

THINKING THE UNTHINKABLE: A FASCIST TAKEOVER OF THE UNITED STATES

September 17, 2020

It isn't something you want to hear; it's not something we want to say. But there's a tried and proven path that autocrats take to lead their countries into fascism. Adolph Hitler refined and perfected that path. Donald Trump is making one move after another that replicates Hitler's drive to fascist control of his country.

We write this piece as seasoned political observers whose politics are just left of center; we are not far-left radicals. And what we're observing is that, with just weeks left until what could be the most important election in US history, the evidence from Donald Trump's four years in office is now incontrovertible: He is set on destroying this constitutional republic and replacing it with a fascist state with himself as its head. His moves are a clear and present danger to this nation, raising alarms from thousands who see what we see.

We ask you to think the unthinkable. Please look at a fast-growing sequence of similarities that has so many observers are so alarmed.

In the beginning—two men, both scorned by their peers and determined to bury their detractors. For most of the 1920's Adolph Hitler was regarded by the German political and social establishments as a self-aggrandizing fool who was not to be taken seriously. Donald Trump was similarly dismissed by New York's political and social elite, who were joined



by national figures when he began to interject himself into national issues, and then ran for president. The ridicule and slights both men endured for years fueled their drives for vindication, adulation and power.

Attracting media got them national attention



Hitler was a speaker with an extraordinary power to win people over. He used airplanes to get to speaking gigs across his country, an unusual move at the time. He used radio to broadcast his speeches to huge audiences, and staged in-person rallies to excite supporters.

Trump was a pioneer of an aggressive, flamboyant style of reality television that attracted huge audiences and gained him a national following that being a real estate developer had never afforded him. He worked media outlets with outrageous promos for his own greatness, (often pretending to be someone else).

As a television celebrity, he put out a steady stream of outrageous ideas, sure to attract media attention by their outrageousness. He's continued to do this throughout his years in the White House, dropping bizarre items into every news cycle, deflecting attention from the moves he's making to curtail democracy. His campaign rallies, revving up his base, didn't stop when he took office; he staged them regularly, slowed only by the pandemic.

Both men published their guiding principles.

Hitler set his views out in Mein Kampf, a book that became a literal blueprint for the Third Reich. Key points:

- Germany should be great again, led by a single all-powerful leader;
- The Aryan race was superior to all others and Jews were a threat to both the racial purity and well-being of true Germans;
- Immigration should be stopped;
- Germany should be economically self-sufficient; and
- The government should control the press.



Read that list again, substitute “the US” for “Germany,” and “people of color” for “Jews,” and you have a page of Trump’s playbook, visible in his actions over his four years in power, and in his current campaign to hold onto power.

Hitler actually wrote Mein Kampf and Trump’s Art of the Deal was written by a paid professional writer, but Trump’s book does contain his blueprint for the amoral, transactional, self-aggrandizing approach to life that has driven him his entire career and now shapes his presidency.



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Both men built large followings by stoking grievances and inciting violence. By frightening people and then claiming the role of their only possible protector, both Hitler and Trump built powerful constituencies, promising to meet perceived needs they themselves had created or exaggerated.

The grievances. Hitler gained a following by tapping into the resentment Germans still held after losing World War I. He filled the media of his time with propaganda, doing everything he could to fuel the humiliation Germans felt, telling his people—his voice coming out of their radios and from podiums—that he alone could return Germany and the Aryan race to their rightful positions of prestige and power.



HITLER GAINS FOLLOWING

- Hitler's ability as a public speaker and organizer drew many followers
- He quickly became the Nazi Party leader
- Calling himself “Der Fuhrer” (the leader) he promised to return Germany to its old glory



Trump uses relentless propaganda to move a similar message: that this nation is beset by those who would diminish it and that it needs to be great again, as it once was, and we'll achieve that when whites regain the power they deserve.



Trump was elected in 2016 by tapping a wellspring of anxieties, frustrations and grievances for which the mainstream political parties had no compelling answer. Many of those grievances are held by single-issue voters, whose feelings on gun control and abortion overwhelm everything else. Another factor is the losses of wages and jobs that were caused by globalization and the rising inequality that predate Trump.

But a huge source of Trump's support—and something he relentlessly taps —is a loss of social position and esteem. Many non-college whites feel that “liberal elites” look down at them, new immigrants are superseding them, and foreigners are failing to acknowledge that the US is in every way better than their countries.



Trump expands and inflames these grievances to create a picture of an America in grave peril, degraded at home and in the world, in danger of having its core values overturned and its neighborhoods taken over by the nonwhites, the leftists and the godless. White Americans are the rightful masters of all. The throngs at Hitler's rallies sang Deutschland uber Alles—Germany Over All Others. Trump's rally crowds chant USA! USA!

No tactic seems too low for Trump in trying to stoke some white people's fear of Blacks—witness his boast that he'll keep low-income housing out of the suburbs to protect the “Suburban Lifestyle Dream.” Hitler would definitely recognize that one.

Violence. Hitler knew, as does Trump, that grievance begets fear and anger, and that the combination is the perfect formula for inciting violence. Hitler knew and Trump knows that when violence escalates, people turn to a leader who promises “LAW & ORDER!” just as Hitler kept raving and Trump keeps tweeting. It’s a simple tactic that autocrats have used successfully for millennia.



Hitler didn’t shrink from using violence to achieve his ends. Trump has sent armed Federal troops wearing unidentified uniforms and moving in unmarked vans to round up protestors in Portland. That’s how Hitler’s paramilitary arm, the SA “Brownshirts” started in Munich. Trump publicly supports armed white vigilantes who claim the right to shoot anyone they decide is a looter or arsonist. A recent report leaked by a brave whistleblower in Trump’s own Department of Homeland Security names armed white supremacists as the major domestic terrorist threat. A senior Trump lieutenant recently advised citizens to start buying ammunition now because, when the shooting starts, bullets will be hard to get. Hitler would be proud.



Trump and members of his administration refuse to condemn the violence he incites, and they blame legitimate protesters as the source of the violence, insisting that the activists of Antifa and Black Lives Matter are existential threats to white lives and property.



Yes, some buildings and cars have been burned by people furious over extra-legal police killings of blacks, but it has been well short of the Armageddon that Trump screams at us to fear. This is important to remember: the evidence is solid that most of the injuries at the protests

have been caused by police or by the right-wing thugs and the militia members that Trump endorses.

It would be worse if Trump weren't still hindered by a bothersome Constitution, House of Representatives, and the judges who retain their independence and respect for the law. He will do more if those restraints are lost in the upcoming election.

Scapegoats. It takes scapegoats to make the Hitler/Trump strategy work. Scapegoats simplify complex issues, focusing popular anger and blame on easily identified targets. That was Hitler's strategy with his nation's Communists and Jews, whom he claimed were responsible for every problem Germany was experiencing, keeping Aryan Germans from their deserved prosperity and greatness.



Trump's list of scapegoats is larger. Trump raves on about the Mexican thieves and rapists streaming across our border. Add the attacking caravans of Honduran mothers and kids. Throw in the socialists who want to turn America into a Marxist state. Don't forget the coastal elites determined to undermine our heritage by tearing down our proud symbols and changing the way we tell our history. Be afraid too of the protestors who are burning our cities and of the sneaky liberals determined to stuff our ballot boxes.



Next week Trump may discover yet another existential threat that only he can stop.

And it all adds up to—jingoistic sloganeering, support of white supremacy, scaremongering and scapegoating appeal not just to those suffering economically or who feel disrespected and powerless. Hitler and Trump attracted rich followers as well as poor ones. The message: If those left-wing radicals get power, they're going to take your money away and give it to the undeserving poor.

Citizens across the economic spectrum can be enrolled by making them fear for their physical safety. Sending right-wing infiltrators into peaceful protests to create mayhem is a tried and true tactic that can scare peaceful people into wanting a revved up physical response, whether legal or not. Trump's recent backing of the Q-anon conspiracy-theory extremists is yet another toxic addition to the contagion of fear he is spreading.



Playing the parliamentary game. Elected to a seat in the Reichstag, Germany's Parliament, Hitler began maneuvering his way to absolute power. With a passionate, devoted and often violent base behind him, Hitler bullied the intimidated Reichstag into giving him absolute power for four years. Even that time limitation collapsed when a suspicious fire all but destroyed the Reichstag building, terrifying legislators and fueling Hitler's claim that the situation was so dire that only he could protect Germany from chaos, chaos that his own agents had caused.



In the ensuing fear that swept the country, Hitler quickly destroyed all opposition to his rule, using public pressure to force the Reichstag to pass an emergency law restricting personal liberty, enabling him to imprison many of his remaining political opponents. He took over as Chancellor of Germany and by 1934 had declared himself Führer—absolute ruler. There was then no need for him to form coalitions, share power, or run for re-election.



The Republican-controlled US Senate has ceded its Constitutional power to Trump, while that party has declared its only platform for the 2020 elections is loyalty to Trump and his agenda, an agenda that has him encouraging rally crowds to chant, "Twelve more years!" It's amazing that it didn't take setting fire to the Capitol to create this level of fear and shameful cowardice in these US legislators.

With that Republican-controlled Senate aiding and abetting him, Trump has dismissed nonpartisan career officials and replaced them with his loyalists. He's fired the independent inspectors general responsible for stopping violations of ethics and of the Constitution. He's denying Congress's right and duty to investigate malfeasance in the Executive Branch. He's used the Department of Homeland Security and other enforcement officers of the Executive Branch as a private army. He's used the government to advance the financial interests of himself and his family. He's solicited help from foreign governments to get elected, and laughed as his Senate enablers refused to remove him from office after he was impeached for his actions.



Now he and his cronies are trying to undermine the November election with scheme after scheme designed to make the act of voting as difficult as possible, including purging voter rolls, sabotaging mail-in balloting by slowing postal deliveries, denying overwhelming evidence of foreign interference in our elections, and setting the stage for rejecting the 2020 result by declaring that mail-ins have been faked.

Trump, a master manipulator, charges that it's the Democrats who are plotting to steal the election and that, if they lose, they will refuse to accept the count. Most recently, Trump's 2016 campaign manager has called for martial law to uphold Trump's continuance in office, no matter what the vote is.



Bottom line. Donald Trump is headed straight for an end to constitutional limitations on the presidency. Only Democratic control of the House, and a still functioning legal system, has kept him from achieving that already.

All this is happening right before our eyes. Unlike German citizens in 1932 who didn't have television or the internet, Americans in 2020 can see

exactly what is happening, if we don't look away, thinking it can't be true.

"Oh, it could never happen here!" There were a lot of Germans who thought the same thing.

Donald Trump is an unprincipled, unbalanced, power-obsessed man who is following Adolf Hitler's path to absolute power. He is not concerned about your future or your country's future.

Trump is a fascist, not a Republican, at least not as most Republicans defined themselves just four years ago.



The November election is no longer a contest between Democrats and Republicans. It's a referendum on the survival of this constitutional republic.

We must not be like the frightened, deceived Germans who voted to give Hitler more power.

We cannot be the frog in the pot, ignoring the rising temperature until it's too late. The pot is about to boil.

Raise your voice. Share this article. Give candidates money, locally as well as nationally. Volunteer for phone banks. Send messages to voters in swing states. If you know people who think their votes don't matter, tell them why they absolutely must vote. Write letters to the editor.

Put a sign in your window or in your yard; wave one at the Park & Ride. Vote on time. Help other people get their votes in on time. Volunteer to be a poll observer. Resist every effort to suppress the vote, subvert it, or override it.

There are hundreds of organizations now focused on the election and voting. A few minutes on the web will help you find the ones that resonate with you. When you find a good one, let others know in the comments section below this article. Here are a few that caught our attention:

Rock the Vote (voting reminders)

Power the Polls (become a poll worker)

Youth Voter Movement (getting youth to vote)

When We All Vote (voter registration)

Postcards to Voters (written reminders)

Vote Save America—Adopt a State (focus on battleground states)

Do Ever Thing You Can

- Reality is shouting at us. We must hear it and act.
- This is the United States of America, the Republic for which we must stand.

John Graham & Ann Medlock
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