

Trump's Vision For A "Golden Age Of America": Oligarchy Plus Ultranationalism

01-23-2025 ~ *Parallels between European fascism in the 1930s and Trump's MAGA vision were on full display this week.*



Donald Trump's inauguration as the 47th president of the United States put on display fascism's 21st-century iteration — a combination of oligarchic power and ultranationalism unlike anything in recent memory.

It was a shameful spectacle for a country that deems itself to be the world's greatest democracy and the leader of the so-called free world. Trump was flanked by [billionaire tech moguls](#) and [far right leaders](#) from Italy, Germany, Argentina, France, the U.K., and other countries around the globe. His [inauguration speech](#) promised a "golden age of America" by making the country "greater, stronger, and far more exceptional than ever before."

It was an inauguration speech dripping with authoritarianism and jingoism in which Trump cast himself as the savior of the country. "Our sovereignty will be reclaimed. Our safety will be restored. The scales of justice will be rebalanced," he said, and described the leadership of the past four years as incompetent and corrupt, without specifying Joe Biden or other Democrats by name.

The speech left little doubt about its ideological character. Indeed, the political message behind Trump's return to the White House was best captured by Elon Musk's [Nazi-like salute](#) during the inauguration celebrations (though, in this case, [predictably](#), the Anti-Defamation League rushed immediately to Musk's defense by downplaying the significance of the gesture). The South African billionaire has appointed himself as [leader](#) of the West's far right movement and has been fomenting fascism since he helped Trump win reelection. For Musk and his ilk,

who expect to be the biggest beneficiaries of the new administration's much anticipated [anti-regulation blitz](#), Trump's return to office promises a new "[Golden Age](#)" of U.S. world dominance and prosperity for the super-rich.

Acting like an authoritarian from day one, Trump signed dozens of executive orders that pose a direct threat to democracy and make a mockery of human rights and the rule of law. He ordered a [crackdown on immigration](#), withdrew the U.S. from the Paris Agreement and the World Health Organization, and [pardoned](#) about 1,500 of his supporters who attacked the U.S. Capitol four years ago. He signed executive orders that seek to [end birthright citizenship](#), which the U.S. Constitution has guaranteed for more than 150 years; [terminate](#) federal diversity, equity and inclusion guidelines; and roll back protections for transgender people.

Trump also signed an executive order that aims to weaken federal employee protections by reinstating [Schedule F](#) in the excepted service, which Biden had rescinded when he took office. This move is intended to help Trump replace federal employees with loyalists faithful to his agenda. The architects of Project 2025 advocated the revival of Schedule F as part of their aim to "[bend or break the bureaucracy to the presidential will](#)." And Trump announced that he will fire over 1,000 appointees from the Biden administration.

History never repeats itself exactly, but there are deeply troubling ideological and political parallels between European fascism in the 1930s and Trump's MAGA vision. To start with, ultranationalism is a key foundation of fascism. Mussolini came to power with a promise to make a "[clean sweep](#)" of Italy and to restore Rome to its "golden age." (Hitler had a similar vision for Germany, and a major difference between Italian fascism and Nazism is that the former did not prioritize biological determinism.)

Under Trump and his MAGA movement, ultranationalism has been given a new lease on life as the U.S. has had a long-standing tradition in ethnic nationalism and extreme chauvinism. The [Alien and Sedition Acts](#), four internal security laws passed by the U.S. Congress in 1798 during the administration of President John Adams, called for the deportation of people from "hostile" nations and made it a crime to criticize the government. The slogan "America First," fused with the idea of "[100 percent Americanism](#)," was dominant between the World Wars. And as Adam Smith, director of the Rothermere American Institute at Oxford University, said, [in "1930s America, fascism was on the march."](#)

Trump's second term promises to turn ultranationalism into state ideology — and the blizzard of executive orders that took place on his first day in office signify in no uncertain terms that his administration will make good on its campaign vow to get rid of "[the enemy from within](#)" by any means necessary. If the latter materializes, the fusion between ultranationalism and the authoritarian state will produce a full-fledged neofascist government cohabiting with violent neoliberalism as the economic regime.

And it will materialize, starting with the sweeping action on immigration and border control, which will enable Trump to carry out his monstrous deportation plan. Having echoed Nazi language by dehumanizing immigrants of color as "animals" and "[poisoning the blood](#)" of the nation, Trump is bent on executing the most massive deportation in U.S. history. This plan isn't merely a "[disgrace](#)," as Pope Francis labelled it, but the apotheosis of cruelty.

In his last major essay, "Nine Theses on the Philosophy of History", Marxist philosopher and critic Walter Benjamin describes in the ninth thesis Paul Klee's painting named "Angelus Novus," which Benjamin had purchased in the spring of 1921, as the Angel of History. He writes:

A Klee painting named Angelus Novus shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. ... This is how one pictures the angel of history must look. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. That which we call progress, is this storm.

Klee's "Angelus Novus" is used by Benjamin, who at the time was fleeing from the gestapo, as a metaphor for the illusion behind the capitalist idea of progress. In the end, like this notion of progress, Trump's pursuit of a "Golden Age" can only lead to disaster and ruin, to catastrophe for the U.S. and the rest of the world.

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C.J. Polychroniou is a political scientist/political economist, author and journalist who has taught and worked in numerous universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. Currently, his main research interests are in U.S. politics and the political economy of the United States, European economic integration, globalization, climate change and environmental economics, and the deconstruction of neoliberalism's politico-economic project. He is a columnist for *Global Policy Journal* and a regular contributor to *Truthout*. He has published scores of books, including *Marxist Perspectives on Imperialism: A Theoretical Analysis*; *Perspectives and Issues in International Political Economy* (ed.); and *Socialism: Crisis and Renewal* (ed.), and over 1,000 articles which have appeared in a variety of journals, magazines, newspapers and popular news websites. Many of his publications have been translated into a multitude of languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Turkish. His latest books are *Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal: The Political Economy of Saving the Planet* (with Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin as primary authors, 2020); *The Precipice: Neoliberalism, the Pandemic, and the Urgent Need for Radical Change* (an anthology of interviews with Noam Chomsky, 2021); *Economics and the Left: Interviews with Progressive Economists* (2021); *Illegitimate Authority: Facing the Challenges of Our Time* (an anthology of interviews with Noam Chomsky, 2023); and *A Livable Future Is Possible: Confronting the Threats to Our Survival* (an anthology of interviews with Noam Chomsky, 2024).