

Wannabe Führer Donald J. Trump Must Be Stopped



Preventing the former president from being reelected should be the primary goal of all progressive forces from this point on.

During Trump's tumultuous four-year reign (2017-2021), democratic norms in the U.S. experienced a huge shock. Almost overnight, the U.S. became a different country as Trump's policies and racist rhetoric tore the social fabric of inclusive democracy and inflicted a body blow to the concept of a decent society. In the end, abnormal became the new normal.

Indeed, Trump's 2016 campaign was unlike anything seen in U.S. presidential elections in decades. It was solely driven by racism, sexism, and xenophobia. And it had a dramatic impact. For example, [hate crimes](#) surged by more than 220% in counties that hosted Trump's campaign rallies in 2016 and reached an all-time high in [2021](#), according to the FBI. [White nationalist hate groups](#), an integral component of the far-right movement in the U.S. targeting immigrants and refugees, LGBTQ people, Blacks, Muslims, and other groups, increased 55% throughout the Trump era.

Trump's inflammatory rhetoric and posturing himself as the only leader able to save the country led many to wonder whether Trump was more than a racist and a populist with an unmistakably authoritarian streak. Scholars and pundits alike began wondering whether it was time to use the "F" word about Trump, and some started doing just that. I happen to be one of the people who objected to the idea of using [fascism](#) as a catch-all term to describe leaders and movement with authoritarian tendencies, while acknowledging that the movement that Trump had created and still leads has a proto-fascist lineage.

Trump's revenge politics and desire to cleanse U.S. society of undesirable elements like migrants, refugees, LGBTQ people, and radical leftists may very

well find us with a dictator in charge in 2025.

Fascism represents the most extreme form of the “exceptional capitalist state,” and should not be confused with all forms of authoritarian rule, as the late Marxist theoretician Nicos Poulantzas argued in *Fascism and Dictatorship*, a work that is essential reading for anyone interested in a serious study of fascism. Fascism worships the state, promotes militarism, and establishes absolute state power over private enterprise. Trump’s nationalist, racist, sexist, homophobic, cult-like movement embraces none of these fascist characteristics and beliefs.

Most [experts](#) agree with this assessment. The Trumpist movement is an extreme populist movement and, as such, poses a clear threat to open society. When granted the opportunity, it will destroy liberal democracy by imposing censorship and even arresting political opponents. If the institutions have not become as weak as the prevailing norms, and if the democratic forces are significantly divided to the point that they muster little resistance to the dismantling of government institutions and their transformation into some sort of proto-fascist state. These are indeed the critical questions that all democratically minded citizens should be concerned with as the 2024 election gets close.

The U.S. is on a very dangerous political trajectory.

Trump is the most likely GOP nominee to run for the White House and, apart from Chris Christie, all other Republican presidential candidates will back Trump even if convicted. [Republican National Committee chairwoman Ronna McDaniel](#) also said that she will support Trump even if he’s convicted. More worrisome is the fact that a recent poll found that [Trump leads Biden](#) by 4 percentage points among registered voters and that most [Americans are unhappy with the state of the economy](#) under Biden.

The U.S. is on a very dangerous political trajectory. If Trump succeeds in returning to the White House, not only will he unleash state power to exact revenge on those who he feels wronged him but may try to turn the U.S. into a Christofascist state. As he pledged to his supporters in a speech in New Hampshire on Veteran’s Day, by copying Hitler’s rhetoric from “Mein Kampf,” he will “root out the Communists, Marxists... and Radical Left Thugs that live like vermin within the confines of our country...” Clearly, the wannabe führer felt the need to double down on Nazi propaganda after he had said in a recent interview that immigrants and asylum seekers are “poising the blood of our country.”

This brings to mind Martin Niemöller's famous quote "First they came for the socialists.. then they came for the trade unionists...then they came for the Jews..."

How one counters and neutralizes the effect that Trump's rhetoric is having on millions of U.S. citizens has no easy answer.

Of course, what is shocking here is that we are not in the midst of a Great Depression and the U.S. has not been humiliated by some sort of a Treaty of Versailles—two key factors in the rise of Adolf Hitler and his Nazi party to power. Nonetheless, the overwhelming majority of Republican voters stand behind Trump, believe in all his lies, pay no attention to his criminal activities and the indictments, and apparently embrace his vision of a United States where white supremacy and authoritarianism rule the day and a world in which the principles and values of strongmen prevail.

The US has a serious problem with its citizenry. Even in a country like Greece, when unemployment in 2013 had reached nearly 28%, more than 30% of its citizens lived below the poverty line, and a policy of fiscal sadism had been imposed on the country by its international creditors, the far-right Golden Dawn party only got as high as 6.9% of the popular vote in the 2015 legislative election and lost all its parliamentary seats in the general election of 2019. The fact that nearly half of U.S. voters are still behind Trump says that the country faces a severe political crisis with profound moral connotations.

The ideals of the Enlightenment are largely absent from the mindset of most of the followers of today's GOP.

Whether it is because of deeply held religious beliefs and the legacy of slavery and racism, or because of political socialization and the constant bombardment of mainstream media propaganda, the ideals of the Enlightenment are largely absent from the mindset of most of the followers of today's GOP. Hence their rejection of science, cosmopolitanism, reason, and tolerance. This is why Trump appeals to the emotions of his primary base and not to their reason—just like Mussolini and Hitler did with their own followers. Trump demonizes his enemies, presents them as threats to U.S. society, and then pledges to get rid of them. In this context, he follows to the letter Hitler's belief that "all propaganda has to be popular and has to accommodate itself to the comprehension of the least intelligent of those whom it seeks to reach."

How one counters and neutralizes the effect that Trump's rhetoric is having on millions of U.S. citizens has no easy answer. Vigilance, community organizing, solidarity, and resistance are all the weapons progressive forces have in today's United States to prevent the further spread of the proto-fascist movement headed by Donald Trump. The U.S. will surely experience major repression in the event that Trump returns to power. And this time the stakes are higher than ever before. Trump's revenge politics and desire to cleanse U.S. society of undesirable elements like migrants, refugees, LGBTQ people, and radical leftists may very well find us with a dictator in charge in 2025. How to stop that from happening should be the primary goal of all progressive forces from this point on. Failure to do so may very well mean the difference between living in a decent society or in one where cruelty and horror dominate.

Our work is licensed under Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0). Feel free to republish and share widely.

Source:

<https://www.commondreams.org/opinion/stopping-fascist-donald-trump-2024>

*C.J. Polychroniou is a political economist/political scientist who has taught and worked in numerous universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. His latest books are *The Precipice: Neoliberalism, the Pandemic and the Urgent Need for Social Change (A collection of interviews with Noam Chomsky;* Haymarket Books, 2021), and *Economics and the Left: Interviews with Progressive Economists* (Verso, 2021).*