

Ferrari Response to The Great Experiment

In his article *The Doom of Pernicious Polarization*, Mounk takes a cursory look at the political problems confronting America and claims that, after all, sectarianism in the U.S. is based exclusively on political affiliation, and the American government has “a comparative competence in managing ethnic and religious diversity. . .[and] the division in America between opposing political camps revolves less around demographics, and more about ideology.” He seems to overlook the rioting following the death of George Floyd, a blunt reminder of American racial divide. At the conclusion of his observations of democracies in different countries and continents, Mounk has at least one cautionary warning as he recognizes that American political partisanship may be too far gone to avoid a catastrophe and suggest that Ruanda and Kenia could “offer clues to how the U.S. could get its polarization under control.”

While Mounk in his analysis of democratic governments includes African and middle eastern countries, Ann Applebaum in her article “*There Is No Liberal World Order*” also published in the *Atlantic* focuses her analysis on the threats presented by Russian aggressive policies and on the political right trends surfacing in Europe. She wisely points out the similarities between the extreme right in western countries on both sides of the Atlantic. Law and Justice Polish right wing populist party leader Prawo Sprawiedliwość and Marine Le Pen in France are examples of this trend. I would like to add Giorgia Meloni, leader of the Italian extreme right neofascist party Brothers of Italy, who has recently been elected as the first woman president of Italy. The populist politics of these leaders is similar to Trump’s demagoguery and the threat he poses to democracy. They have used lies as the core of their politics just like Trump used birtherism and the fabricated threat of immigrant crimes to motivate his core followers to believe in his reality. The lies continue to this day and, sadly enough, are believed by a threatening number of people.

Applebaum’s view of contemporary western politics is dark. With the formation NATO, the UN, and the EU, Europeans and Americans alike believed that they had created a set of rules that would preserve peace not only on their own continents, but eventually in the whole world. After the cataclysm of the two world wars, Applebaum cautions, “this liberal world order relied on the mantra of “Never again.” Never again would there be genocide. Never again would large nations erase smaller nations from the map. Never again would we be taken in by dictators, but “unless democracies defend themselves, the forces of autocracy will destroy them.”

Applebaum’s analysis of western history past and recent is far more relevant than Mounk’s cursory observations on democracies around the world. It can make us realize that political change for the worse can occur swiftly. I doubt that African or Middle Eastern democracies could make us realize the present dilemmas and decisions that western countries face.

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