deep state activity.⁵¹⁸ Bin Salman and the Saudi consulate employees did hold sovereignty, but kept illegal actions hidden from the public. Although some formal government actions may remain secret for security purposes, democracies require transparency to facilitate voter decisions. The U.S. president serves as commander-in-chief of the armed forces yet remains subservient to citizens.⁵¹⁹ For example, Harry Truman held little military experience and did not know about the *Manhattan Project* prior to entering presidential office.⁵²⁰ But Truman, not bureaucrats, ultimately decided to drop atomic bombs on Japan in World War II.⁵²¹ America's electoral system required Truman to face his constituents in 1948 when he barely won reelection.⁵²² Americans can remove their nation's most powerful general if they

⁵¹⁶ Söyler, "Informal institutions, forms of state and democracy: the Turkish deep state," p. 311.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

⁵¹⁸ Scott, Peter Dale. "Donald J. Trump and The Deep State." The Real News Network (February 10) (2017).

⁵¹⁹ Fisher, Louis. "Domestic Commander in Chief: Early Checks by Other Branches." *Cardozo L. Rev.* 29 (2007): p. 962.

⁵²⁰ Stimson, Henry L., and Harry S. Truman. "The decision to use the atomic bomb." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 3, no. 2 (1947): p. 42.

⁵²¹ Ibid., p. 38.

⁵²² Heersink, Boris, and Brenton D. Peterson. "Truman defeats Dewey: The effect of campaign visits on election outcomes." *Electoral Studies* 49 (2017): p. 52.

disapprove of his or her performance. Deep state officials in Turkey and Saudi Arabia face no such repercussions.

This paper uses these examples to drive its definition of a deep state. 1) A deep state operates in secrecy. 2) Deep state bureaucrats are not accountable to the public nor legal government institutions. 3) A deep state can legally or illegally hold influence, but officials usually enact policy through informal channels not enshrined by law. 4) A deep state actively silences critics who threaten to expose their actions or undermine their authority.

The Administration's Role

Modern democracy requires robust administration. In 1887 Woodrow Wilson wrote an article for *Political Science Quarterly* explaining that while Congress debates and writes policy, they cannot and should not administer the resulting programs.⁵²³ Government requires a separate set of executive actors, without whom legislation proves meaningless.⁵²⁴ While legislatures are naturally fragmented and partisan, executive administrators can act quickly and efficiently to manage crises, complete objectives, and administer reforms. Therefore, administration represents the practical wing of policy, or “government in action.”⁵²⁵

The founders disagreed about how to compose the executive branch. In *The Federalist*, a series of essays aimed at convincing Americans to support a constitutional system of government, James Madison and Alexander Hamilton expressed competing views on the subject. Hamilton favored a strong executive with the power to work quickly and effectively. In *Federalist 70* Hamilton writes, “Energy in the executive is a leading character in the definition of good

⁵²³ Wilson, Woodrow. “The Study of Administration.” *Political Science Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (June 1887): p. 197-198.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*

government,” and, “Government ill-executed, whatever it may be in theory, must be, in practice, bad government.”⁵²⁶

Alternately, Madison feared centralized power. In *Federalist 51* he explains that human nature desires to consolidate control.⁵²⁷ This ambition inevitably results in each political organ attempting to absorb as much power and influence as possible. To curb this instinct, Madison prescribed breaking federal government into separate branches that compete with one another.⁵²⁸ The resulting structure created three divisions: a legislative branch with the power to make law, an executive branch with the power to administer law, and a judicial branch with the power to interpret law. This system enabled each branch of government to check the other two to ensure none could dominate policy.⁵²⁹

The Constitution developed further checks against tyranny by instituting a federalist system. Federalist states create double sovereignty where citizens live underneath both provincial governments and an overarching central authority.⁵³⁰ In the United States, the federal government controls national interests such as the military and interstate commerce while each state government maintains regional and local interests such as policing and education.⁵³¹ Federal control prevents state governments from violating the Constitution’s principles. In turn, state authority stops the federal government from overreaching into local affairs.

⁵²⁶ Hamilton, Alexander. “Federalist no. 70: The Executive Department Further Considered.” *The Federalist Papers*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2009.

⁵²⁷ Madison, James. “Federalist no. 51: The Structure of the Government Must Furnish the Proper Checks and Balances Between the Different Departments.” *The Federalist Papers*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2009.

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Tani, Karen M. “Administrative Equal Protection: Federalism, the Fourteenth Amendment, and the Rights of the Poor.” *Cornell L. Rev.* 100 (2014): p. 830.

⁵³¹ Ibid., p. 831.

Direct voting further diminishes tyranny. Many countries in Europe engaged in some form of republicanism by the late eighteenth century that often operated through aristocracy.⁵³² In today's European-style parliamentary systems voters choose a party to represent their district and party leaders choose the head of state on voters' behalf.⁵³³ The United States Constitution created a system where citizens directly vote for president and governor of their state.⁵³⁴ This approach forces candidates for executive office to appeal to constituents. Instead of officeholders ascending to power through hereditation, they need to continuously refresh voter trust.

In *Federalist* 77 Hamilton explains how direct elections and competition between the branches creates an efficient administrative state deferential to its citizens.⁵³⁵ The Constitution enables the executive to choose the bureaucrats that lead various administrative departments.⁵³⁶ But those bureaucrats depend upon congressional confirmation to enter office.⁵³⁷ This process instills the president with autonomy to choose his or her own executive employees, but handicaps any ability to institute a partisan government of self-serving loyalists. Furthermore, Congress can remove bureaucrats from office when they usurp the Constitutional system.⁵³⁸

Executive branch employees often serve in their roles for years or decades, much longer than presidents and most congresspeople. Therefore, they add stability to government and carry out long-term trans-presidential goals.⁵³⁹ For example, in 1961 President John F. Kennedy announced an ambitious plan to put Americans on the Moon by the end of the decade. The task

⁵³² Lind, Michael. "European Origins of American Democracy." *The Globalist*, June 11, 2003.

⁵³³ Bowler, Shaun, David M. Farrell, and Richard S. Katz, eds. *Party discipline and parliamentary government*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999: p. 124.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁵ Bailey, Jeremy D. "The traditional view of Hamilton's *Federalist* No. 77 and an unexpected challenge: A response to Seth Barrett Tillman." *Harvard JL & Public Policy* 33 (2010): page 175.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁵³⁹ Michaels, "The American deep state," p. 1688.

fell to the executive branch's National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).⁵⁴⁰ Kennedy died in 1963, but his successors Democrat Lyndon Johnson and Republican Richard Nixon continued the project and successfully landed on the Moon in 1969.⁵⁴¹ If NASA suffered from partisan politics and employee turnover every two to four years, the government could not have accomplished this feat.

Administrators came to provide another check on government tyranny.⁵⁴² Bureaucrats frequently amount to experts in various scientific, technological, and humanitarian fields and work within highly specialized departments dedicated to narrow tasks.⁵⁴³ Like the separate branches of government, these departments compete with one another for resources, access, and prestige.⁵⁴⁴ The longer administrators serve, the more knowledgeable they become about the laws and policies that impact their work.⁵⁴⁵ When federal and state politicians enact suspect policy, administrators can and do refuse to follow orders.⁵⁴⁶ Sometimes they blow the whistle on illicit requests to inform voters of their representatives' actions. Moreover, knowledgeable administrators can speak to journalists and government officials to inform the public about complicated issues.⁵⁴⁷

The government uses its executive departments to invest in research and development that provides social and economic benefits. For example, the tech boom of the early twenty-first century followed decades of government research.⁵⁴⁸ The internet, personal computers, and smartphones developed from public investments into the world wide web, GPS, and touchscreen

⁵⁴⁰ Dethloff, Henry C. *Suddenly, Tomorrow Came--: A History of the Johnson Space Center*. Vol. 4307. National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 1993: p. 229.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴² Michaels, Jon D. "The American deep state." *Notre Dame L. Rev.* 93 (2017): p. 1664.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 1666.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1661.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1660.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1657.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁸ Marx, Paris. "Love Your Iphone? Don't Thank Apple. Thank the US Government." *Salon*. Salon.com, January 6, 2018.

displays.⁵⁴⁹ Companies like Apple received early financial support from the federal government's Small Business Investment Company program and Google's search engine borrowed algorithms from National Science Foundation research.⁵⁵⁰ The economic expansion in the 1990s depended on administrative departments investing in scientific study. In this manner, private enterprise and government bureaucracy creates a successful symbiosis.

Diversity signifies another strength of the American administrative state. More than 85 percent of executive department employees work outside of Washington, sometimes hundreds or thousands of miles from the national capital.⁵⁵¹ This distance allows them to complete tasks while shielded from the partisan bickering of Washington politics.⁵⁵² Bureaucrats who live in the communities they serve often comprehend local issues better than elected representatives. Moreover, administrative jobs seldom make people rich, famous, or powerful. The average civil servant earns \$80,000 a year, and only half graduated from a four-year college.⁵⁵³ Women account for over 40 percent of the federal workforce and federal employees are 63 percent white and 37 percent nonwhite. This ratio closely resembles the nation's 64 percent white to 38 percent nonwhite ethnic breakdown.⁵⁵⁴

By comparison, millionaires account for more than half of those elected to Congress in the last two elections,⁵⁵⁵ and only 20 percent of congressional representatives are women.⁵⁵⁶ Fifteen current Senators attended Harvard, Yale, or Stanford and every president of the last thirty-five years other than Joe Biden attended an Ivy League university or law school.⁵⁵⁷ The 2018 Congress

⁵⁴⁹ Marx, "Love Your Iphone? Don't Thank Apple. Thank the US Government."

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ Michaels, "The American deep state," p. 1660.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ Evers-Hillstrom, Karl. "Majority of Lawmakers in 116th Congress Are Millionaires." OpenSecrets News. June 16, 2020.

⁵⁵⁶ Michaels, "The American deep state," p. 1661.

⁵⁵⁷ "Here Is Where the 117th US Senate Went to College." soflotutors. Accessed September 26, 2022.

remained 78 percent white and only 22 percent nonwhite.⁵⁵⁸ Although conservatives often vilify the administrative state, bureaucrats demonstrate a fair degree of bipartisanship. Forty percent of federal employees identify as Republican while 44 percent identify as Democratic.⁵⁵⁹ Given these metrics, the federal workforce exists much closer to the American population than elected representatives.

Administrative Overreach

Despite these benefits, many scholars argue that executive departments can grow too powerful and violate the Constitution's separation of powers. However, unlike the examples in Turkey and Saudi Arabia, American executive departments collect authority through formal government processes. The Framers wrote the Constitution before the Industrial Revolution, globalization, and widespread access to mass communication. By the middle of the twentieth century the federal government ballooned in size and scope to meet the demands of a dynamic, modern society.⁵⁶⁰ Wilson explained that in the early republic, "The functions of government were simple, because life itself was simple...There was no complex system of public revenues and public debts to puzzle financiers (or)...financiers to be puzzled."⁵⁶¹

By the late nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution created a vastly unequal economy. Industry titans amassed immense wealth while laborers endured low wages, long hours, and unsafe work environments.⁵⁶² Families often sent children under the age of ten to work and those injured on the job never received adequate compensation.⁵⁶³ Americans demanded change through

⁵⁵⁸ Michaels, "The American deep state," p. 1661.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ Rourke, Francis E. "Responsiveness and neutral competence in American bureaucracy." *Public Administration Review* (1992): p. 543.

⁵⁶¹ Wilson, Woodrow. "The Study of Administration": p. 199.

⁵⁶² Adams, Guy B. "Enthralled with Modernity: The Historical Context of Knowledge and Theory Development in Public Administration." *Public Administration Review* 52, no. 4 (July & August 1992): p. 364.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

government, leading to the Progressive Era reforms from the 1890s through the 1920s.⁵⁶⁴ Before long, Congress created the *Department of Commerce and Labor* in 1903, which later separated into the *Department of Commerce* and *Department of Labor*.⁵⁶⁵ These executive departments fought to implement child labor laws, a minimum wage, and workplace safety regulations.⁵⁶⁶

In the 1930s The Great Depression led to 25 percent unemployment as many Americans lacked basic resources.⁵⁶⁷ Voters elected President Franklin Roosevelt in 1932 for his promise to take bold government action to fix the economy.⁵⁶⁸ He believed the depression undermined the Declaration's ideals because, "necessitous men are not free."⁵⁶⁹ In his first one hundred days in office Roosevelt instituted a series of reforms known as The New Deal that developed programs offering citizens access to health care, home ownership, farm subsidies, and Social Security.⁵⁷⁰ It simultaneously regulated business interests to prevent further labor exploitation.⁵⁷¹ Some historians call this period the start of the "modern administrative state" which, "Fundamentally and irrevocably changed the national purpose."⁵⁷²

Many contemporary Americans welcomed government expansion as a necessary step to combat economic catastrophe but others feared it centralized too much power in the executive branch.⁵⁷³ However, Roosevelt did not act in a vacuum to unilaterally accumulate authority. Instead, Congress facilitated Roosevelt's government expansion through legislation. For example,

⁵⁶⁴ Adams, "Enthralled with Modernity: The Historical Context of Knowledge and Theory Development in Public Administration," p. 364.

⁵⁶⁵ Goldberg, Joseph P., and William T. Moyer. The First Hundred Years of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. No. 2235. US Department of Labor, Washington, DC, 1985: p. 33.

⁵⁶⁶ Adams, "Enthralled with Modernity: The Historical Context of Knowledge and Theory Development in Public Administration," p. 364.

⁵⁶⁷ Lucas Jr, Robert E., and Leonard A. Rapping. "Unemployment in the Great Depression: Is there a full explanation?" *Journal of Political Economy* 80, no. 1 (1972): p. 189.

⁵⁶⁸ Mosher, Frederick C. *American Public Administration Past, Present, Future*. The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, AL, 1975: p. 61.

⁵⁶⁹ Stipelman, Brian Eric. "Necessitous men are not free men:" The political theory of the New Deal. Rutgers The State University of New Jersey-New Brunswick, 2008: p. 140.

⁵⁷⁰ Ferguson, Niall, and Laurence J. Kotlikoff. "The New New Deal." Forthcoming, *The New Republic* (2005): p. 18.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

⁵⁷² Rourke, "Responsiveness and neutral competence in American bureaucracy," p. 543.

⁵⁷³ Mosher, "American Public Administration Past, Present, Future," p. 59.

in 1939 it passed the *Federal Reorganization Act*, which, among other functions, created the *Executive Office of the President*.⁵⁷⁴ The new department helped the president support, draft, and implement policy goals.⁵⁷⁵ Though Congress maintained authority to veto any of the president's decisions, they never used it.⁵⁷⁶ Thus, administrative expansion occurred through, rather than around, formal government institutions.

Administration critics often note that some executive departments began to accrue quasi-legislative authority throughout the Roosevelt administration. For example, in the 1930s budding radio technology helped politicians and journalists communicate political information to the public.⁵⁷⁷ Radio differed from print journalism in several important aspects. Newspapers operate privately, often controlling all the means of production. Many publishers own their printing presses, paper, ink, and means of distribution.⁵⁷⁸ Alternately, radio broadcasts definitionally require access to a finite spectrum of publicly owned airwaves.⁵⁷⁹ Since broadcasters could not transmit their programs without government infrastructure, the government maintained a right to regulate radio transmissions.⁵⁸⁰

In 1934 Congress passed *The Communications Act* which created the *Federal Communications Commission* (FCC).⁵⁸¹ Congress tasked the with FCC regulating broadcasts, and the agency's head reported directly to the president. Some broadcasters accused Roosevelt of using the department's rulemaking authority to censor information that countered his agenda.⁵⁸² For

⁵⁷⁴ Mosher, "American Public Administration Past, Present, Future," p. 60-61.

⁵⁷⁵ Relyea, Harold C. *Executive Office of the President: An Historical Overview*. DIANE Publishing, Collingdale, PA 2011: p. 9.

⁵⁷⁶ Mosher, "American Public Administration Past, Present, Future," p. 62.

⁵⁷⁷ Viguerie, Richard A., and David Franke. *America's Right Turn: How Conservatives Used New and Alternative Media to Take Power*. Bonus Books, Inc., 2004: p. 175.

⁵⁷⁸ DeLorme, Denise E., and Fred Fedler. "Journalists' Hostility Toward Public Relations: An Historical Analysis." *Public Relations Review* 29, no. 2 (2003): p. 105.

⁵⁷⁹ Viguerie & Franke "America's Right Turn: How Conservatives Used New and Alternative Media to Take Power," p. 173.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ Rosenbloom, Joel. "On the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Communications Act of 1934." *Fed. Comm. LJ* 47 (1994): p. 366.

⁵⁸² Cronauer, Adrian. "The Fairness Doctrine: A Solution in Search of a Problem." *Fed. Comm. LJ* 47 (1994): p. 55.

instance, the FCC held authority to grant licenses that allowed radio stations to access the airwaves.⁵⁸³ Some stations accused the FCC of revoking licenses from broadcasters that criticized New Deal policies.⁵⁸⁴ This kind of activity intensified once the country entered World War II when the FCC allegedly censored content that undermined the commander-in-chief's military strategy.⁵⁸⁵

Analysts can disagree with executive agencies obtaining rulemaking authority or any specific policy implemented by the FCC. But they cannot claim the FCC represents a branch of the deep state. Congress knowingly empowered the executive branch with the Federal Communications Act. Therefore, the FCC developed through the Constitution's formal framework. Even if the FCC sought to silence New Deal critics its activities occur through formal, transparent channels. The president replaces the head of the FCC when each new administration enters office. Its actions sharply contrast with the violent, secret, informal means of censorship exemplified by the Saudi and Turkish governments.

Any actions that occur through formal institutions can be reversed through the same processes. As such, Congress addressed concerns surrounding bureaucratic power after World War II. In 1946 it passed the *Administrative Procedure Act* which required executive agencies to publish any proposed executive rules and solicit congressional feedback.⁵⁸⁶ In 1984, Congress amended the "legislative veto" mechanism by requiring executive agencies to submit suggested rules for approval before they took effect.⁵⁸⁷ The ability to reverse course through formal

⁵⁸³ Cronauer, "The Fairness Doctrine: A Solution in Search of a Problem," p. 55.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 59.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 59-60.

⁵⁸⁶ West, William. "Administrative Rulemaking: An Old and Emerging Literature." *Public Administration Review* (December 2005) 65, no. 6: page 657.

⁵⁸⁷ Hogue, Henry B. *Presidential Reorganization Authority: History, Recent Initiatives, and Options for Congress*. Congressional Research Service Report no. 7-5700: p. 2.

institutions sharply contrasts American administrative departments from its deep state counterparts.

Government Distrust and Bureaucracy

Because the New Deal grew the size of government so extensively, it led to a cycle of continuously increasing government distrust. Republicans anti-government rhetoric grew into a central component of their messaging that persists today. But Democrats also vilify government when Republicans hold power. The rapid decrease in government trust has eroded Congress' desire to work across the aisle and led to government gridlock. When Congress is controlled by the party opposite the president, they often work to quash the administration's agenda and purposefully stall the administrative state's ability to carry out legislation.

Senator Barry Goldwater (R-AZ) was the first major politician to embrace the "conservative" label.⁵⁸⁸ His campaign espoused an anti-government philosophy by criticizing the continued implementation of New Deal policies. Goldwater and his supporters attacked the moderate wing of the Republican Party and pushed for small-government conservative policies.⁵⁸⁹ Goldwater lost to Democrat Lyndon Johnson in one of the largest landslides in presidential election history, but his emphasis on government distrust, libertarian principles, and conservatism laid the foundation for the Reagan Revolution of the 1980s.⁵⁹⁰ George Will opined, "Conservatives like to say Goldwater won in 1964, but it took sixteen years to count all the votes."⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸⁸ Fried, Amy, and Douglas B. Harris. *At war with government: How conservatives weaponized distrust from Goldwater to Trump*. Columbia University Press, 2021: p. 67.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67-68.

⁵⁹¹ Will, George. "One Man's America: The Pleasures and Provocations of Our Singular Nation." *Crown Forum*, 2008: p. 22.

The Watergate Scandal represented a pivotal moment that diminished Americans' trust in their government and harmed the executive department's reputation.⁵⁹² It began in late 1972 when several people were caught breaking into the Democratic Committee National Headquarters at the Watergate office building in Washington. *The Washington Post* uncovered connections between the break-in and resulting coverup to members of President Nixon's inner circle.⁵⁹³ Eventually, the public came to believe that Nixon used unaccountable political bureaucrats to illegally attack his political opponents. Because of his small government conservatism, Barry Goldwater became an outspoken critic of Nixon and urged the president to resign from office publicly and privately.⁵⁹⁴ By 1973 Nixon lost support in Congress and resigned from the presidency.⁵⁹⁵

Democrat Jimmy Carter won the 1976 presidential election by painting himself as a trustworthy smalltown peanut farmer from rural Georgia. His outsider image symbolized the antithesis of Nixon and Watergate. Carter called America's executive branch, "A horrible bureaucratic mess," and promised to eliminate, "Unnecessary agencies, departments, regulations, and paperwork."⁵⁹⁶ In office, Carter reorganized the executive branch, scaled back unpopular military operations, and attempted to run a more transparent administration.⁵⁹⁷ His message resonated with Americans wary of government establishment in Watergate's aftermath.

Republicans also pursued an anti-government election strategy. In the 1980 election California Governor Ronald Reagan defeated Carter by promising to reduce the size of

⁵⁹² Wright, Thomas L., and Jack Arbuthnot. "Interpersonal trust, political preference, and perceptions of the Watergate affair." *Proceedings of the Division of Personality and Society Psychology* 1, no. 1 (1974): p. 168.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 168-169.

⁵⁹⁴ Nevin, Mark. "Nixon Loyalists, Barry Goldwater, and Republican Support for President Nixon during Watergate." *Journal of Policy History* 29, no. 3 (2017): p. 405.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁵⁹⁶ Hogue, "Presidential Reorganization Authority: History, Recent Initiatives, and Options for Congress. Congressional Research Service Report no. 7-5700," p. 27.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

government.⁵⁹⁸ Reagan built upon the Goldwater model and railed against New Deal programs while arguing for reduced spending and regulations. His philosophy centered on administrative distrust, referring to government itself as a problem and not a solution.⁵⁹⁹ In office, Reagan tried to abolish several administrative agencies including the *Department of Transportation* and the *Department of Energy*, which he accused of usurping private enterprise's liberty.⁶⁰⁰

Yet for all the conservative rhetoric of the Reagan era, his legacy in reducing the size of government remains ambiguous. For example, Reagan viewed farmers as an important bloc in his election constituency and supported policies that called for economic independence for agriculture.⁶⁰¹ However, spending on farm subsidies rose dramatically during the Reagan presidency and the government spent more on farming in the final year of his term than any other president spent during their entire tenure.⁶⁰² Because of his emphasis on "peace through strength" Reagan recorded three of the highest increases in military spending in American history.⁶⁰³ For all their talk of limited government, few Republicans actually reduced the size of government when their party held office.

Anti-bureaucracy rhetoric continued into the twenty-first century. In the aftermath of the 2007-2008 housing crisis and decreasing popularity of the 2003 Iraq War, Americans grew tired of professional politicians who only cared about holding onto power.⁶⁰⁴ Barack Obama ran his 2008 presidential campaign by presenting himself as an outsider who promised to change

⁵⁹⁸ Gilligan, John J. "Foreward; Special White Center Project: Examining the Impact of Reagan Budget Reductions: Foreward." *Journal of Legislation* 10, no. 2 (1983): 454.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁰ Reagan, Ronald. "1982 Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress Reporting on the State of the Union." *The American Presidency Project*. UC Santa Barbara, January 26, 1982.

⁶⁰¹ Fried, Amy, and Douglas B. Harris. *At war with government: How conservatives weaponized distrust from Goldwater to Trump*. Columbia University Press, 2021: p. 79.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*

⁶⁰³ Henderson, Errol Anthony. "Military spending and poverty." *The Journal of Politics* 60, no. 2 (1998): p. 503.

⁶⁰⁴ Freinberg, Jonathan. "Barack Obama: Same story, new character." *Pepperdine Policy Review* 1, no. 1 (2008): p. 75.

Washington.⁶⁰⁵ One of his most consistent messages accused the George W. Bush administration of promoting foreign policy preferences based on business interests. For example, Vice President Dick Cheney had previously served on the board of the private contract firm Halliburton.⁶⁰⁶ In 2003, Bush sent over a hundred thousand troops to invade Iraq and the resulting war lasted for eight years. To fund the war, private companies bid on contracts to manufacture weapons, food, vehicles, and armor. Halliburton was awarded over 52 percent of all contracts which totaled over \$40 billion.⁶⁰⁷ By comparison, the second and third highest earning contract companies won \$13 billion in contracts combined.⁶⁰⁸ Further, half of the contracts awarded to Halliburton never entered the bidding process.⁶⁰⁹ Obama and his supporters used the Cheney-Halliburton connection to symbolize bureaucracy grown too powerful.

In the 2012 Republican presidential primaries Texas governor Rick Perry campaigned on a plan to eliminate several executive departments including the Department of Energy.⁶¹⁰ Then, in 2017, President Trump nominated Perry to serve as his Secretary of Energy. In his nominating hearing, Perry disavowed his previous proposal, stating, “After being briefed on so many of the vital functions of the Department of Energy, I regret recommending its elimination.” The Department of Energy spends 90 percent of its budget on private contracts and works with private firms to implement most of its programs.⁶¹¹ Perry realized that eliminating the department would diminish bureaucrats from conducting invaluable research and assisting private enterprise.

⁶⁰⁵ Freinberg, "Barack Obama: Same story, new character," p. 75.

⁶⁰⁶ Scott, "Donald J. Trump and The Deep State."

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ Musfon, Steven, and Sean Sullivan. "Rick Perry Expresses 'Regret' for Pledging to Abolish Energy Department." The Washington Post, 2017.

⁶¹¹ Dilulio, John. *Bring Back the Bureaucrats: Why More Federal Workers Will Lead to Better (and Smaller!) Government*. Templeton Foundation Press, PA, 2014, page 64.

Republicans began to embrace anti-big-government positions since at least the 1960s and continue to attack executive agencies today.⁶¹² In 2016 rightwing thinktank *The Heritage Foundation* released a report saying bureaucratic agencies created over twenty thousand rules between 2009 and 2016 which unfairly regulated private enterprise.⁶¹³ Heritage called these rules both ineffective and illegal since rulemaking amounts to “de facto” legislation.⁶¹⁴ The report concluded that most Americans want, “Smaller government with fewer services.”⁶¹⁵ Despite such analysis, politicians rarely slash government programs after entering office. Americans say they want smaller government, but never identify specific places to cut services from the federal budget. In fact, various polling agencies found that voters support the continuation of nearly every government service.⁶¹⁶

Watergate catalyzed a cycle of political parties attacking one another through anti-establishment themes. When Americans hear their politicians demonizing the administrative state, it leads to widespread government distrust. *Pew* reports that in 1958, 73 percent of Americans trusted government to, “do what’s right.”⁶¹⁷ That figure dropped to 36 percent by 1974 and 28 percent by 1980. In recent years, distrust hit a new low, even as Watergate recedes from public consciousness. By 2022 only 20 percent of Americans said they trusted their government.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹² Edwards-Levy, Ariel, and Grace Sparks. “Americans Don’t Prefer A Smaller Government Anymore.” *Huffington Post*. HuffPost.com, April 25, 2017.

⁶¹³ Gattuso, James, and Diane Katz. “Red Tape on the Upswing.” *The Heritage Foundation*. November 3, 2016.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁶ Boushey, Graeme T., and Robert J. McGrath. “The Gift of Gridlock: Divided Government, Bureaucratic Autonomy, and the Politics of Rulemaking in the American States.” Unpublished Manuscript, Fairfax, VA: *George Mason University* (2015): page 2.

⁶¹⁷ “Public Trust in Government: 1958-2022.” *Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy*. *Pew Research Center*, June 6, 2022.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Conclusion: The Steady State

In 2017, far-right website *Breitbart News* publicized a report from the *Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee* saying Trump faced seven times more leaks during the first 126 days of his administration than the previous two presidents did during the entirety of their terms.⁶¹⁹ It further reported that the Trump White House experienced at least 125 leaks in its first year compared to only eighteen under Obama.⁶²⁰ Later, a *National Security Council* memo stated that bureaucrats believed Trump represents, “An existential threat to the cultural Marxist memes that dominate the prevailing cultural narrative,” and endangered, “Deep state actors globalists, bankers, Islamists, and establishment Republicans.”⁶²¹

Even *if* Breitbart’s claims proved true, leaks do not prove deep state corruption. Quite the opposite, leaks provide a path for administrators to curb corruption. In 2018 *The New York Times* ran an anonymous op-ed entitled, “I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration.”⁶²² The author, later revealed to be Department of Homeland Security Chief of Staff Miles Taylor, stated that some administrators worked against President Trump to protect the Constitutional system. “Many of the senior officials in his own administration are working diligently from within to frustrate parts of his agenda and his worst inclinations,” He wrote. “I would know. I am one of them.”⁶²³

Taylor went on to explain why some appointees in federal executive departments felt the need to act against the president. Defense bureaucrats took their vow to protect and preserve

⁶¹⁹ Strassel, Kimberly A. “Washington’s Leak Mob.” *The Wall Street Journal*. The Wall Street Journal, July 6, 2017.

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*

⁶²² Taylor, Miles. “I Am Part of the Resistance inside the Trump Administration.” *The New York Times*. September 5, 2018.

⁶²³ *Ibid.*

America's political institutions seriously.⁶²⁴ In private, senior officials expressed discomfort with Trump's rhetoric, behavior, and leadership style. The president held virtually zero political experience and never defected to administration expertise before making decisions. Defense department bureaucrats worked against Trump's agenda when they believed he usurped his authority or gave illegal orders. "This isn't the work of the so-called deep state," Taylor concluded. "It's the work of the steady state."⁶²⁵

Administrators represent one of the few consistently nonpartisan forces in government. Executive departments must fulfill their obligations regardless of which party holds power in Congress and the White House. Administrative employees do not face elections and therefore learn to work with Republican, Democratic, and independent politicians. NASA doesn't change course because its employees disagree with the president's position on a certain issue. State department officials do not go on strike when Congress passes a bill they disagree with.

Administrators ensure Congress' plans get implemented, keep citizens safe, and perform essential government roles like delivering mail, patrolling the coasts, and assisting private companies with research and development. The United States Constitution provides several layers of protection against government tyranny to ensure career bureaucrats cannot accumulate too much power. Successful politicians work in tandem with federal employees and rely upon their vast experience to efficiently implement policy. Those who enter office railing against the bureaucracy either adapt and benefit from administrators' expertise or continue to fight administrative agencies and fail to implement policy. In this sense, administration represents the backbone of American government.

⁶²⁴ Taylor, "I Am Part of the Resistance inside the Trump Administration."

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

Though the situation in Turkey and Saudi Arabia do not correlate to the administrative state in the United States, the example of the *Derin Devlet* bears relevance by helping to explain conspiratorial thinking. The Truman administration helped create the Turkish deep state in the as a means to combat Soviet aggression in the region. Cold War policy legitimately necessitated some level of secrecy to protect elements of government action at home and abroad. Truman's actions lent some credibility to conspiratorial thinking that accused the government of engaging in covert action.

This directly leads to the modern Trump supporter's belief in a deep state. Americans know their government sometimes engages in covert operations, so Trump can accuse the government of corruption without providing concrete evidence. In this manner, Trump uses the term "deep state" in the same way he uses "fake news." The label undermines the administrative state's credibility. When Trump calls executive agencies a part of the deep state, it forces the employees of those agencies to act defensively. Audiences who frequent websites like Infowars and Breitbart have long consumed conspiratorial information, so Trump's accusations of deep state activity reinforce their beliefs. Attempts to counter those claims only serve as more evidence that "confirms" their suspicions. Establishment government organizations with no credibility cannot effectively rebuke such attacks.

Polarization and government distrust form a dangerous pact. When Trump won the presidency, it catapulted conspiratorial paranoia and fear into the mainstream political narrative. Republicans failed their responsibility to reign in this dangerous rhetoric, but also struggled to curtail conspiracy thinking because of weakened political institutions. Administrative agencies characterize the foundation of a steady state. They protect the national interests and well-being of a given population. Attacking these political institutions prevent a nation from flourishing.

CONCLUSION

This thesis posits that American politicians and voters increasingly embrace anti-establishment ideas. Specifically, it considers the public's diminished respect for legacy media, political party leadership, and administrative agencies. Widespread distrust of these establishment institutions undermines the national purpose, polarizes the electorate, and weakens the country's ability to implement reforms. President Trump succeeded in the 2016 election and throughout his presidency by condemning the press, attacking politicians who criticized his policies, and destabilizing voters' trust in bureaucrats. However, establishment distrust did not begin in 2016. It built over decades from technological, social, and political changes that challenged the status quo and subverted safeguards that historically protected government from populism.

Summary

Chapter I discussed diminished media authority. Free democracies depend on informed citizens making wise choices about their government.⁶²⁶ The American founders understood that an independent press helps achieve this goal.⁶²⁷ The internet facilitated less accurate media agencies to find wide audiences and spread propaganda. Today, many people only interact with information that reinforces their beliefs and never connect with alternate viewpoints.⁶²⁸ Fewer Americans hold the capacity to properly consume and digest news, leading to a poorly informed nation unable to engage in civic reasoning.⁶²⁹ President Trump used terms like “fake news” to

⁶²⁶ Gunter, Barrie, and Maria Touri. "News Blogs: Strengthening Democracy Through Conflict Prevention." In *Aslib Proceedings*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2009: p. 171.

⁶²⁷ Nimmer, Melville B. "Introduction--Is Freedom of the Press a Redundancy: What Does it Add to Freedom of Speech." *Hastings Law Journal* 26 (1974): p. 639-640.

⁶²⁸ Purcell, Kristen, Lee Rainie, Amy Mitchell, Tom Rosenstiel, and Kenny Olmstead. "Understanding the Participatory News Consumer." *Pew Internet and American Life Project* 1 (2010): p. 20.

⁶²⁹ McGrew, Sarah, Teresa Ortega, Joel Breakstone, and Sam Wineburg. "The Challenge That's Bigger than Fake News: Civic Reasoning in a Social Media Environment." *American Educator*. 41, no. 3 (2017): p 7-8.

eschew negative coverage which both exploited and further undermined the media's credibility. Because of anti-establishment thinking, the press could not effectively rebuke these attacks.

Chapter II discussed weakened political parties. The American founders were initially reluctant to develop parties, but soon learned they could not accomplish much in office without organization.⁶³⁰ Parties help government build coalitions, refine policy, implement reforms, and provide accountability.⁶³¹ Primaries diminished party control throughout the twentieth century as the nominating process became democratized.⁶³² The internet and a series of court decisions empowered individual campaigns to solicit funds outside the mediating force of party apparatus.⁶³³ By the 2010s, candidates no longer needed parties to access ballots, communicate with voters, or raise money.⁶³⁴ As a result, some campaigns began to succeed by adopting populist rhetoric and actively running against the party leadership they hoped to represent.⁶³⁵ In 2016 Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders laid the blueprint for the anti-establishment campaign strategy. Weakened party leadership struggled to curb these outsider campaigns.

Chapter III discussed the diminished standing of executive departments in the United States. A state requires strong administrative agencies to protect liberty, limit corruption, and enact policy.⁶³⁶ The administrative state grew and accumulated authority throughout the twentieth century to meet the changing demands of a modernizing society.⁶³⁷ Government distrust exploded

⁶³⁰ Issacharoff, Samuel. "Outsourcing Politics: The Hostile Takeovers of Our Hollowed Out Political Parties." *Houston Law Review* 54 (2017): p. 4.

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4-5.

⁶³² Magleby, David B., ed. *Financing the 2016 Election*. Brookings Institution Press, 2019: p. 13.

⁶³³ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁴ Steger, "Do Primary Voters Draw from a Stacked Deck? Presidential Nominations in an Era of Candidate-Centered Campaigns." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2000): p. 730.

⁶³⁵ Dyck, Joshua J., Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz, and Michael Coates. "Primary Distrust: Political Distrust and Support for the Insurgent Candidacies of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the 2016 Primary." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51, no. 2 (2018): 351-357.

⁶³⁶ Smith, Douglas G. "An Analysis of Two Federal Structures: The Articles of Confederation and the Constitution." *San Diego L. Rev.* 34 (1997): p. 263.

⁶³⁷ Wilson, Woodrow. "The Study of Administration." *Political Science Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (June 1887): p. 197-198.

after Watergate and voter support for political institutions deteriorated.⁶³⁸ But administrators often understand policy and government processes better than elected representatives.⁶³⁹ Further, the bureaucracy helps check presidential and legislative power.⁶⁴⁰ Donald Trump used the term “deep state” to liken America’s administrative agencies to corrupt organizations in Saudi Arabia and Turkey. But the situation in the United States does not correlate to these countries. American bureaucrats operate through transparent, legal, and formal processes.

The preceding chapters argue that the press, political parties, and administrative departments suffer from weakened public standing which harms the national interest. After Trump won the 2016 presidential election, a bevy of likeminded individuals ran for office with anti-establishment messages. While different areas of government should check each other’s power, the modern political arena has turned competition into combat. In the 2022 midterms, candidates for governor, Senate, and the House openly stated their intention to disregard election results if they lost.⁶⁴¹ Unfortunately, voters do not seem willing to hold these candidates accountable. Instead, they connect with anti-establishment rhetoric and vote for politicians that promise to fight the system. Such ideas once lived on the fringes of American politics, but outlets like Infowars and candidates like Trump brought this thinking into the mainstream.

In the last several years a number of issues demonstrated the danger of weakened political institutions in the United States. Perhaps none more prominent than the American government’s inability to unite the country during a pandemic.

⁶³⁸ Wright, Thomas L., and Jack Arbuthnot. "Interpersonal trust, political preference, and perceptions of the Watergate affair." *Proceedings of the Division of Personality and Society Psychology* 1, no. 1 (1974): p. 168.

⁶³⁹ Michaels, Jon D. "The American deep state." *Notre Dame L. Rev.* 93 (2017): p. 1666.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴¹ Reich, Robert. "Republicans Won't Commit to Honoring Vote Results This Fall. That's Troubling." *The Guardian*. September 22, 2022.

COVID-19 in The United States and Denmark

Crises often expose and intensify troubles lurking in society and the COVID-19 pandemic revealed gaps in the America's healthcare system, reinforced its political divisions, and further eroded trust in its political institutions. The respiratory virus first appeared in Wuhan, China in late 2019 and quickly spread through the world.⁶⁴² The United States suffered its first COVID-19 deaths in February 2020 and before long millions of Americans contracted the disease.⁶⁴³ Problems began to mount as patients overran hospitals that increasingly lacked the resources and personnel to operate. By March 6, President Trump declared a national emergency and allocated more than \$8 billion to combat the pandemic.⁶⁴⁴

People transfer COVID-19 by breathing airborne germs in close proximity with one another. Therefore, the medical establishment recommended a policy of social distancing to curb transmission rates.⁶⁴⁵ Forty-two U.S. states and territories administered stay-at-home orders that impacted more than 75 percent of the population.⁶⁴⁶ Businesses laid off record numbers of employees, leading to a 15 percent unemployment rate, the highest since the Great Depression.⁶⁴⁷ School lockdowns prevented 55 million students from attending class.⁶⁴⁸ Despite these measures, over a million Americans died in just over two years.⁶⁴⁹

Debates surrounding how to combat COVID-19 typically split along partisan lines. Early evidence suggested hydroxychloroquine treated the virus, but later clinical trials found the drug

⁶⁴² "CDC Museum Covid-19 Timeline." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. August 16, 2022.

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁷ "Charts Related to the Latest 'The Employment Situation' *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*. Accessed October 15, 2022.

⁶⁴⁸ "CDC Museum Covid-19 Timeline." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*.

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

ineffective.⁶⁵⁰ Conservatives continued to favor hydroxychloroquine as a safe and useful remedy while liberals mocked its recommendation.⁶⁵¹ Democratic governors and mayors routinely issued facemask mandates for anyone entering indoor establishments.⁶⁵² Many Republican political leaders said those mandates infringed on liberty. The left generally favored policies that restricted large gatherings as the right fought to reopen schools, businesses, and places of worship.⁶⁵³

Effectively combating a public health crisis like COVID-19 requires strong leadership and robust political institutions working cohesively within civil society. Public health agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) need to carefully study the virus and report its findings to government officials. Elected representatives must soberly consider expert conclusions to pass coherent legislation. Executive departments can then enact policy and mobilize resources to help the public as quickly and efficiently as possible. The media should communicate complex information to help audiences understand the disease and the government's response.

Growing skepticism towards establishment institutions prevented the United States from successfully coordinating a response. Pew Research reported that in April 2020, 83 percent of Americans trusted the CDC. By September only two-thirds held the same view.⁶⁵⁴ Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the *National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases*, came to represent the face of the medical establishment's COVID-19 response. In April over 80 percent of Americans held a positive view of Fauci, but by September his favorability fell to 68 percent.⁶⁵⁵ These figures diminished more significantly amongst Republicans. In April, 90 percent of Republicans trusted

⁶⁵⁰ Chen, Emily, Herbert Chang, Ashwin Rao, Kristina Lerman, Geoffrey Cowan, and Emilio Ferrara. "COVID-19 misinformation and the 2020 US presidential election." *The Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review* (2021): p. 5.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² Ibid.

⁶⁵³ Chen, et al., "COVID-19 misinformation and the 2020 US presidential election," p. 5.

⁶⁵⁴ Tyson, Alec, and Cary Funk. "Increasing Public Criticism, Confusion over Covid-19 Response in U.S." *Pew Research Center Science & Society*. Pew Research Center, February 9, 2022.

⁶⁵⁵ Fox, Samantha. "Public Trust in CDC, FDA, and Fauci Holds Steady, Survey Shows." *The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania*, June 10, 2022.

the CDC and 70 percent favored Fauci.⁶⁵⁶ By September those ratings dropped to 60 and 48 percent, respectively.⁶⁵⁷

The weakened media establishment could not effectively communicate crucial information to the public. Gallup found that only 16 percent of Americans expressed a great deal of faith in newspapers and only 11 percent felt they could rely on television news.⁶⁵⁸ This distrust manifested in a misinformed public acquiring information from various inaccurate internet sources. A 2021 *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion, and Parties* report documented that half of respondents called COVID-19 a Chinese bioweapon.⁶⁵⁹ A third said the government already developed a vaccine but kept it hidden.⁶⁶⁰ Moreover, Americans lacked a basic understanding of the virus itself. Most respondents thought septuagenarians exposed to COVID-19 suffered a 50 percent deathrate when the real figure sat closer to one-half of 1 percent.⁶⁶¹ Nobody in government nor legacy media ever communicated this disinformation.⁶⁶² It came from alternate sources.

A 2022 *Behavioral Therapy* study found that individuals who trust political institutions fare better when dealing with devastating events like pandemics and natural disasters.⁶⁶³ This occurs for two reasons. First, people who trust the advice of government's institutions are more likely to follow their recommendations.⁶⁶⁴ Second, confidence in establishment institutions benefits a person's mental well-being.⁶⁶⁵ Those who have faith in their community and government

⁶⁵⁶ Fox, "Public Trust in CDC, FDA, and Fauci Holds Steady, Survey Shows."

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁸ Brennan, Megan. "Media Confidence Ratings at Record Lows." Gallup. August 15, 2022.

⁶⁵⁹ Eberl, Jakob-Moritz, Robert A. Huber, and Esther Greussing. "From populism to the "plandemic": Why populists believe in COVID-19 conspiracies." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 31, no. sup1 (2021): p. 273.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 276.

⁶⁶¹ Kearny, Adrey. "KFF Health Tracking Poll – September 2020: Top Issues in 2020 Election, the Role of Misinformation, and Views on a Potential Coronavirus Vaccine." KFF. October 1, 2020.

⁶⁶² DeSoto, M. Catherine. "Overestimating COVID-19 Mortality: Differential Findings Based on Support for Trump versus Biden." *North American Journal of Psychology* 23, no. 2 (2021): p. 279.

⁶⁶³ Li, Shuangshuang, Yijia Sun, Jiaqi Jing, and Enna Wang. "Institutional Trust as a Protective Factor during the COVID-19 Pandemic in China." *Behavioral Sciences* 12, no. 8 (2022): p. 252.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁵ Li, Shuangshuang, et al., "Institutional Trust as a Protective Factor during the COVID-19 Pandemic in China." p. 251.

demonstrate reduced rates of depression, fear, anxiety, and stress.⁶⁶⁶ They feel more confident that they live in a just, orderly, and predictable environment that offers access to resources and controls difficult situations.⁶⁶⁷ The resulting emotional stability and happiness correlates with more positive medical outcomes.

Countries with stronger political institutions responded to the pandemic more effectively. For example, Denmark's government agencies exercise considerable regulatory control over social programs.⁶⁶⁸ Contrary to what anti-establishment Americans may believe, these political institutions do not infringe upon liberty. The Human Development Index ranks Denmark the third freest and tenth most developed country in the world.⁶⁶⁹ The nation's health administrators contribute to and protect its freedom and development. Moreover, Danes express a great deal of trust in their government and enthusiastically participate in the citizen-state relationship.⁶⁷⁰ *Denmark.dk*, the official government website, says, "Trust forms the basis of most social interactions as well as business and government (in Denmark)."⁶⁷¹

On March 11, 2020, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen announced a proposal to close the nation's borders, ban large gathering, shut down schools, and discourage public transportation.⁶⁷² The government would implement the plan by March 16 but requested the public act in accordance with the medical establishment's recommendations as soon as possible.⁶⁷³ Danes adopted the government's policies almost immediately without coercion or legal force. As a result,

⁶⁶⁶ Li, Shuangshuang, et al., "Institutional Trust as a Protective Factor during the COVID-19 Pandemic in China." p. 252.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

⁶⁶⁸ Olagnier, David, and Trine H. Mogensen. "The Covid-19 pandemic in Denmark: big lessons from a small country." *Cytokine & growth factor reviews* 53 (2020): p. 10.

⁶⁶⁹ Freest countries 2022. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/freest-countries>.

⁶⁷⁰ Olagnier & Mogensen, "The Covid-19 pandemic in Denmark: big lessons from a small country," p. 12.

⁶⁷¹ "Trust a Cornerstone of Danish Culture." *Denmark.dk*. <https://denmark.dk/people-and-culture/trust>.

⁶⁷² Olagnier & Mogensen, "The Covid-19 pandemic in Denmark: big lessons from a small country," p. 11.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 11-12.

healthcare officials held the capacity to act quickly and precisely. They prioritized COVID-19 patients in hospitals, reorganized medical resources, and effectively managed emergency care.⁶⁷⁴

In 2021, Reporters Without Borders ranked the Danish press the sixth freest in the world based on criteria such as pluralism, media independence, self-censorship, transparency, infrastructure, and the free flow of information on the internet.⁶⁷⁵ By comparison, The United States ranked thirty-second.⁶⁷⁶ The Danish media did not exploit its freedom to chase ratings by presenting conspiratorial misinformation to the public.⁶⁷⁷ The conspiracy theories common on websites like Infowars and Breitbart are virtually nonexistent in the Danish press.⁶⁷⁸ Danes consumed consistently accurate and important COVID-19 information underscored through a belief in the nation's media institutions.⁶⁷⁹

Denmark's parliamentary political system houses two major political parties and several others with significant representation in government. Danish citizens differ on many important political matters, but do not distrust their political parties as intensely as Americans. Therefore, the government unified to develop and enact an effective plan to fight the pandemic. As a result, the country managed to reopen parts of its economy only a few months after the initial lockdowns.⁶⁸⁰ Ultimately, Denmark reported less than seven thousand total COVID-19 deaths.⁶⁸¹ It's northern Scandinavian neighbor Sweden, with a similar-sized but less concentrated population, did not institute lockdowns and suffered almost twenty thousand deaths.⁶⁸²

⁶⁷⁴ Olagnier & Mogensen, "The Covid-19 pandemic in Denmark: big lessons from a small country," p. 11.

⁶⁷⁵ "The Ranking." Reporters Without Borders. <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>.; "Detailed Methodology." <https://rsf.org/en/index-methodologie-2013-21>.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁷ Olagnier & Mogensen, "The Covid-19 pandemic in Denmark: big lessons from a small country," p. 11.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 11-12.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid.

⁶⁸² Olagnier & Mogensen, "The Covid-19 pandemic in Denmark: big lessons from a small country," p. 10.

Denmark can implement policies more easily than the United States because of its smaller population of around six million people. China's pandemic response might serve as another point of comparison. Even though the virus originated in their country, the Chinese demonstrated increasing faith in their establishment institutions throughout the crisis.⁶⁸³ Canada's York University conducted a poll among 20,000 Chinese citizens in the midst of the pandemic. Over half of respondents said they trusted government officials more because of the government's response, compared to only 3 percent who said they trusted their government less.⁶⁸⁴ Ninety percent trusted most of the information communicated through Chinese media.⁶⁸⁵ Through strong national healthcare institution, the Chinese government fully vaccinated over 1.2 billion of China's 1.4 billion citizens by January 2022. Alternately, over 73 million Americans were still completely unvaccinated by the start of 2022, representing over 20 percent of the population.⁶⁸⁶

Denmark is a small country in northern Europe and China is a communist country with a massive population. Neither serves as a perfect comparison to the United States. But China's influence continues to increase on the global stage as it pulled 800 million people out of poverty over the last forty years.⁶⁸⁷ Denmark consistently ranks as one of the freest, most developed, and happiest nations in the world. Both of these states implemented policies to combat COVID-19 more easily than the United States because of populations that trust their national establishments and embrace the personal obligations inherent to the citizen-state relationship.

⁶⁸³ Wu, Cary. "Analysis | Did the Pandemic Shake Chinese Citizens' Trust in Their Government? We Surveyed Nearly 20,000 People to Find out." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, May 5, 2021

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁶ Rouw, Anna, Krutika Amin, Cynthia Cox, and Jennifer Kates. "Update: The Number of People Not up to Date on Vaccination in Counties with Elevated COVID-19 Community Levels Is Growing." KFF. August 3, 2022

⁶⁸⁷ Jakovljevic, Mihajlo, Yuriy Timofeyev, Natalia V. Ekkert, Julia V. Fedorova, Galina Skvirskaya, Sergey Bolevich, and Vladimir A. Reshetnikov. "The impact of health expenditures on public health in BRICS nations." *Journal of sport and health science* 8, no. 6 (2019).

Institutional Design Protects Elections

The American founders created the electoral college to limit the possibility of corruption in presidential elections. Americans do not directly elect their president and the person with the most votes does not always win. Instead, Americans choose their president through the electoral college.⁶⁸⁸ Voters in all fifty states and the District of Columbia (D.C.) participate in individual state election systems, and the state allocates electors based on pre-determined legal standards. The number of electors granted to each state depends on the state's population as a proportion of the national total.⁶⁸⁹ Forty-eight of the fifty states and D.C. institute a winner-take-all system where the candidate who wins the state's popular vote earns all the state's electors.⁶⁹⁰

This federalist system significantly reduces the likelihood of widespread voter fraud. Since states control their own electoral processes and assign electors as they choose, federal administrators hold virtually no role in choosing the president. In 2016, Democrat Hillary Clinton earned three million more votes than Donald Trump, but still lost the presidency.⁶⁹¹ This method's value was identified by Gouverneur Morris at the Constitutional Convention, who said, "As the electors would vote at the same time throughout the U.S. and at so great a distance from each other, the great evil of cabal was avoided. It would be impossible to corrupt them."⁶⁹²

States generally hire ballot counters through county election boards.⁶⁹³ Some states break county election boards into smaller districts. Election tallying is controlled by between seven thousand and ten thousand local election managers composed of people who live within the

⁶⁸⁸ Nguyen, Anh Duy. "'Whose Electors? Our Electors!': Due Process as a Safeguard against Legislative Direct Appointment of Presidential Electors after an Election." *BCL Rev.* 63 (2022): p. 408.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 415.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 413.

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 437.

⁶⁹² Lynn, Audrey J. "The Continuing Validity of the Electoral College: A Quantitative Confirmation." *ConLawNOW* 11 (2019): p. 6.

⁶⁹³ Turner, Karen. "How Ballots Are Actually Counted, Explained by 3 Election Officials." *Vox*. November 3, 2020.

communities they serve.⁶⁹⁴ Counting does not begin until polls close on election night in order to prevent early indication of how a state might lean. Those who run elections may hold partisan political views but primarily concern themselves with ensuring election integrity.⁶⁹⁵

Voter fraud on a level that could impact a president election would need to occur in thousands of different localities run by thousands of election officials.⁶⁹⁶ Joe Biden defeated Donald Trump in several states with Republican governors and others with Republican state legislatures. Three of 2020's most hotly contested swing states (Arizona, Georgia, New Hampshire) had Republican governors and five (Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin) had Republican state legislatures.⁶⁹⁷ Many of the elected representatives of these states supported Trump's candidacy and would not have participated in election rigging against the Republican candidate. For example, Georgia's Republican Secretary of State supported and voted for President Trump but consistently confirmed that voter integrity superseded his partisan interests.⁶⁹⁸

Still, many Republicans continue to assert the 2020 election suffered from a lack of security, with some even accusing a deep state of effectively rigging the election. President Trump Tweeted more than seventeen-hundred times between November 2020 and January 2021 that Democrats "stole" the election.⁶⁹⁹ Unfortunately, such claims did not exist in a vacuum. One-hundred-forty-seven Republicans in the House and Senate voted to contest the election's

⁶⁹⁴ Turner, "How Ballots Are Actually Counted, Explained by 3 Election Officials."

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁶ Eggers, Andrew C., Haritz Garro, and Justin Grimmer. "No evidence for systematic voter fraud: A guide to statistical claims about the 2020 election." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118, no. 45 (2021): e2103619118.

⁶⁹⁷ Pfiffner, James P. "The Transition of the Presidency, 2020-2021." *Journal of Policy Studies* 36, no. 1 (2021): p. 50-51.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 50.

⁶⁹⁹ Fuchs, Christian. "How did Donald Trump incite a coup attempt?." *TripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique. Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society* 19, no. 1 (2021): 246-251.

validity.⁷⁰⁰ Worse, they undertook this action after the events of January 6, 2021 when protestors stormed the Capitol. Not even a direct, violent attack on the democratic process convinced Republicans to project trust in the nation's political institutions.

Vote rigging allegations without evidence severely undermine democracy and add to establishment distrust. When popular political figures allege election insecurity, their supporters often believe the allegations.⁷⁰¹ Even those who do not believe an individual election was rigged become less confident in elections generally.⁷⁰² The founders specifically designed the United States Constitutional to limit the possibility of presidential election rigging. Thus far, no convincing evidence has suggested that numerous states, many with Republican governors and state legislatures, fixed the election. The media, political party leaders, and bureaucrats could not counter Trump's claims because of their diminished standing.

Limitations

Elections are emotional events that can impact the way people behave.⁷⁰³ Further psychological analysis about election corruption would help illuminate whether these fears may subside in the next several years. This paper attempts to compare the United States to other countries, but no two countries serve as perfect points of comparison. The United States is unique with its large population, diversity, short history, emphasis on liberty, and geographic location. Further, technology continues to develop and change. Similar concerns about media surfaced following the creation of the printing press, radio, and television. As the internet continues to

⁷⁰⁰ Yourish, Karen, Larry Buchanan, and Denise Lu. "The 147 Republicans Who Voted to Overturn Election Results." The New York Times. January 7, 2021.

⁷⁰¹ Albertson & Guiler, "Conspiracy theories, election rigging, and support for democratic norms.," p. 2.

⁷⁰² Ibid., p. 6.

⁷⁰³ Ibid., p. 2.

change politics, it is possible that legislation or better technology could curb some of the problems expressed in the preceding chapters.

However, it is clear that all states require robust political institutions to effectively govern. The media, political parties, and administrators represent some of the most important political institutions necessary to maintain a stable government. Freedom in political institutions remain usually signals freedom more generally in the daily lives of the population. The United States has always maintained press freedom, a multi-party political system, and administrators who work for the population rather than a monarch.

The United States guarantees its citizens the freedom to criticize their establishment. In the modern era, establishment criticism has become a common occurrence and almost completely unchallenged. Perhaps Americans are failing their obligation to remain informed by absorbing various media sources and factchecking the information. Or maybe citizens are simply failing the Lincoln test of accepting institution's decisions and actions. These questions exist somewhat beyond the scope of this paper, which identifies establishment distrust as a major concern, examines the reasons it continues to grow, and applies it to recent issues.

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