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Trump: Leader of the Fascist World?



Drawing by Nathaniel St. Clair

FASCISM: Fascism is a populist political philosophy that exalts the nation and often race above the individual. It is associated with a centralized autocratic government and a far-right authoritarian and ultranationalist political ideology and movement, characterized by a authoritarian leader. Fascist movements emphasize extreme nationalism, militarism, and the supremacy of the “dear leader” and the nation over the individual.

The 21st century is witnessing a resurgence of fascism or neofascism in the global community. Currently, the leaders of Russia, China, India, Argentina, Hungary and Bulgaria conform to a fascist model. The leaders of these countries are contemptuous of electoral as well as political and cultural liberalism. For the first time in its 250-year history, the United

States has an ultra-nationalist and authoritarian leader in Donald J. Trump, who exhibits many of the dangerous attributes of fascism.

The most authoritative figures in the Trump administration conform to the ideas and ideals of fascism. Trump's choices to serve as his vice president (J.D. Vance); director of the Office of Management and Budget (Russell Vought); secretary of defense (Pete Hegseth); director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (Kash Patel); deputy chief of staff (Stephen Miller), and Attorney General (Pam Bondi) fit that description. They have declared their fealty to their "dear leader" in the White House. As Chris Lehmann noted in "The Nation" last month, they are the "fixers and fascists in the 47th president's orbit."

In less than two weeks, Trump himself has taken actions that can only be described as authoritarian—steps that will advance his personal and political power at the expense of the rule of law and America's democracy. On the two most recent Friday nights, Trump has emulated Richard Nixon's Saturday night massacre in 1973 by firing 18 Inspectors General and then 30 federal prosecutors who worked on the January 6th Capitol riot cases over the past four years. Trump also revoked security clearance for 51 signers of a letter suggesting that the contents of Hunter Biden's laptop could be Russian misinformation.

The Department of Justice ordered the firing of eight FBI executives and began an investigation of thousands of FBI officials who worked on the January 6th uprising. All of these steps were taken without regard for the laws that protect these officials from such summary actions. When asked about the firing of the IGs, which ignored the legal requirement to provide 30-day notice to the Congress as well as the appropriate cause for such action, deputy chief of staff Miller explained that the Trump administration doesn't recognize the legality of the laws.

There have been additional steps that have raised alarms throughout the nation, and have transformed American society. Trump's call for ending birthright citizenship, which is recognized in the Constitution, would mark a major change in U.S. immigration policy. His pardon of the 1,600 rioters from January 6th never specified the criteria that were used in evaluating the various cases. Trump's threat to investigate the "entire Biden crime family" was unprecedented and tore a page out of the fascist playbooks of such countries as Russia and China. These threats led Biden to issue pardons to his immediate family as well as to chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, who Trump once insinuated would be subject to the death penalty for committing "treason."

Although Trump's inaugural address supported a "colorblind" and "merit-based" society, his order to federal agencies to purge the concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion was an act of

white supremacy that targeted civil rights protections for civil servants and government contractors. In a classic display of meanness, Trump blamed the tragic air collision over the Potomac River last week that took 67 lives on “diversity hiring” at the Federal Aviation Administration.

In less than two weeks, Trump has taken comprehensive steps to weaponize and politicize the key departments and agencies of government, particularly the judicial and national security components. Executive orders have ignored federal law and judicial rulings in order to challenge the so-called “deep state,” and to reverse existing policy on immigration, the environment, and diversity. Trump froze federal hiring, exempting only the military and “positions related to immigration.” He restored a category of federal workers known as Schedule F in order to eliminate job protections for civil servants, and offered buyouts to nearly the entire federal work force of 2.3 million men and women.

Meanwhile, the so-called guardrails of our democracy are folding their tents and succumbing to Trump’s pressure. In recent weeks, Paul Krugman of the New York Times; Jennifer Rubin of the Washington Post; and Jim Acosta and Chuck Todd of CNN have resigned their positions because of institutional pressure to tone down or avoid criticism of Donald Trump. Powerful industries are dropping their DEI programs because of Trump’s intimidation. Two networks (ABC and CBS) are settling law suits in Trump’s favor because their institutional backers (Disneyland and Paramount, respectively) want to avoid antagonizing Trump. Too many Democrats in the Senate are voting to confirm Trump’s cabinet choices, no matter how unqualified or unsavory they are. The major players in the technology arena were particularly pathetic, rushing to Mar-a-Lago to bend the knee and kiss the ring. Mark Zuckerberg, the chairman of Meta, is particularly pathetic in this regard.

This is sadly reminiscent of Germany in 1933, when the titans of industry and the media believed that they could handle Adolf Hitler simply by catering to his whims. By the middle of the year, the democracy of the Weimar Republic had been transformed into the police state of the Third Reich. In just two weeks, the Trump administration has been dynamic and fast-moving and, as a result, the so-called guardrails of our democracy have been weakened and submissive.

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