

Why Vance Matters

Conservatives And Liberals Need To Take A Longer View Of The Right's Future.

THE WEEKLY DISH — [BIASED & BALANCED](#)

By Andrew Sullivan 4 October 2024

By Far The Biggest Revelation Of Last Tuesday Night Was What Happens
To American Politics If You Remove **Donald J Trump**.

Everything Instantly Changes.

We Actually Had A Civil, Lively Debate Between A Sane, Reconstructed
Republican And A Likable, If Jittery, Democrat. Not In The Distant Post-
Populist Future, But *Now*. It Was A Fleeting Snapshot Of A Politics Without
Madness. Yes We Can!

Does That Mean That JD Vance Told The Truth? Nope. Among The
Untruths: Hospitals In Springfield Have *Not* Been Overwhelmed By New
Immigrants; **Trump** Did *Not* Salvage Obamacare — He Tried To Repeal It;
And The **Trump** Tax Cuts Benefitted The Wealthy Far More Than The
Middle Class. Walz Was Better But Still Couldn't Admit He Made Up Being
In China During The Tiananmen Massacre (He Missed By A Couple Of
Months); Absurdly Claimed That Border Crossings Were Down From The
Trump Era; And Invented The Idea That Project 2025 Would Create
Registries Of Pregnant Women.

But The Thing About These Untruths Is That They Were Perfectly,
Reassuringly, Normal. Politicians Fib; They Exaggerate; The Elide
Uncomfortable Truths. It All Eventually Gets Filtered Out In The
Democratic Process. Liars Aren't Necessarily Bad Presidents. Bill Clinton
Proved That. What Has Changed In This Past Decade Is A Whole New
Category Of Total Gaslighting, And *Endless Series Of Total Lies Designed
Solely To Defend The Ego And Interests Of Donald J Trump*.

Here Is The Latest From The Man Himself, On The Federal Government's Response To Hurricane Helene:

They Stole The FEMA Money Just Like They Stole It From A Bank So They Could Give It To Their Illegal Immigrants That Want To Have Vote For Them This Season.

Disgusting, Despicable, Demagogic Lies All The Way Down. Yes, History Handed Him Social Media As A Super-Weapon, And He Used It Like A Jedi. But It Is Startling How Much Of Our Democratic Nadir Can Be Traced To A *Single, Depraved Monster.*

Trumpism Isn't The Problem. It Was A Response To Shifting Realities As Neo-Liberalism Won Its Pyrrhic Victory. But **Trump** Really Is. Last Week, He Said:

"[Migrants Will] Rape, Pillage, Thieve, Plunder And Kill The People Of The United States Of America... They Will Walk Into Your Kitchen, They'll Cut Your Throat."

THIS IS NAZI RHETORIC. IT IS TRUMP'S ALONE. *There Is Nothing He Will Not Say.* All Those Who Are Finding Reasons To Support His Candidacy Need To Admit They Are Backing A *Uniquely Indecent* Figure In American History. And Decency Matters.

Look At The Other Manifestations Of Right-Populism In The West, And It's Nowhere Near As Nuts. Giorgia Meloni Is Conservative, Charismatic, Attuned To The Populist Era But Sane. Same With Sunak In The UK During His Brief Period In Office. Le Pen Has Moderated Substantially. No Other Leader Has Nearly Brought Their Entire System Down With Mob Violence. No Other Leader In Any Other Democracy Tells Lies As Depraved As **Trump** Does. Every Other Right-Populist Leader Has Instantly Accepted Election Losses.

And This, Of Course, Is Vance's Core Weakness. He Has To Remain Committed To That Lie, Because He Is **Trump's** Vassal. In The Debate, He

Eventually Hocked Up This Sad Loogie:

It's Really Rich For Democratic Leaders To Say That Donald Trump Is A Unique Threat To Democracy When He Peacefully Gave Over Power On January The 20th, As We Have Done For 250 Years In This Country.

That Takes Some Balls, Doesn't It? Vance Then Suggested That Government Censorship Of Social Media Was As Big A Threat To Democracy As... Trying To Overturn The Results Of An Election By Fraud And Violence. The Argument — A Reprise Of His Flailing In An Interview With Ross — Is Contemptible Whataboutism.

And We Now Know In Detail, Thanks To Jack Smith, The Extent Of Trump's Crimes. We Know He Was Always Going To Declare Himself The Victor On Election Night, Regardless Of The Results, Capitalizing On The Fact That Democratic Votes Would Take Longer To Count And So He'd Appear To Have A Lead.

He Then Conspired To Try And Get Fake Electors To Nullify The Real Ones, Pressured Key Republican Officials To Rig The Results, Targeted His Own Vice President By Claiming He Had The Power To Prevent The Certification; And Piled Pressure On Him — Including, On January 6 Itself, The Threat Of Murderous Violence. “So What?” Trump Said When He Heard Mike Pence Was In Physical Danger. “The Details Don't Matter,” He Told An Aide Who Insisted That The Fraud Claims Would Not Hold Up In Court.

Reality Never Mattered To Him.

It Doesn't Matter If You Won Or Lost The Election. You Still Have To Fight Like Hell.

It Still Doesn't, As He Ranted To A Reporter This Week:

They Rigged The Election. The Election Was Rigged. I Didn't Rig The Election, They Did.

None Of This Can Be Faintly Ascribed To A President's Official Actions, Subject In Some Way To Presidential Immunity. These Are, Simply Put, Crimes Committed By A Candidate To Overturn An Election Result. They Are, In Fact, *Some Of The Gravest Crimes Ever Committed Against The Constitution, Which Is Why The Required Impeachment And Barring Trump From Office Indefinitely.* But Mitch McConnell Blinked.

Vance Has Disqualified Himself By Repeating The Big Lie. It's Why I'm Voting, *However Reluctantly, For Harris.* But It's Vital To See That Vance Also Showed Tuesday Night That There May Be A Republican Future Beyond **Trump**; And That It Does Not Have To Be As Depraved And Deranged As It Now Is. And This Matters. It Should Matter To You If You're A Democrat As Well As A Republican, Because We Have Two Parties, And Bringing One Of Them Back To Some Kind Of Sanity Is Vital If We Are To Rescue Liberal Democracy.

Very Few Seem Interested In This Right Now, In Nursing The Signs Of Pro-Family Policy Pragmatism On The Right, A More Realist Foreign Policy, And A Less Culturally Progressive Government. Some Still Want To Return To The Party Of Neoconservatism And Open Borders, And Would Rather Destroy The GOP Than Reform It. That's Why They've Done All They Can These Past Few Years To Prevent Any Republican Alternative Emerging. The Campaign Against DeSantis Was Brutal, And Relentless And It Worked.

Sane Liberals Have Also Assailed Vance, Many With Zest. Part Of It Is His Submission To **Trump**; Part Is His Constant Ideological Reinvention. Fair Enough, I Guess. But Part Is Also, It Seems To Me, The Usual Educated Liberal's Contempt For An Intellectually Curious Conservative. I Just Wish They'd Stop For A Second And Listen To Some Of Vance's Answers On Tuesday Night: The Way He Acknowledged Republican Flaws (On Abortion, For Example); The Way He Reached Out Personally To Walz (Over His Son Witnessing A Shooting); The Way His Voice Modulated When Weighing Various Points; The Way He Seemed Focused On Solutions Rather Than Slogans, As In His Agreement With Walz On A Federal Family Leave Program.

This Tone — And I Acknowledge It's Not One He's Used On Wingnut Podcasts — Matters. It Really Does Suggest That There's A Way To Have A Conversation About Our Challenges That Doesn't Become A Rant, A Diatribe, Or A Shout-Fest. That's Something That, Even If You Disagree With Vance, You Should Welcome. It's The Tone Of A Liberal Democracy, And It Has Been A Very, Very Long Time Since We've Heard It On The Right. Get Rid Of **Trump**, And We Have A Future For Conservatism.

I Think There Are Two Ways This Election Will Go. One Could Be The Final Turning Of The Page Of The **Trump** Era. It Won't Be A Victory For Harris So Much As A Defeat Of The Ugly, Destabilizing, Toxic Past. At Some Point, The Ratings For *The Apprentice* Collapsed. Maybe The Same Will Happen For A Third **Trump** Election Cycle. I Sure Hope So.

The Other Could Be A Surprising **Trump** Victory, Because The Alternative Seems Too Compromised By The Biden Record, Simply Doesn't Have The Talent Or Vision To Command Even A Single News Cycle, And Is Running A Dangerously Risk-Averse Campaign, Which The Press, By And Large, Is Too Chickenshit To Expose. Yes, I Have PTSD From 2106. But You Should Too.

Either Way, Vance Will Matter — Either As A Saner Version Of Trumpism, Or As A Moderator Of The Coming Madness. Rather Than Trashing Him, We Need To Engage Him. After Defeating Him, Of Course.

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