

Curtis Yarvin Wants American Democracy Toppled. He Has Some Prominent Republican Fans.

The New Right Blogger Has Been Cited By Blake Masters And J D Vance. What Exactly Is He Advocating?

By Andrew Prokop [vox.com](https://www.vox.com) 24 October 2022 (@ 0500 hrs edt)

In September 2021, J D Vance, A GOP Candidate For Senate In Ohio, **Appeared** On A Conservative Podcast To Discuss What Is To Be Done With The United States, And His Proposals Were Dramatic. He Urged Donald Trump, Should He Win Another Term, To “Seize The Institutions Of The Left,” Fire “Every Single Midlevel Bureaucrat” In The US Government, “Replace Them With Our People,” **And Defy The Supreme Court If It Tries To Stop Him.**

To The Uninitiated, All That Might Seem Stunning. But Vance Acknowledged He Had An Intellectual Inspiration. “So There’s This Guy, Curtis Yarvin, Who Has Written About Some Of These Things...”

Nearly A Decade Earlier, A Stanford Law Student Named Blake Masters, Asked By A Friend For Reading Recommendations For A Book Club, **Emailed** A Link To A Set Of Blog Posts. Those Posts Made An Argument That was Quite Unusual In The American Context, Asserting That The Democratically Elected US Government Should Be Abolished And Replaced With A Monarchy. Its Author, Then Writing Pseudonymously, Was Yarvin.

Masters Is Now The GOP Senate Nominee In Arizona. At A Campaign Event Last Year, According To **Vanity Fair’s James Pogue**, He Was Asked How He’d Actually Drain The Swamp In Washington. “One Of My Friends Has This Acronym He Calls RAGE — Retire All Government Employees,” Masters Answered. You’ve Probably Guessed Who The Friend Is.

In Many Thousand Words' Worth Of Blog Posts Over The Past 15 Years, Computer Programmer And Tech Startup Founder Curtis Yarvin Has Laid Out **A Critique Of American Democracy**: Arguing That It's Liberals In Elite Academic Institutions, Media Outlets, And The Permanent Bureaucracy Who Hold True Power In This Declining Country, While The US Executive Branch Has Become Weak, Incompetent, And Captured.

But He Stands Out Among Right-Wing Commentators For Being Probably The Single Person Who's Spent The Most Time Gaming Out How, Exactly, The US Government Could Be Toppled And Replaced — “Rebooted” Or “Reset,” As He Likes To Say — With A Monarch, CEO, Or Dictator At The Helm. Yarvin Argues That A Creative And Visionary Leader — A “Startup Guy,” Like, He Says, Napoleon Or Lenin Was — Should Seize Absolute Power, Dismantle The Old Regime, And Build Something New In Its Place.

To Yarvin, Incremental Reforms And Half-Measures Are Necessarily Doomed. The Only Way To Achieve What He Wants Is To Assume “**Absolute Power**,” And The Game Is All About Getting To A Place Where You Can Pull That Off. Critics Have Called His Ideas “**Fascist**” — A Term **He Disputes**, Arguing That Centralizing Power Under One Ruler Long Predates Fascism, And That *His Ideal Monarch Should Rule For All Rather Than Fomenting A Class War As Fascists Do*.
(Ed. Note:) “Autocratic” Fits As A Descriptor, Though His Preferred Term Is “Monarchist.” You Won't Find Many On The Right Saying They Wholly Support Yarvin's Program — Especially The “**Monarchy**” Thing — But His Critique Of The Status Quo And Some Of His Ideas For Changing It Have Influenced Several Increasingly Prominent Figures.

Besides Vance And Masters (Whose Campaigns Declined To Comment For This Story), Yarvin Has Had **A Decade-Long Association With** Billionaire Peter Thiel, Who Is Similarly Disillusioned With Democracy And American Government. “*I No Longer Believe That Freedom And Democracy Are Compatible*,” Thiel Wrote In 2009, And Earlier This Year, **He Declared** That Republican Members Of Congress Who Voted For Trump's Impeachment After The January 6 Attacks Were “Traitorous.” Fox Host Tucker Carlson Is Another Fan, **Interviewing Yarvin With Some Fascination** For His Streaming Program Last Year. He's Even Influenced Online Discourse — Yarvin **Was The First** To Popularize The Analogy From *The*

Matrix Of Being “Redpilled” Or “— Pilled,” Suddenly Losing Your Illusions And Seeing The Supposed Reality Of The World More Clearly, As Applied To Politics.

Overall, Yarvin Is Arguably The Leading Intellectual Figure On The **New Right** — A Movement Of Thinkers And Activists Critical Of The Traditional Republican Establishment Who Argue That An Elite Left “Ruling Class” Has Captured And Is Ruining America, *And That Drastic Measures Are Necessary To Fight Back Against Them*. And New Right Ideas Are Getting More Influential Among Republican Staffers And Politicians. Trump’s Advisers Are Already Brainstorming Yarvinite — Or At Least Yarvin-Lite — **Ideas For The Second Term**, Such As Firing Thousands Of Federal Civil Servants And Replacing Them With Trump Loyalists. With Hundreds Of “**Election Deniers**” On The Ballot This Year, Another Disputed Presidential Election Could Happen Soon — And Harvin Has **Written A Playbook** For The Power Grab He Hopes Will Then Unfold.

So These Ideas Are No Longer Entirely Just Abstract Musings — It’s Unclear How Many Powerful People May Take Yarvin Entirely Literally, But Many Do Take Him Seriously. And After The 2020 Election Crisis, The Fall Of American Democracy Seems Rather More Plausible Than It Used To. To Better Understand The Ideas Influencing A Growing Number Of Conservative Elites Now, And The Battles That May Lie Ahead, Then, I Reviewed Much Of Yarvin’s Sizable Body Of Work, And I Interviewed Him.

During Our Lengthy Conversation, Yarvin Argued That *The Eventual Fall Of US Democracy Could Be “Fundamentally Joyous And Peaceful.”* Yet The Steps President Trump Took In That Direction After The 2020 Election Were Not Particularly Joyous Or Peaceful, And It Was Hard For Me To See Why Further Movement Down That Road Would Be.

From Obscure “Anti-Democracy” Blogger To New Right Influencer

In Yarvin’s **Telling**, His Political Awakening Occurred During The 2004 Election. A Computer Programmer Living In Silicon Valley, He Was Then An Avid Reader Of Political Blogs, Following The “**Swift Boat Veterans For Truth**” Scandal About Whether Democratic Nominee John Kerry Had Lied About Aspects Of His Military Service. Yarvin Thought It Was Clear Kerry Had Lied, And Felt The Media Went To Stunning Lengths To Protect Him And Smear His Accusers. But He Also Became Disillusioned With The Conservative Response, Which He Thought Amounted To Ineffectively Complaining About “Media Bias” And Continuing With Politics As Usual. The Problem, He Felt, Was Far Deeper.

An Intense Period Of Reading Old Books On Political Theory And History To Contemplate How Systems Work Followed. Eventually, He (As He Later Put It) “**Stopped Believing In Democracy,**” Comparing This Realization To How Formerly Religious People Feel When They Stop Believing In God. Soon, He Began Posting **Blog Comments**, And Then Writing A **Self-Described “Anti-Democracy Blog”** Beginning In 2007, Under The Pseudonym “Mencius Goldbug.” In These Writings — Discursive, Filled With Historical References, Wry, And **Often Gleefully Offensive** — He Laid Out A Sort Of Grand Theory Of Why Is Broken, And How It Can Be Fixed:

- * The US Government Is A Sclerotic, Decaying Institution That Can No Longer Achieve Great Or Even Competent Things And, **As He Now Puts It**, “Just Sucks.” Constrained By The Separation Of Powers And Congress, The President Has “**Negligible Power**” To **Achieve His Agenda** In Contrast To The “**Deep State**” **Bureaucracy** And The Nonprofits That Are Permanent Fixtures Of Washington’s Governing Class.
- * True Power In The US Is Held By “**The Cathedral**” — Elite Academic And Media Institutions That, In Yarvin’s Telling, Set The Bounds Of Acceptable Discourse And Distort Reality To Fit Their Preferred Ideological Frames. This Does Not Unfold As A Centralized Conspiracy, But Rather Through A Shared Worldview And Culture, And It’s His Explanation For Why Society Keeps Moving To The Left Through The Decades.

- * It's Not Just The Current Government That Sucks — Democracy Sucks, Too. Sometimes He Denounces Democracy Entirely, Calling It A “Dangerous, **Malignant Form Of Government.**” Sometimes He Says Democracy Doesn't Even Practically Exist In The US, Because Voters **Don't Have True Power** Over The Government As Compared To Those Other Interests, Which Function As An Oligarchy. Sometimes He **Argues** That Organizations In Which Leadership Is Shared Or Divided Simply Aren't Effective.
- * Far Preferable, In His View, Would Be A Government Run Like Most Corporations — One With Leader Holding Absolute Power Over Those Below, Though Perhaps Accountable To A “Board Of Directors” Of Sorts (He **Admits That** “An Unaccountable Autocracy Is A Real Problem”). This Monarch/CEO Would Have The Ability To Actually Run Things, Unbothered By Pesky Civil Servants, Judges, Voters, The Public, Or The Separation Of Powers. “How Do We Achieve Effective Management? We Know One Simple Way: *Find The Right Person, And Put Him Or Her In Charge,*” He Writes.

For Years, Yarvin Was Something Of An Odd Internet Curiosity, With His Ideas Far From Most Political Conservatives' Radar. He Gained One Prominent Reader — Thiel, Who Had Written About His Own **Disillusionment With Democracy**, Became A Yarvin Friend, And **Funded His Startup**. “He's Fully Enlightened,” Yarvin Later **Wrote Of Thiel In An Email**, “Just Plays It Very Carefully. (Thiel Did Not Respond To A Request For Comment.) Beyond That, Ideas Bloggers Like **Robin Hanson** And **Scott Alexander** Argued With Him, And He Gradually Got More Attention For Being A Leading Figure In The “**Neoreactionary**” Movement.

Though His Blog Was Pseudonymous, He Had Not Made A Particularly Extensive Effort To Keep His Identity Secret, Appearing In Person As Goldbug To **Give A Talk** At A Conference In 2012. In The Following Years, Journalists **Began To Write About Him By Name**, And Though He Soon **Put His Blog On Hiatus** To Focus On His Startup, Outrage Over Some Of His Writings Continued To Follow Him. Yarvin **Was Disinvited** From One Tech Conference In 2015 After Protests, And His **Appearance At Another** In 2016 Led Several Sponsors And Speakers To Withdraw.

The Sticking Points Commonly Cited By His Critics Included One Moldbug Post On **Historical Thought About Slavery**, Which Was Seized On As Proof That He Was “**Pro-Slavery**” And Racist. In A **Response**, He Said He Believes In The Biological Roots Of Intelligence And Does Not Believe That All Populations (Or Racial Groups) Are Equally Intelligent, On Average. But He Insisted Racism Was “Despicable” And Said He Did Not Believe Europeans Have Any Inherent Or “Moral Superiority” Over Other Races. Another Post That Spurred Outrage Discussed Far-Right Norwegian Mass Murderer Anders Breivik — Yarvin **Argued** The Political Organizations Of Left Heroes Like Che Guevara and **Nelson Mandela** Also Murdered Civilians, And They Should Face Condemnation, Too.

Yarvin Was Out Of The Blogging Game For The Early Trump Years (Though He **Did Attend** Thiel’s Watch Party For The 2016 Election). But In His Time Away, His Influence Grew. To Some On The Right, Yarvin’s Longtime Obsessions Seemed Both Prescient And Clarifying. The “Cathedral” Anticipated The “**Great Awakening**” And The Social Justice Wars, As **Jacob Siegel Has Written**. Presidential Powerlessness Before The “Deep State” Predicted Trump’s Struggles In Getting His Agenda Done.

Additionally, Trump Himself Proved A Filter Of Sorts To The Conservative Intellectual Class. As The President Disdained The Norms Of Classically Liberal Democracy, Conservatives Who Were Attached To Those Norms Either Self-Selected Out Of The Party Or Got Purged. The Pro-Trump Intellectual Space Was Taken By The **New Right**, Thinkers Arguing The Left’s Control Of Culture, Society, And Government Have Gotten *So Bad* That Extreme Measures Were Necessary To Reverse It — And That Previous GOP Leaders **Were Too Hesitant** To Fully Recognize They’re In A War And Need To Fight Back.

Take, For Instance, Vance. In **Explaining To Podcast Host Jack Murphy** Why He Became A Trump Supporter **After Initially Disdaining Him**, Vance Said, “I Saw And Realized Something About The American Elite, And About My Role In The American Elite, That Took Me Just A While To Figure Out. I Was “Redpilled” — Using The Reference Yarvin Helped Popularize. “We Are In A Late Republican Period,” Vance Told Murphy. “If Were Going To Push Back Against It, We’re

Going To Have To Get Pretty Wild, And Pretty Far Out There, And Go In Directions That A Lot Of Conservatives Right Now Are Uncomfortable With.”

After Yarvin **Stepped Away From** His Startup (The Company **Behind The Open Source Software Project Urbit**) In 2019, **The American Mind**, The Online Publication Of The Conservative Think Tank The Claremont Institute, **Began Publishing His Essays**, Effectively Welcoming Him Into The Now-Mainstream Discourse On The Right. He Became A Frequent Guest On New Right Podcasts, And In 2020 He **Started A Substack**, At First Using It To **Post Excerpts** From An In-Progress Book But Eventually Returning To His Blogging Roots. Then, When Trump Tried And Failed To Overturn That Year’s Election Result, Yarvin’s Longtime Interest In “Regime Change” Suddenly Became Far More Relevant.

How To Win Absolute Power In Washington

Talk Of An American Coup May Sound Bizarre, But Coups Are Not That Weird. They Happen In Other Countries, And In Yarvin’s Telling, They’ve Even Happened In The US, Sort Of. He Argues That Alexander Hamilton, Abraham Lincoln And Franklin D Roosevelt Each So Sweepingly Expanded Presidential Power, Centralizing Authority And Establishing New Departments, That They Can Be Said To Have Founded New Regimes.

But Yarvin Wants To See Something Even More Dramatic. In Posts Such As “**Reflections On The Late Election**” And “**The Butterfly Revolution**,” And Podcast Appearances Such As Those With **Former Trump Official Michael Anton** And Writer **Brian Chau**, Yarvin Has Laid Out Many Specific Ideas About How The System Could Really Be Fully Toppled And Replaced With Something Like A Centralized Monarchy. Sometimes He Frames This As What Trump Should Have Done In 2020, What He Should (But Won’t) Do In 2024, Or What Some Other Candidate Should Do In The Future, If They Want To Seize Power. “Trump Will Never Do Anything Like This,” **Yarvin Wrote**. But I won’t Disguise My Belief That *Someone* Should. Someone Worthy Of The Task, Of Course.”

It Is Basically A Set Of Thought Experiments About How To Dismantle US Democracy And Its Current System Of Government. Writer John Ganz, Reviewing Some Of Yarvin's Proposals, **Concluded**, "If That's Not The Product Of A Fascist Imagination, I Don't Know What Possibly Could Be." Many Of These Are Similar To Events Preceding The Fall Of Democracies Elsewhere In The World. Again, Yarvin's Prominent Fans Like Vance And Masters Wouldn't Fully Endorse This Program — **Masters Told NBC** That He Would Have "A Different Prescription" Of What To Do Than Yarvin, And That He Believes In The Constitution — But Some Aspects Of It Have Caught Their Interest.

Campaign On It, And Win: First Off, The Would-Be-Dictator Should Seek A Mandate From The People, By Running For President And Openly Campaigning On The Platform Of, As He Put It **To Chau**, "If I'm Elected, I'm Gonna Assume Absolute Power In Washington And Rebuild The Government."

The Idea Here Would Be Not Frame This As Destroying The American System, But Rather As Improving A Broken System That **So Many Are Frustrated With. Congress Is Unpopular, The Courts Are Unpopular, The Federal Government Is Unpopular.** Why Not Just Promise To Govern As President As You See Fit, Without Their Interference? And See If People Like That Idea?

"You're Not That Far From A World In Which You Can Have A Candidate In 2024, Even, Maybe," Making That Pledge, Yarvin Continued. "I Think You Could Get Away With It. That's Sort Of What People Already Thought Was Happening With Trump," He Said. "To Do It For Real Does Not Make Them Much More Hysterical, And" — He Laughed — "It's Actually Much More Effective!"

It No Longer Seems Clear That Voters Would Reject Such A Pitch. Trump's Ascendancy **Already Proves** That Many American Voters Are No Longer So Enamored Of Niceties About The Rule Of Law And Civics Class Pieties About The Greatness Of The American Separated Powers System. Political Messaging About "Threats To Democracy" Has **Polled Poorly This Year**, With Voters Not Particularly Engaged By It.

Another Piece Of Advice Yarvin Has In This Vein Is That The Would-Be Dictator Should Try To Prevent Blue America From Feeling So Terrified About The New Regime That They Take To The Streets And Make It All Fall Apart. Instead, Ideally, Liberals And Leftists Should Feel So Disillusioned With The Status Quo That They're Ready For Something New. (He Thought Things Were On A Promising Trajectory On This Front During The Early Biden Administration, But Has Griped That The **Dobbs Decision** May Have Scuttled This By Firing Up Blue America.)

Purge The Federal Bureaucracy And Create A New One: Once The New President/Would-Be Monarch Is Elected, Yarvin Thinks **Time Is Of The Essence**. "The Speed That This Happens With Has To Take Everyone's Breath Away," He Told Chau. "It Should Just Execute At A Rate That Totally Baffles Its Enemies."

Yarvin Says The Transition Period Before Inauguration Should Be Used To Intensively Study What's Essential For The Federal Government To Do, Determine A Structure For The New Government, And Hire Many Of Its Future Employees. Then, Once In Power, It's Time To "Retire All Government Employees" Of The Old Regime, Sending Them Off With Nice Pensions So They Won't Make Too Much Of A Fuss. To Circumvent Congress, The President Should Have His Appointees Take Over The Federal Reserve, And Direct The Fed On How To Fund The New Regime.

Talk Of Firing Vast Swaths Of Federal Workers Is Now Common On The Right. In Late 2020, Trump Issued An Executive Order Called "Schedule F" That Would Reclassify As Many As 50,000 Civil Servants In Middle Management As Political Appointees Who Could Be Fired And Replaced By The New President. Nothing Came Of It, And Biden Quickly Revoked It, But Trump's Regime-In-Exile Is Brainstorming What Could Be Done With It In A Second Term, As **Axios's Jonathan Swan Has Reported**.

To Yarvin, Even That Is A Doomed Half-Measure. "You Should Be Executing Executive Power From Day One In A Totally Emergency Fashion," He Told Anton. "You Don't Want To Take Control Of These Agencies Through Appointments, You Want To Defund Them. You Want Them To Totally Cease To Exist." This Would Of Course Involve Some Amount Of

Chaos, But Yarvin Hopes That It Will Be Brief, And The Actually Essential Work Of Government Would Quickly Be Taken Over By Newly Created Bodies That Could Be Under The Autocrat's Control.

Ignore The Courts: The Rule Of Law In America Is Based On Shared Beliefs And Behaviors Among Many Actors Throughout The System, But It Has No Magical Power. The Courts Have No Mechanism To Actually Force A President To Abide By Their Wishes Should He Defy Their Rulings. Yet, With Certain **Notable Exceptions**, They Have Had An Extraordinary Track Record At Getting Presidents Stay In Line. Defying The Supreme Court Means Ending The Rule Of Law In The US As It Has Been Long Understood.

Yarvin Has **Suggested Just That** — That A New President Should Simply Say He Has Concluded *Marbury v Madison* — The Early Ruling In Which The Supreme Court Greatly Expanded Its Own Powers — Was Wrongly Decided. He's Also Said The New President Should Declare A State Of Emergency And Say He Would View Supreme Court Rulings As Merely Advisory.

Would Politicians Back This? JD Vance, In The **Podcast Mentioned Above**, Said Part Of His Advice For Trump In His Second Term Would Involve Firing Vast Swaths Of Federal Employees, "And When The Courts Stop You, Stand Before The Country Like Andrew Jackson Did, And Say, 'The Chief Justice Has Made His Ruling. Now Let Him Enforce It.'"

Co-Opt Congress: One Reason Past Presidents May Have Been Reluctant To Defy The Supreme Court Is That There Is One Body That Can Keep Them In Check — Congress, Which Can Impeach And Actually Remove A President From Office, And Ban Him From Running Again.

Now, Congressional Majorities Have Been Gradually Getting More Deferential To Their Party's Presidents. Yet The Threat Of Impeachment And Removal Hung Over Much Of Trump's Decision-Making And Likely Prevented Him From Going Further In Several Key Moments. For Instance, He Didn't Fire Special Counsel Robert Mueller, And He Backed Down And Left Office After January 6 (While Mitch McConnell's Allies **Were Leaking** That The GOP Senate Leader Might

Support Impeachment, In An Apparent Threat To Trump). Congress Also **Frequently Cut Trump Out Of Policymaking, Ignoring His Veto Threats.**

Yarvin's Idea Here Is That Trump (Or Insert Future Would-Be Autocrat Here) Should Create An App — **The Trump App** And Get His Supporters To Sign Up For It. Trump Should Then Handpick Candidates For Every Congressional And Senate Seat Whose Sole Purpose Would Be To Fully Support Him And His Agenda, And Use The App To Get His Voters To Vote For Them In Primaries. Trump Has Been Picking Primary Favorites And Had Some Success In Open Seat Contests, But This Would be A Far More Large-Scale, Strategic, And Systematic Effort.

The Goal Would Be To Create A Personalistic Majority That Nullifies The Impeachment And Removal Threat, And That Gives The President The Numbers To Pass Whatever Legislation He Wants. If You Can Win Majorities In This Way, Then “Congratulations, You’ve Turned The US Into A Parliamentary Dictatorship,” Yarvin Told Chau. Effectively, The US’s Madisonian Separation Of Powers Will Have Been Made Moot.

“I Think It Could Be Done By, Um, Anyone With A Few Billion Dollars To Spare,” He Continued. “This Is What Pisses Me Off — That I Don’t Know Anyone With, Like, Billions Of Dollars Who Could Do This.” He Then Paused, Which You Can Read Into As You Wish. “Oh — You Know, Such Is Life.”

Centralize Police And Government Powers: Moving Forward In A State Of Emergency, Yarvin Told Anton The New Government Should Then Take “Direct Control Over All Law Enforcement Authorities,” Federalize The National Guard, And Effectively Create A National Police Force That Absorbs Local Bodies. This Amounts To Establishing A Centralized Police State To Back The Power Grab — As Autocrats Typically Do.

Whether This Is At All Plausible In The US Anytime Soon — Well, You’ll Have To Ask The National Guard And Police Officers. “You Have To Be Willing To Say, Okay, When We Have This Regime Change, We Have A Period Of Temporary Uncertainty Which Has To Be Resolved In An Extremely Peaceful Way,” He Says.

Yarvin Also Wants His New Monarch's Absolute Power To Be Truly Absolute, Which Really Can't Happen So Long As There Are So Many Independently Elected Government Power Centers (Especially Blue) States And Cities. So They'll Have To Be Abolished In **"Almost"** All Cases. This Would Surely Be A Towering Logistical Challenge And Create A Great Deal Of Resistance, To Put It Mildly.

Shut Down Elite Media And Academic Institutions: Now, Recall That, According To Yarvin's Theories, True Power Is Held By "The Cathedral," So They Have To Go, Too. The New Monarch/Dictator Should Order Them Dissolved. "You Can't Continue To Have A Harvard Or A New York Times Past The Start Of April," He Told Anton. After That, He Says, People **Should Be Allowed To Form** New Associations And Institutions If They Want, But The Existing Cathedral Power Bases Must Be Torn Down.

Turn Out Your People: Finally, Throughout This Process, Yarvin Wants To Be Able To Get The New Ruler's Supporters To Take To The Streets. "You Don't Really Need An Armed Force, You Need The Maximum Capacity To Summon Democratic Power That You Can Find," He Told Anton. He Pointed To The "Trump App" Idea Again, Which He Said Could Collect 80 Million Cell Numbers And Notify People To Tell Them Where To Go And Protest ("Peacefully") — For Instance, They Could Go To An Agency That's Defying The New Leader's Instructions, To Tell Them, "Support The Lawful Orders Of This New Lawful Authority."

He Points To The Post-Soviet Revolutions In Eastern Europe As A Model, Saying The Enormous Mass Of People "Shouldn't Be Menacing In This January 6 Sense, It Should Have This Joyous Sense That You're Actually Winning And Winning Forever And The World Is Being Completely Remade." And He Says That Though Many Police Officers Follow Orders During Their Day Job, Many Of Them Also Support Trump — So Perhaps They Could Signal That By Putting On *"A Special Armband."*

"If The Institutions Deny The President The Constitutional Position He Has Legally Won In The Election, The Voters Will Have To Act Directly," **Yarvin Wrote.** "Trump Will Call His People Into The Streets — Not At The End Of His Term, When

He Is Most Powerless; At The Start, When He Is Most Powerful. No One Wants To See This Nuclear Option Happen. Preparing For It And Demonstrating The Capacity To Execute It Will Prevent It From Having To Happen.”

Sowing Seeds Of Doubt In Democracy

Yarvin And I Spoke For Nearly Two And A Half Hours Recently. He Peppered His Comments With Hundreds Of Historical References, And, As He Often Does With Left Interlocutors, He Focused On Areas Where He Appeared To Believe He Could Find Common Ground. He Was At Pains To Reassure Me That He Didn’t Believe The US Regime Was Going To Fall Anytime Soon, Saying This Was A “Generational, Not Immediate” Process.

“Part Of My Project Now Is To Say Let’s Make This A Little Less Of An Abstraction, Let’s Imagine What It Might Look Like In A Way That Doesn’t Scare Anyone,” He Said. “It Is Dangerous! Any Kind Of Serious Political Change Is Dangerous, “ He Said. He Named Specifically The Possibility Of **Nuclear War** In Ukraine, Which Does Seem Quite Dangerous, Though It Cannot Be Laid Solely At The Feet Of Democracy. And While Saying He Was Not Exactly A Fan Of FDR, He Sang The Praises Of New Deal Washington As A Time When The US Government Could Actually Achieve Impressive Things, Bemoaning That It No Longer Can.

All This Is More Politic Than Mencius Moldbug’s Old Approach Of Throwing Rhetorical Bombs At The Left, And He’s Given An Explanation Of This Shift. On His Substack, He **Has Used** A *Lord Of The Rings* Metaphor In Which Red-Staters Are “Hobbits,” Battling The Elite Blue-Stater “Elves,” But With “Dark Elf” Allies — Elite Blue-Staters Like Him. “The First Job Of The Dark Elves Is To Seduce The High Elves — To Sow Acorns Of Dark Doubt In Their High Golden Minds,” He Wrote. Then Perhaps They’ll Change Sides, Or At Least Their “Conviction And Energy” May Flag. “Today’s Global Elites Are Invulnerable To Any External Coercive Power And Can Coerce Any Internal Coercive Power,” He Continued. “Like The USSR, They Can Only Overthrow Themselves.

That Is: He Wants To Convince Elite Liberals And Leftists To Lose Faith In The System, Believing That When Enough Of Them No Longer Want To Defend It, It Will Be Easier To Topple. In His Thinking, That's The Prerequisite For Regime Change. "When You See Cultural Elites Developing A Sense Of Possibility In A Broader Sense Which Is Outside The Sort Of Matrix Of Conventional Belief, Then You're Like, Okay, Something Interesting Is Starting To Happen," He Told Me.

And Among Liberals And The Left, There Is Indeed Much Frustration That Our Government And Political System Have Become Sclerotic And Ineffective, That **The Constitution Is Fatally Flawed**, That America **Can't Build Anymore**, And That The President **Is Frustratingly Weak**. Ideas To **Empower The Majority Party, Expand Executive Power**, And Take **The Supreme Court Down A Peg** Are Now Commonly Debated Among Democrats. They Share With Many On The Right The Feeling Of Being Locked In Never-Ending Political Combat With A Terrifying, Powerful "Other Side" That Enjoys **Unfair Advantages** In The System, While Their Own Leaders **Aren't Doing Enough** To Fight Back.

But Of Course Yarvin's Villains (The Media, Academic, The "Deep State") Are Different From The Villains In The Progressive Story (Moneyed Interests, Bigotry Or Systemic Bias, Religious Extremists, Ignorant Red-Staters). And What He'd Want His Monarch To Do With All That Power Is Different, Too: He's Written About His Idea To **Deter Crime** By Putting An Ankle Monitor Who's Not Rich Or Employed, And To Create "**Relocation Centers**" For Decivilized Subpopulations.

So If You're Trying To Increase Left-Right Agreement That The Current System Is Fatally Flawed, I Asked Him, Is It Really Possible To Please Both Sides About What The New System Will Offer? Might You Be Trying To Sell The Left A Bill Of Goods, Claiming This Future Monarchy Will Be Better, When It Will Actually Be Far Worse For Them?

"Neither Side Should Be Sold A Bill Of Goods," He Answered. "This Is Not A Homogeneous Country; It's Never Been. There's A Lot Of People In This Country Who Have To Share The Same Land. That's A Solvable Problem." He Referenced The Long-Running Conflict Between Plebeians And Patricians In The Roman Republic, Which He Said Was

Made Irrelevant By Julius Caesar And His Successor Augustus's Centralization Of Power. "Imagine In America If This Red State/Blue State, Race War, Class War, All This Shit, It's Just Gone," He Said.

The Picture Was So Rosy That The Music Of John Lennon Began Playing In My Head. It Is Certainly Possible To Imagine A Much More Effective Government Under One-Man Rule Than The One We Have Now. Perhaps If We Picked Out The Perfect Brilliant, Ingenious, Compassionate King (With A Wise Board Of Directors He'd Respect Rather Than Supplant), It All Would Work Out Well. It Could Also, Of Course, Work Out Very Poorly.

Even If The Darkest Scenarios Don't Come About, Sclerosis And Decay Are Hardly Problems Unique To Democratic Systems — They've Affected Autocracies Throughout History, **Up To Today**. It Is Difficult To Ensure The Leader's Incentives Are Focused On Good Governance Rather Than On Entrenching Himself In Power. The Corporate Model, Which Yarvin Praises, Also Often Leads To Dysfunctional Bureaucracy, Not To Mention That Governing A Country Might Simply Be A Different Sort Of Problem Than Running A Country.

But In A Practical Sense, Yarvin's Long-Term Ambitions For The New Regime Matter Less Than His Ideas About How The Old One Could Fall. Yarvin's Popularity Among Rising Republicans And New Right Intellectuals Reveals This Cohort Is More And More Willing To Entertain Ideas That Are Out Of The Mainstream. Some Ambitious Figure, Or Even Trump Himself, Could Well Try To Follow His Playbook In A Future Crisis.

If They Do, Despite Yarvin's Urging That The Revolution Should Be "**Absolutely Bloodless**," There's No Telling How Messy Things Could Get. All The Declarations That America Is Currently Falling Apart Could Look Quaint By Comparison To What Comes, If The Rule Of Law Is Shredded And The Current Order Is Toppled. "If You Yank Out A Tooth, You Cannot Automatically Expect A New And Better Tooth To Grow Back," The Economist **Tyler Cowan Recently Wrote**, In A Critique Of The New Right, The Best-Laid Plans Of Revolutionaries Very Often Go Awry.

When I First Asked To Speak With Yarvin, He Requested That I Prove My “Professional Seriousness As A Current Historian” By “Reading Or At Least Skimming” Three Books, And I Complied. One Of Them, *Public Opinion* By Walter Lippmann — A Classic Of The Journalism School Canon — Describes How People Can Respond When Their Previous Beliefs About How The World Works Are Called Into Question.

“Sometimes, If The Incident Is Striking Enough, And If He Has Felt A General Discomfort With His Established Scheme, He May Be Shaken To Such An Extent As To Distrust All Accepted Ways Of Looking At Life, And To Expect That Normally A Thing Will Not Be What It Is Generally Supposed To Be,” Lippmann Wrote. “In The Extreme Case, Especially If He Is Literary, He May Develop A Passion For Inverting The Moral Canon By Making Judas, Benedict Arnold, Or Caesar Borgia The Hero Of His Tale.”

There, I Thought Of Yarvin — The Self-Described Dark Elf Who Yearns For A King.

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