

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

MARCH 9, 2024

<i>Maddening New Poll: Voters Are Unaware of Trump “Dictator” Threats</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Three-Quarters of Republicans Back Trump Being ‘Dictator for a Day’</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>The Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 wants to reshape America under Trump</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Conservatives Plan to Ban Abortion and Cut LGBT Rights Starting Next January</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Project 2025 Reaches 100 Coalition Partners, Continues to Grow in Preparation for Next President.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Trump praises ‘fantastic’ Viktor Orbán, Hungarian autocrat, at Mar-a-Lago for meeting & concert</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>BREAKING NEWS: The New Questions Federal Investigators Must Ask on An Emergency Basis About Trump’s Eleventh-Hour Bond Proposal—Whose Apparent Kremlin Connections Increase By the Hour</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>MAJOR BREAKING NEWS: Source of the Money for \$91 Million Bond in Trump’s Defamation and Rape Case Appears to Have Major Kremlin Ties</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Trump a worse appeaser than Neville Chamberlain, leading Democrat says.....</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>The Real Reason Trump Loves Putin</i>	<i>29</i>

Maddening New Poll: Voters Are Unaware of Trump “Dictator” Threats

A small percentage of voters surveyed are familiar with Trump’s most overt authoritarian outbursts. That’s frightening. But it’s also an opportunity.

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President Biden’s brain trust appears confident that he will ultimately prevail over Donald Trump due to the threat Trump poses to our constitutional system. By November, the election’s “focus will become

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

March 9, 2024

overwhelmingly on democracy,” one top Biden adviser [told](#) *The New Yorker*, adding that “the biggest images in people’s minds are going to be of January 6th.”

Some new polling from a top Democratic pollster finds mixed news for Team Biden on this front: Large swaths of voters appear to have little awareness of some of Trump’s clearest statements of hostility to democracy and intent to impose authoritarian rule in a second term, from his [vow](#) to be “dictator for one day” to his [vague threat](#) to enact “termination” of provisions in the Constitution.

That’s maddening for obvious reasons. But it also presents the Biden campaign with an opportunity. If voters are unaware of all these statements, there’s plenty of time to *make* voters aware of them—and the polling also finds that these statements, when aired to respondents, shift them against Trump.

The survey—which was conducted by veteran Democratic pollster Geoff Garin for the group Save My Country and shared with *The New Republic*—did something novel. It polled 400 voters in each of three swing states—Arizona, Michigan, and Pennsylvania—and weighted them in proportion with each state’s Electoral College votes. It omitted respondents who voted for Trump in 2020 and also said Biden didn’t legitimately win.

In short, the poll was designed to survey voters who are genuinely gettable for Biden. The poll asked them about 10 of Trump’s most authoritarian statements, including: the two mentioned above, Trump’s [claim](#) that immigrants are “poisoning the blood of our country,” his [vow](#) to pardon rioters who attacked the Capitol, his [promise](#) to prosecute the Biden family without cause, his [threat](#) to inflict mass persecution on the “vermin” opposition, and a few more.

Result? “Only 31 percent of respondents said they previously had heard a lot about these statements by Trump,” the memo accompanying the poll concluded.

The good news for Biden is that when respondents were presented with these quotes, it prompted a rise in Trump’s negatives. For instance, after hearing them, the percentage who see him as “out for revenge” jumped by five points, the percentage who see him as “dangerous” rose by nine points, and the percentage who see him as a “dictator” climbed by seven points.

“This is an opportunity to move voters and change the race,” Garin told me, noting that this shows that current public polling, which has Biden down to Trump, is “not set in concrete.”

If this Democratic polling is right, it might help explain a dynamic that has perplexed observers. The latest *New York Times* poll [finds](#) Biden trailing Trump by five points among registered voters even as 53 percent think he committed serious crimes.

Yet voters may still see Trump’s (alleged) criminality as a theoretical proposition, without connecting it to the type of unbound, lawless presidency he has told us he’d preside over—in his own words.

Indeed, the poll from Save My Country finds that after voters are presented with these statements, the percentage of those who view Trump unfavorably jumps five points, from 53 percent to 58 percent, and 69 percent say Trump will bring “chaos to the presidency and our country.”

In other words, when voters are presented with evidence straight from Trump’s own mouth, they see an authoritarian second term as very plausible.

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

March 9, 2024

In one sense, the lack of voter awareness of Trump’s “dictator” threats shows that the Biden campaign and Democrats don’t appear to have succeeded in making voters aware of the menace Trump poses.

Perhaps their messaging has yet to work, or maybe the party [has not seriously used the levers of power at its disposal](#) to highlight Trump’s staggering corruption and malice.

But if this polling is right, one explanation that *doesn’t* seem as plausible is that voters don’t care about these matters. In fact, all this might in some ways validate one of the Biden camp’s frequent claims—that voters are so checked out that they aren’t seriously aware of the threat a second Trump term poses.

The new polling also counters a well-worn refrain from skittish, nonconfrontational Democrats. They sometimes say Trump’s negatives are so well known—or “baked in,” as campaign jargon puts it—that there’s no sense in spending much time on his authoritarian outbursts, affection for political violence, and wide array of (alleged) crimes. Yet all this may in an important sense constitute new information for untold numbers of voters.

“Trump’s negatives are not baked into the cake at all,” Garin told me. Fortunately for the Biden camp, between now and Election Day there are some eight months to fire up the campaign crucible and ensure that they *do* get baked in—good and hard.

Three-Quarters of Republicans Back Trump Being ‘Dictator for a Day’

©The Washington Post Analysis, Feb 7, 2024 by [Philip Bump](#) National columnist

The irony of Donald Trump’s assertion that he would seek to have dictatorial powers for the first day of his presidency is that he was supposed to be saying he had no authoritarian inclinations at all.

Trump’s [original formulation](#) of the idea came during a conversation with Fox News host Sean Hannity in December. Hannity aired clips of observers offering warnings about Trump’s embrace of authoritarian rhetoric and offered Trump a chance to tamp down any such concerns. But Trump didn’t want to.

“I love this guy. He says, ‘You’re not gonna be a dictator, are you?’ I say, ‘No, no, no — other than Day One,’” Trump said at the time. “We’re closing the border. And we’re drilling, drilling, drilling. After that I’m not a dictator, okay?”

Those two issues, immigration and fossil-fuel production, were simply picked up from a bit earlier in the conversation. But Trump discovered that people liked the line — dictator for a day! — and so he has at times [sprinkled it](#) into his patter at rallies. That’s how his politics work: He angles for applause and, if the crowd likes something, it’s on the path to potential policy implementation.

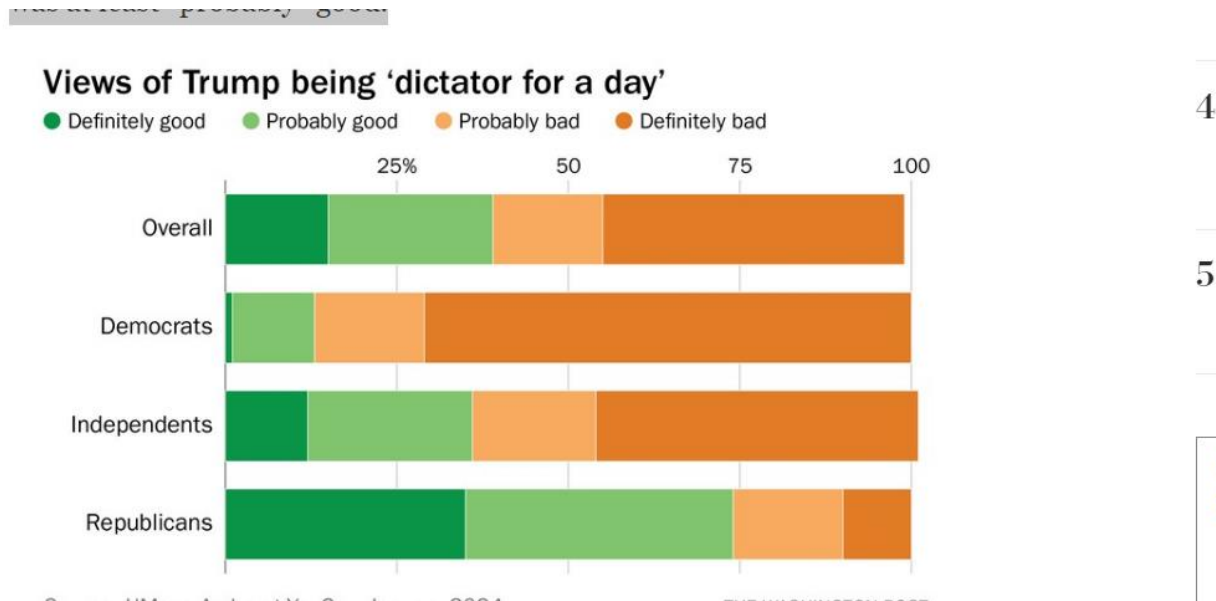
On Wednesday, UMass Amherst [released](#) the results of a poll conducted by YouGov in which respondents were asked about the concept. The framing of the comment was stark, excluding Trump’s specific plans for using his theoretical dictatorial power. It was just, “Trump recently said that if elected, he would be a

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

March 9, 2024

dictator only on the first day of his second term. Do you think that this is a good or bad idea for the country?”

A plurality of respondents said this was “definitely bad” with 6 in 10 saying it was “definitely” or “probably” bad. Among Republicans, though, a third said it was “definitely good” with three-quarters saying it was at least “probably” good.

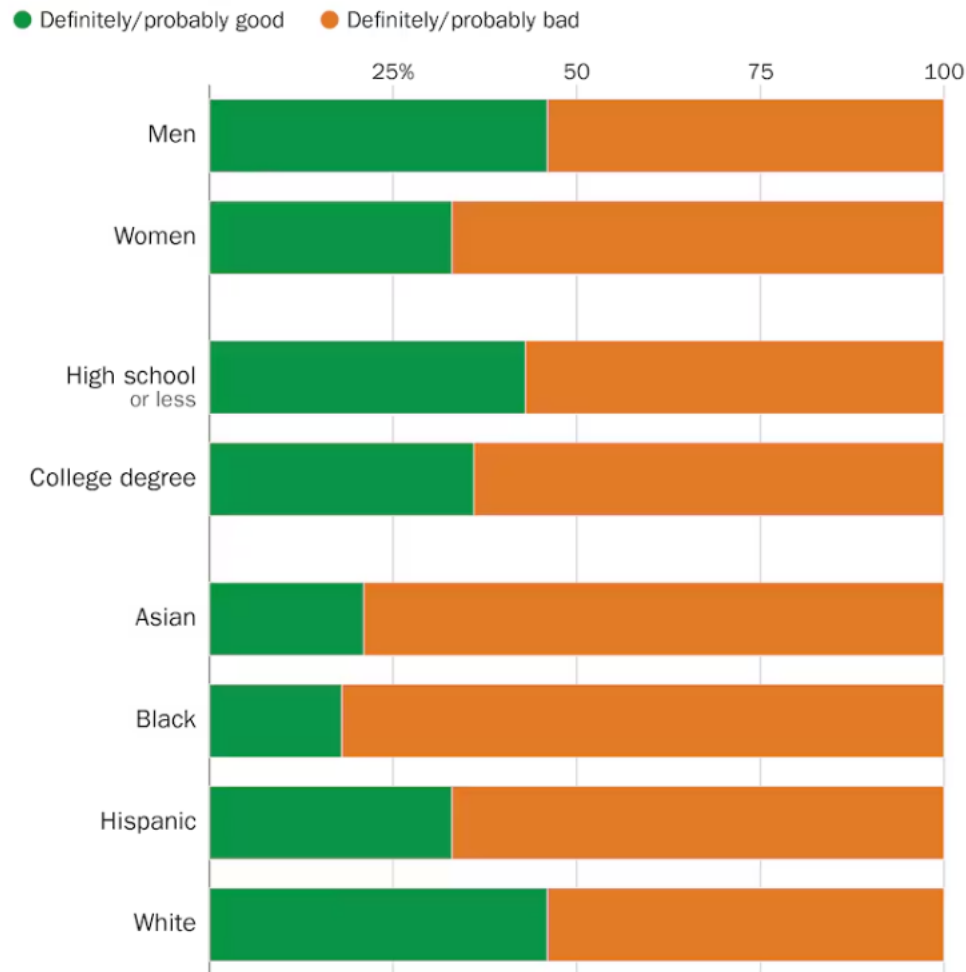


Again, this isn’t “Trump wants temporary absolute powers to build a wall on the border.” It is “is it good or bad if Trump has absolute powers for a fixed time period.” And three-quarters of Republicans responded that this was probably a good idea.

This response isn’t surprising as such. It’s been obvious for years that there is a non-insignificant part of the American public, largely on the right, that is [supportive of the idea](#) of suborning democracy to absolute executive power. There is unquestionably a gap between “supporting a dictatorship in theory” or “as a way to indicate anger at the system” and “approving of an actual implementation of dictatorship.” But it seems safe to assume that the more people you have in the theoretically accepting group, the larger the literally accepting group would turn out to be.

Past analyses of acceptance of authoritarianism in the U.S. have found [a correlation](#) to hostility to diversity. In the UMass Amherst poll, the groups most supportive of Trump’s “dictator for a day” idea are men (26 points more approving of the idea than women on net), and White Americans. There was not as wide a difference between respondents with and without a college degree.

Views of Trump being 'dictator for a day'



Source: UMass Amherst-YouGov, January 2024

THE WASHINGTON POST

Of course, Trump's formulation also doesn't really make any sense. He can't be "dictator for a day" except to issue mandates that could then be challenged in court. He can try to mandate that a wall be built on the border with Mexico, but he tried that when he was president, too, declaring a state of emergency that allowed him to shift funding around to pay for it.

Fox News host Maria Bartiromo asked him what he meant by it in an interview on Sunday, again framing it in the context of the concerns raised by outside observers. Trump said that he'd offered the idea "in jest."

But also: "I'm going to close the border and we're going to drill, baby, drill, that's all," he said. "And then after that, I'm not going to be a dictator."

Did he mean executive orders, Bartiromo pressed? In response, Trump praised executive orders in general and suggested that [President Biden](#) was the one undercutting democracy.

In other words, he doesn't really know. Think of it less as a plan than as an aspiration.

One that most of his party views positively.

The Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 wants to reshape America under Trump

The project outlines a series of moves to transform the executive branch of the government

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PUBLISHED 12 DAYS AGO

While the 2024 presidential election is still nine months away, there appears to be a not-slim chance that [former President Donald Trump](#) could make his return to the White House. Most polls show him in the lead against President Joe Biden, though [this could change](#) in the months to come. The former president has previously committed to being a "[dictator on day one](#)" if he were to gain power again. While there have been arguments over whether Trump's words are hyperbole or literal, there is at least one group apparently scheming to assist with these dictatorial tendencies — through a plan called Project 2025.

While the plan has not gained significant amounts of traction in the national news media, Project 2025 is the brainchild of a conservative think tank called the [Heritage Foundation](#). The foundation is collaborating with at least 80 other conservative groups to spearhead an effort to "rescue the country from the grip of the radical left," with a "governing agenda and the right people in place, ready to carry this agenda out on day one of the next conservative administration," according to the Project 2025 [website](#).

Many in opposition to the plan have alleged that Project 2025 is part of a greater effort by conservatives to turn the United States into a Trump-led autocracy. What does Project 2025 entail, and why are some political scientists afraid of its effect on democracy?

What is Project 2025?

It is a "mission to dismantle the federal government and replace it with a vision closer to [Trump's] own," The Associated Press said, and is "essentially a government-in-waiting for the former president's return — or any candidate who aligns with their ideals." The full Project 2025 consists of a 920-page outline that mandates four doctrines to implement in the event of a conservative presidency: the first is to "restore the family as the centerpiece of American life and protect our children," the outline said. The second doctrine is to "dismantle the administrative state and return self-governance to the American people."

Third, Project 2025 would "defend our nation's sovereignty, borders, and bounty against global threats." And the last doctrine of the project is to "secure our God-given individual rights to live freely — what our

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

March 9, 2024

Constitution calls 'the Blessings of Liberty.'" The main goal of these four tenets would be to execute a "sweeping expansion of presidential power over the machinery of government if voters return [Trump] to the White House in 2025," The New York Times said. The majority of the plan would be implemented during a transition period of 180 days that the project is calling its "playbook."

As the project's outline shows, this would involve the consolidation and retooling of dozens of federal agencies to place them fully under Trump's auspices. The project is mostly based on a legal principle called the unitary executive theory, which asserts that the president of the United States has complete power to control the executive branch of the government. The theory is an interpretation of Article II of the U.S. Constitution, which states that the country's executive power "shall be vested" in the president.

Proponents of the unitary executive theory, including those in charge of Project 2025, argue that this vesting of power in Article II "gives the president complete control of the executive branch, so Congress cannot empower agency heads to make decisions or restrict the president's ability to fire them," the Times said. The theory is often a point of debate among scholars but has been championed by conservatives. The Reagan administration first developed the theory "as they sought to advance a deregulatory agenda."

The plan would also seek to fill the government with Trump loyalists by "scouring records and social media accounts to rule out heretics — effectively administering loyalty tests — and launching a so-called Presidential Administration Academy that tutors future MAGA bureaucrats," Politico said. This would ensure that "what remains of this slashed-down bureaucracy is reliably MAGA conservative — not just for the next president but for a long time to come — and that the White House maintains total control of it."

Using these powers as a baseline, Project 2025 presents a "Christian nationalist vision of the United States, one in which married heterosexuality is the only valid form of sexual expression and identity; all pregnancies would be carried to term, even if that requires coercion or death; and transgender and gender-nonconforming people do not exist," The New Republic said.

Who is behind Project 2025?

The project is mainly led by the aforementioned Heritage Foundation. Led by Kevin D. Roberts and Paul Dans, the foundation is a think tank "based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values and a strong national defense," according to its website. The foundation has grown to become one of the most influential conservative groups in the country.

Other people and groups involved with the project include like-minded right-wing think tanks and institutes, including individuals who once worked in the prior Trump administration. This includes Turning Point USA, a college-based nonprofit led by right-wing activist Charlie Kirk, as well as a conservative advocacy organization called the Center for Renewing America. Former Trump staffers involved with Project 2025 include former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows and Trump's former senior adviser Stephen Miller, the latter of whom has been described as a white nationalist.

What have analysts said about Project 2025?

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

March 9, 2024

Many progressives have opined that Project 2025 is an effort to turn the country into an autocracy, with Trump and his MAGA movement at the top. "The right is intent on turning Trumpism into a governing agenda," Robert L. Borosage said for The Nation. The Heritage Foundation is looking to "recruit, train and plant MAGA operatives throughout the government, and arm them with clear marching orders."

The priority of Project 2025 is to "bring the permanent bureaucracy to heel," Borosage said. The appointees in Trump's new government "will be driven not by Reagan's sunny 'morning in America' conservatism but by a dark QAnon vision of America betrayed," he added. However, there remains an unknown: whether Trump "would have the discipline to impose this agenda." Nevertheless, there is a "greater likelihood that if he regains office, his next administration will be far more organized, relentless and destructive than his first," said Borosage.

Project 2025 is a "dangerous political storm," Dick Hall said for The Oklahoman. The current discourse in the United States means that the government "is susceptible to converting our democracy to an authoritarian dictatorship," driven by "politicians' personal conduct and their disregard for ethics and established laws." The project itself is less a transition and "more like the 'The Radical Conservatives Machination,'" Hall said.

What has Trump said about Project 2025?

The former president has made little mention of the project by name. However, as New York Magazine said, many of Trump's indicated plans for a second term fall in line with the Project 2025 outline.

This includes giving the president unchecked power over federal agencies and the total ability to bypass Congress. He has also pledged to appoint a special prosecutor to go after the Biden family and other political opponents, as well as the installation of loyalists throughout the government.

The Heritage Foundation maintains that Project 2025 is "candidate-agnostic, meaning its thousands of applicants could serve in any Republican administration," New York Magazine said. In a statement to the outlet, the foundation said it was "proud to welcome conservatives of all different backgrounds and experiences."

Conservatives Plan to Ban Abortion and Cut LGBT Rights Starting Next January

Project 2025's 180-Day Playbook is a remarkably detailed guide to turning the United States into a fascist's paradise.

©TNR The New Republic [Melissa Gira Grant](#)/ February 8, 2024

On January 20, 2025, conservatives plan to resurrect a 150-year-old defunct law to ban abortion across the nation. This is not a secret plan—far from it. It's part of the [180-Day Playbook](#) produced by Project 2025,

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

March 9, 2024

detailing priorities for an incoming conservative president on day one. These 900 pages lay out a Christian nationalist vision of the United States, one in which married heterosexuality is the only valid form of sexual expression and identity; all pregnancies would be carried to term, even if that requires coercion or death; and transgender and gender-nonconforming people do not exist.

Project 2025's 180-Day Playbook is driven by such ideology. "Look at America under the ruling and cultural elite today," writes Kevin Roberts, president of the Heritage Foundation, in the document's foreword: "Children suffer the toxic normalization of transgenderism with drag queens and pornography invading their school libraries." Project 2025 claims to present the "consensus recommendations" of "the entire conservative movement" for addressing purported crises like these: The first guiding principle is "Restore the family as the centerpiece of American life and protect our children."

The hundreds of pages that follow lay out specific plans for each department—from Health and Human Services and Education to Labor and Justice. Make no mistake: As steeped as Project 2025 is in the conspiratorial imagination of the right, its plan is comprehensive and dangerous. Health care providers, educators, employers, and the government's own civil rights enforcement apparatus, among many others, would all be marshaled to ensure our acquiescence in this dictatorial male supremacist society.

This is [not the first](#) such playbook to come out of the Heritage Foundation, which has been doing this kind of thing since Ronald Reagan. But Project 2025 isn't an empty document, nor is it solely a Heritage Foundation project: Heritage has brought in more than 90 conservative organizations as an advisory board, with some drawing their leadership from [former Trump administration staff](#). That includes Paul Dans, who worked in Trump's Office of Personnel Management and now leads Project 2025. Alongside the playbook, Project 2025 is currently vetting thousands of "conservative warriors," as Dans has [called](#) them, who can be installed quickly in all the positions required to make the playbook a reality. Dans and others have characterized Project 2025 as dismantling the power of the administrative state, but it would also concentrate power in a capacious and unchecked executive branch, operating on the premise of the "unitary executive" theory. As my colleague Matt Ford has [written](#), this theory argues that "the executive branch's powers reside entirely within the president; all other officials simply exercise them on his behalf and serve at his whim."

Dozens of groups behind Project 2025 have been working on this since at least 2022.

Heritage [announced](#) Project 2025's advisory board on the same day the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, as if this was in some way the next logical step. That board includes many familiar names in anti-abortion rights and anti-LGBTQ rights politics, such as Alliance Defending Freedom, which brought the case that overturned *Roe*; America First Legal, led by former Trump adviser Stephen Miller, which [sought to depose the leadership of two Texas abortion funds](#); the [Claremont Institute](#) (sample brief from a Claremont fellow: "[How Activists Use Your Tax Dollars to Sexualize Kids at School](#)"); Family Research Council (sample brief: "[Why Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Should Never Be Specially Protected Categories Under the Law](#)"); and Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America. Along with the advisory board, altogether [more than 90 groups](#) have signed onto Project 2025. Some have received substantial

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

March 9, 2024

contributions from Heritage—nearly \$1 million, according to tax filings [obtained](#) by Accountable.US and [reported](#) by NBC News. That accounts for 58 percent of Heritage’s total giving in 2022, the year Project 2025 began. Around 40 of the Project 2025 groups have also [received funding from Leonard Leo-linked dark money groups](#), for instance more than \$16.5 million from [DonorsTrust](#) in 2022.

In such a lengthy, expansive plan, it can be easy to get lost in the details. This may be intentional, bogging down discussion and complicating reporting on the project’s potential impact. So let’s focus on the vision of society driving the blueprint. That means beginning with Project 2025’s threat to bodily autonomy: how Project 2025’s drafters plan to mandate their narrowly defined and state-enforced patriarchal, heterosexual, married, procreating family and how they plan to confine people within that vision.

Here are the policies attacking bodily autonomy that Project 2025 wants the next conservative presidential administration—presumably, Donald Trump’s—to announce or set in motion on day one.

Equate legal personhood with heterosexuality, gender conformity, and compulsory motherhood by removing mention of any alternative from all laws, all government agencies, all grants and contracts, and any other official regulations. “The next conservative President must make the institutions of American civil society hard targets for woke culture warriors,” Project 2025’s playbook states in its foreword. A “hard target” is a term of art in the military, security, and surveillance, referring to a secured location meant to withstand an outside threat. “Hardening” the target in this case, the playbook continues, “starts with deleting the terms sexual orientation and gender identity (“SOGI”), diversity, equity, and inclusion (“DEI”), gender, gender equality, gender equity, gender awareness, gender-sensitive, abortion, reproductive health, reproductive rights, and any other term used to deprive Americans of their First Amendment rights [note: the reference to First Amendment rights here is typically code for a religiously or otherwise motivated choice to [discriminate](#)] out of every federal rule, agency regulation, contract, grant, regulation, and piece of legislation that exists.”

This deletion of terms is a global recommendation in the playbook. Everything else is premised on this. It is not new: The Trump administration proposed redefining “sex” across all federal agencies in 2018, in such a way as to exclude trans people, which could in turn result in denying trans people protections under anti-discrimination laws. “A policy that allows for increased job and housing discrimination, among other forms of discrimination, allows for government-enforced poverty and homelessness for an entire generation of people who simply want to live their lives as their authentic selves,” [noted](#) activist Evan Greer at the time. “The end goal here is no less than the complete ostracization of transgender people from public life: This is an attempt to disappear us.” When asked whether they saw these efforts as an attempt at erasing types of people, neither Project 2025 nor the Heritage Foundation responded to our emails before publication. Erasure from official records and policy often accompanies exclusion in other concrete ways—which Project 2025 also suggests.

Establish not individuals but families—specifically one married mother, one father, and their biological children—as the basis for governmental policy. Throughout the report, and in the Health and Human

Services chapter especially, the family, adhering to this rigid definition, is privileged as the basis for policy. The roadmap says the next HHS secretary should “proudly state that men and women are biological realities that are crucial to the advancement of life sciences and medical care and that married men and women are the ideal, natural family structure.” It claims that under Biden, HHS is “fraught with agenda items focusing on ‘LGBTQ+ equity,’ subsidizing single-motherhood, disincentivizing work, and penalizing marriage. These policies should be repealed and replaced by policies that support the formation of stable, married, nuclear families.” In addition to gutting any policy related to LGBTQ families or single-mother-led families, some of those replacement proposals include “prioritiz[ing] married father engagement” in health and welfare policies, emphasizing marriage in health and education programs, ending the Head Start preschool program for low-income families, and allowing child abuse prevention funds to go to marriage-promotion programming. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention should be directed to “eliminate programs and projects that do not respect human life and conscience rights and that undermine family formation.”

Project 2025 proposes, in short, that the government do everything in its power to mandate every woman carry every pregnancy to term and marry the father of the child she births. (It also decrees that only women can become pregnant.) It says the government should do this by excluding, defunding, or eliminating any other options.

Adopt the position that abortion is murder and harms women. Strike the word “abortion” from all laws, policies, and regulations. The playbook says the government should pursue research on “the comparative health and psychological benefits of childbirth versus the health and psychological risks of intentionally taking a human life through abortion.” This research question preemptively takes the stance that the government should consider abortion to be murder. It also specifies that the CDC “should ensure that it is not promoting abortion as health care.” Instead, the government should “create and promote a research agenda that supports pro-life policies and explores the harms, both mental and physical, that abortion has wrought on women and girls.” How it will do all this without using the now-banned word “abortion” is unclear.

Overhaul policy and research to deny the existence of transgender and nonbinary people, and instead pursue methods of ensuring children remain the sex they were assigned at birth. The playbook states that the president should declare to education agencies and officials “that ‘sex’ is properly understood as a fixed biological fact.” The CDC should be ordered to stop “collecting data on gender identity, which legitimizes the unscientific notion that men can become women (and vice versa) and encourages the phenomenon of ever-multiplying subjective identities.” The playbook suggests the president eliminate all government research involving transgender people, claiming that the National Institute for Health is “at the forefront in pushing junk gender science,” and recommending that the next HHS secretary “should immediately put an end to the department’s foray into woke transgender activism.”

There is an exception: “Fund studies into the short-term and long-term negative effects of cross-sex interventions, including ‘affirmation,’ puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and surgeries, and the

likelihood of [desistance] if young people are given counseling that does not include medical or social interventions.” That is, research on gender-nonconforming children and teenagers should be funded by the government, but only for the purpose of studying what will make them conform, such as denying them gender-affirming care and instead trying to change their identities through “counseling,” which is a form of conversion therapy. Related to this, the playbook says all school staff should be prohibited from referring to any student by a gender or name different from the one on their birth certificate without the written permission of the student’s parents or guardians. The playbook claims that data point to transgender identity being a “social contagion.” For this, they cite the [anti-trans writer and activist Abigail Shrier](#).

Outlaw anything conservatives deem “pornographic,” treating the public presence and depictions of queer and trans people as a threat to children and families. Shut down or imprison any individual or company that discusses or shares such depictions. “Pornography should be outlawed,” the roadmap decrees. “The people who produce and distribute it should be imprisoned. Educators and public librarians who purvey it should be classed as registered sex offenders. And telecommunications and technology firms that facilitate its spread should be shuttered.”

It’s important to understand what conservatives mean by “pornography” here. The roadmap refers (in its Foreword) to “pornography, manifested today in the omnipresent propagation of transgender ideology and sexualization of children.” This language suggests that the document is adopting the thesis animating right-wing [threats and attacks](#) targeting LGBTQ spaces, books, and people: the old trope that lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are out to recruit children and that depictions of their lives are meant to seduce children away from heterosexuality. This thinking holds that transgender people are evidence of a contagious “ideology,” at risk of infecting children. (Requests to define what was meant here by “pornography” sent to both Project 2025 and Kevin Roberts, president of Heritage and author of the foreword, did not get a response by time of publication.)

So what the Project 2025 playbook seems to be proposing here is that public institutions such as schools and libraries regard any presence or depiction of queer and trans life as a potential sex offense, to be reported. Similarly, social media platforms would risk government seizure if they serve as a platform for any presence or depiction of queer and trans life.

Outlaw abortion. Until then, surveil abortion in the areas in which it remains legal in order to prioritize criminal cases against “chemical abortion” and “abortion tourism.” The playbook says the president should enforce a 150-year-old law, the Comstock Act, which right-wing groups see as a way to ban abortion nationally because it outlaws the use of the mail for the purposes of sending or receiving any object that could be used for an abortion. It is the position of the playbook that mailing abortion pills—what they call “chemical abortion”—is already illegal in every state. (The Comstock Act is written broadly enough that any device used in abortion could be considered outlawed; when asked if they believed Comstock only banned medication abortion, neither Project 2025 or Heritage responded.) The playbook never mentions the Comstock Act by name; one reference to the law is crammed into a paragraph on China on page 285. (Instead, footnotes reference the Comstock Act by the numbers used in the U.S.

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

March 9, 2024

criminal code.) The playbook also calls for the intensive policing of what it calls “abortion tourism,” in which people travel from no-access states to states where abortion is available: “Because liberal states have now become sanctuaries for abortion tourism, HHS should use every available tool, including the cutting of funds, to ensure that every state reports exactly how many abortions take place within its borders, at what gestational age of the child, for what reason, the mother’s state of residence, and by what method.” They also want emergency rooms to collect data on miscarriages to try to determine whether patients had taken abortion pills. If you have an abortion using pills, it is the position of Project 2025 that your abortion becomes a crime on January 20, 2025.

This is the America envisioned by Project 2025: one in which gender and sexuality are not acknowledged as actually existing outside patriarchal, nuclear families. All that exists here is mothers and babies, children and families. Each family is meant to function as an extension of the state, dedicated to controlling and confining sex, gender, and sexuality, with all the coercive power and violence that would require. Full compliance could only be accomplished through self-policing under intimidation. These groups know they cannot expect people to do that completely. They know they cannot force everyone to be straight, to marry, to deny their gender, to birth a child. They know people will refuse. What they want is to use that inevitable noncompliance as a threat and a tool.

This playbook, the groups and donors behind it, the installation of ideologically motivated staff across government agencies, and the theory that the Constitution permits the executive to rule absolutely, is more than guidance for a new conservative presidential administration. It is also one of the right’s most open admissions that they aim to install an [authoritarian](#) ruler and roll out a twenty-first-century [American fascism](#). At its heart is a plan of mass reproductive and sexual coercion, casting whole populations as deviants who threaten the nation, denying them legal personhood. Historically, it has been a short step from there to plans to eliminate whole classes of people altogether.

Project 2025 Reaches 100 Coalition Partners, Continues to Grow in Preparation for Next President

Heritage.org Feb 20, 2024

WASHINGTON—The Heritage Foundation announced today that its [2025 Presidential Transition Project](#) has reached 100 coalition partners.

[Paul Dans](#), director of the 2025 Presidential Transition Project, commented on this milestone:

“This is a historic moment for the conservative movement. From the time we launched this project, we knew it was critical for conservatives to put aside differences and come together if we are to succeed in restoring our federal government to one “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” And reaching 100 members on our advisory board is monumental. Americans are tired of their government being used

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

March 9, 2024

against them. The administrative state is, at best, completely out of touch with the American people and, at worst, is weaponized against them. We will soon embark on a historic reform of the federal government to get it once again to work for the American people. With our 100-member strong coalition we have the momentum as we begin this critical year.”

Project 2025 is unparalleled in the history of the conservative movement—both in its size and scope but also for organizing 100 different groups under a single banner. Spearheaded by Heritage, the coalition is systematically preparing for successful conservative governance in our nation’s capital. Project 2025’s four pillars will collectively pave the way for an effective and historic administration: A policy agenda, personnel recruitment, training, and a [180-day playbook](#) to kick off the term on Jan. 20, 2025.

Project 2025 3/9/2024	Defense of Freedom Institute	National Center for Public Policy Research
The 100 groups that make up the Board	Discovery Institute	Native Americans for Sovereignty and Preservation
1792 Exchange	Dr. James Dobson Family Institute	Noah Webster Educational Foundation
ACLU Action	Eagle Forum	Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs
Alabama Policy Institute	Ethics and Public Policy Center	Pacific Research Institute
Alliance Defending Freedom	Fairer America	Palmetto Promise
AMAC Action	Family Policy Alliance	Patrick Henry College
America First Legal	Family Research Council	Personnel Policy Operations
American Accountability Foundation	Feds for Freedom	Project 21 Black Leadership Network
American Association of Pro-Life ObGyn	First Liberty Institute	Public Interest Legal Foundation
American Commitment	For America	Recovery for America Now Foundation
American Compass	Forge Leadership Network	Republicans Overseas Foundation
American Cornerstone Institute	Foundation for American Innovation	Stand Together Against Racism and Radicalism in th
American Council of Trustees and Alumni	Foundation for Defense of Democracies	Stop Abusive and Violent Environments
American Family Association	Foundation for Government Accountability	Students for Life of America
American Juris Link	Freedom’s Journal Institute	Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America
American Legislative Exchange Council	Hillsdale College	Tea Party Patriots
American Moment	Honest Elections Project	Teneo Network
American Principles Project	Independent Women’s Forum	Texas Public Policy Foundation
Americans United for Life	Institute for Education Reform	The American Conservative
California Family Council	Institute for Energy Research	The American Family Project
Calvert Task Group	Institute for the American Worker	The American Main Street Initiative
Centennial Institute	Intercollegiate Studies Institute	The American Redistricting Project
Center for a Secure Free Society	Job Creators Network	The Claremont Institute
Center for Equal Opportunity	Keystone Policy	The Frederick Douglass Foundation
Center for Family and Human Rights	League of American Workers	The Heartland Institute
Center for Immigration Studies	Liberty University	The Heritage Foundation
Center for Military Readiness	MacArthur Society of West Point Graduates	The Institute for Women’s Health
Center for Renewing America	Mackinac Center for Public Policy	The James Madison Institute
Citizens Against Government Waste	Media Research Center	The Leadership Institute
Coalition for a Prosperous America	Mississippi Center for Public Policy	The Malone Institute
Competitive Enterprise Institute	Moms for Liberty	The Palm Beach Freedom Institute
Concerned Women for America	Mountain States Policy Center	The Patriot Foundation Trust
Conservative Partnership Institute	National Association of Scholars	Turning Point USA
		Young America’s Foundation

Trump praises ‘fantastic’ Viktor Orbán, Hungarian autocrat, at Mar-a-Lago for meeting & concert

© CNN March 8, 2024 By [Kristen Holmes](#) and [Andrew Millman](#)

[Donald Trump](#) heaped praise on Viktor Orbán while hosting the Hungarian prime minister at Mar-a-Lago on Friday night.

“There’s nobody that’s better, smarter or a better leader than Viktor Orbán. He’s fantastic,” the former president told a crowd gathered for a concert at the Florida resort, as shown in a series of videos posted to Orbán’s Instagram account.

Trump added that the European autocrat is “a noncontroversial figure because he said, ‘This is the way it’s going to be,’ and that’s the end of it, right? He’s the boss and ... he’s a great leader, fantastic leader. In Europe and around the world, they respect him.”

Trump called the visit “an honor” and seemed to reference the pair staying in contact after he left White House in 2021, saying they “kept in touch.”

The meeting and subsequent admiration underscore Trump’s history of [embracing global strongmen](#) – at times at the expense of more traditional US allies.

The former president and a small group of close advisers met with Orbán for roughly an hour Friday night, sources familiar with the matter told CNN, with one of the sources describing it as a “social meeting” with no agenda. A separate source called it “friendly.”

Trump, according to a readout from his campaign, met with Orbán “to discuss a wide range of issues affecting Hungary and the United States, including the paramount importance of strong and secure borders to protect the sovereignty of each nation.”

Orbán, a fourth source told CNN, sought the meeting with Trump and had been planning to be in the US separately.

Afterward, Trump took him to a tribute concert that was part of a “members only” event at the club, featuring The Beatles and Rolling Stones tribute bands, along with the Palm Beach Symphony.

In one clip posted to social media, Orbán can be seen at the concert – billed as “Orchestral Elegance Meets Rock Legends” – presenting former first lady Melania Trump with a large bouquet of flowers as the band played “Oh, Pretty Woman” by Roy Orbison.

A Biden administration official confirmed to CNN that the White House did not extend an invitation to the authoritarian leader to meet with [President Joe Biden](#), and Orbán did not request a White House meeting during his trip to the US this week.

Biden earlier in the day suggested the meeting between the Hungarian strongman and Trump, the presumptive GOP presidential nominee, was worrying.

Asked whether he was concerned about the Mar-a-Lago talks, Biden said: “If I’m not, you should be” – suggesting it was only natural for him to be alarmed by the meeting between Orbán and Trump.

Orbán's far-right populism, fierce anti-immigration rhetoric, Christian nationalism and hostility to LGBTQ rights has made him a popular ideological model for Trump's "Make America Great Again" followers. He has [spoken](#) in the past at the Conservative Political Action Conference – an annual gathering of pro-Trump forces – and Hungary will host another edition of CPAC's overseas conferences next month. The Biden administration has mostly declined to comment on Orbán's meetings with Trump, but the president [seized on the visit](#) during remarks Friday evening in the crucial 2024 battleground of Pennsylvania.

"You know who he's meeting with today, down in Mar-a-Lago? Orbán of Hungary, who stated flatly he doesn't think democracy works – he's looking for dictatorship," Biden told the crowd gathered for what was his effectively his first rally of the 2024 general election campaign.

"That's who he's meeting with," Biden added. "I see a future where we defend democracy, not diminish it."

BREAKING NEWS: The New Questions Federal Investigators Must Ask on An Emergency Basis About Trump's Eleventh-Hour Bond Proposal—Whose Apparent Kremlin Connections Increase By the Hour

Authored by a former federal criminal investigator, this list gives the NYC federal court overseeing E. Jean Carroll case's against Trump details on what's gravely wrong about his proposed bond.

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ABOVE: Convicted Kremlin spy Maria Butina and her onetime associate, former Russian bank co-owner Maurice "Hank" Greenberg—the father and former boss of new Trump financial patron Evan Greenberg, whose Chubb Limited now hopes to back the nearly bankrupt criminal defendant to the tune of over \$91 million dollars.

Introduction

Most major-media reporting on **Donald Trump's** proposed \$91.6 million *supersedeas* bond from **Chubb**, a large insurance carrier, emphasizes that Chubb's CEO is a former Trump adviser, **Evan Greenberg**—and that Greenberg, who spent four years (2018 to 2022) [working on the President Trump-created Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations](#), almost certainly signed off on the massive financial risk for Chubb that it stands on the cusp of assuming and objectively makes no business sense for the firm.

See [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) for examples of such coverage.

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

March 9, 2024

Perhaps because Trump has so many other major professional milestones coming up—he’s likely to clinch the **Republican Party** presidential nomination this week; he [goes to trial on 34 felonies](#) in **New York City** in 16 days; and he faces [a deadline to pay \\$454 million in yet another civil suit related to his tortious conduct in New York state](#) on the very same day his criminal trial begins, March 25—or perhaps because Greenberg did the bare minimum we would expect of any American after the **January 6 armed rebellion** (as the *Washington Post* [approvingly notes](#), but without the italics mindfully added by this author, Trump’s new lender “**condemned efforts to keep Trump in power after the January 6 insurrection**”), it seems that many in major media are ready to move on from Trump’s bizarre, eleventh-hour procuring of what indisputably is one of the strangest bond proposals in the history of civil litigation in the United States.

So before we address the additional major breaking news about this bond proposal in exhaustive detail—including revealing harrowing new details about its relationship to key past events involving Donald Trump and **Vladimir Putin’s Kremlin**—some added background on what U.S. major media inexplicably isn’t telling its readers is required.

Trump’s Dodgy Bond Proposal Has Not Been Accepted By the Court

Nearly every major-media report this author could find on Trump’s bond *falsely* said that the bond had been “**posted**”—suggesting that it’s a done deal about which there is no purpose in media continuing to report. But in fact accepting the bond as already conclusively posted is *exactly* what U.S. District Court Judge **Lewis Kaplan** *didn’t* do.

In a strange juxtaposition, the *New York Times* [simultaneously reports](#) that Trump has “**posted**” bond *and* that Trump’s legal team has in fact merely “**asked Judge Kaplan to approve the bond.**” As an attorney as well as a journalist and a longtime journalism professor, this author can report that only the *latter* framing is accurate: while Trump has indeed *secured* a bond with an insurance carrier, he has not actually *posted* a bond.

This distinction is due, however, to a quirk of this particular case that the *Times* (again without any obvious explanation) somehow both reports on and fails to account for in its reporting. That is, the *Times* is *correct* to imply that an *uncontested* bond is usually reported on as “posted” as soon as it’s “secured”—which is the practice the *Times* has adopted here—but the problem is that Trump *isn’t* the conventional litigant, and as a result his second civil-suit loss to journalist **E. Jean Carroll** *isn’t* a typical legal defeat.

Trump has a [long](#) and [well-documented](#) history of lying to courts, lenders, and party opponents in civil cases—and *for that reason* Judge Kaplan, as the *Times* *does* correctly note, on Friday (yesterday) “**gave [E. Jean] Carroll until 11AM [on] Monday to file any response to the proposed bond, and said that if she had any opposition to its form or amount, the judge would hold a hearing that afternoon [March 11] on the matter.**”

This is an astounding development that could easily have led major-media coverage of Trump's bond situation rather than, as was the case with the *Times*, getting relegated to the *thirteenth* paragraph of the relevant reporting. Why? Well, for several reasons:

1. As noted, it means Trump *hasn't* **"posted bond"** in this historic case, and every headline claiming otherwise—which, sadly, is nearly all of them—is incorrect.
2. In fact, Trump has **"proposed a bond"** in his case, which means it is the duty of every major media outlet to report on whether his proposal is legally sound. By not accurately reporting on the major national news story in this way, some in media have abandoned their duty to professionally analyze Trump's new bond proposal via research, legal analysis, and historic contextualization of the bond proposal within Trump's astonishingly checkered legal and financial history.
3. The biggest open question in the **United States** this weekend is therefore whether E. Jean Carroll and her attorney **Roberta Kaplan** will challenge Trump's proposal as they have been invited to do by Judge Kaplan (no relation). Because U.S. major media has fewer journalistic resources to bring to bear on weekends—for the obvious reason that employees are entitled to a weekend break—it's convenient for media to pretend that this major weekend news story with significant national security implications isn't happening at all. I can confirm, having been a working journalist for thirty years and having worked also as a journalism professor for many years (during which period the study of corporate media was one of my academic foci), the hope within American corporate media is likely that (a) Carroll won't challenge the Trump bond proposal, making any work it could and should be doing this weekend seemingly moot, or (b) if she *does* challenge the proposal, most readers of major media won't notice or care that major media launched its coverage of that stunningly significant story several days after it actually began.
4. Judge Kaplan almost certainly *doesn't* regularly issue orders like the one he did yesterday, which makes *the order itself* worthy of discrete reporting rather than it being buried amongst a story that inaccurately claims Trump already "posted" bond (adding then, in the fine print, that Trump lawyer **Alina Habba** has merely "proposed" a bond). In my years of experience as a trial attorney, judges do not see a need to *invite* parties to object to bonds through written orders because that invitation is always *tacit*. Parties can *always* object via motion to any action taken by the party opposite if they believe it was for some reason legally infirm. The reasoning behind Judge Kaplan issuing his Friday order is therefore, more than likely, because he understands that Trump has a uniquely rich and sordid history of attempting to escape his debts via subterfuge. For a federal court to implicitly acknowledge this with respect the presumptive **Republican Party** nominee for **President of the United States** isn't just unprecedented and therefore astounding but could *itself* warrant a *second* discrete course of reporting from major media that we as American news consumers curiously aren't getting this weekend. The effect of this non-reportage is obfuscation of the fact that the federal court system *understands* Donald Trump to be a scofflaw of *highly irregular* proportion and scope.

Donald Trump Is Actually Broke

The *New York Times* has buried *another* game-changing lede in its coverage of Trump's bond proposal, namely that Trump is almost certainly broke.

This information is encoded in the [following sentence](#): **“The terms of Trump’s bond deal have not been publicly disclosed, but bonding companies often charge a fee of anywhere between 1% and 3%, and require enough collateral to cover the bond.”**

Keeping in mind here that a *Pulitzer Prize*-winning journalist at the *New York Times*, **Maggie Haberman**, has already [reported](#) that, with just a matter of hours before a court-mandated deadline to issue a bond proposal, someone close to Trump’s legal team confessed to her that **“there’s clearly a problem so far in acquiring a bond”**, the bolded sentence in the paragraph above is astonishing. Why? Consider the following:

1. The bond proposed by Trump to Judge Kaplan is a **\$91.6 million bond**;
2. the *Times* indicates that Trump likely *purchased* the bond for **somewhere between \$916,000 to \$2.75 million** (1% to 3% of its face value);
3. Trump [previously testified](#) *under oath* that he had **\$400 million in liquid assets** with which to instantly pay any civil judgment; and yet
4. the *Times* says that, until the eleventh hour, Trump couldn’t secure *any* bond.

This means that either (a) no bond company anywhere in the world would deal with Trump at all, which would be international news because it would indicate the total abandonment of Trump by global markets; or (b) the bond companies were offering Trump bonds *he could not afford*, with the offers coming in somewhere *above* \$916,000 to \$2.75 million, a fact which would indicate that the [self-claimed billionaire](#) (he has said he had **\$10 billion in assets**) is *effectively bankrupt*; or (c) Trump lacked even the *collateral* to secure a bond, as in this case approximately \$90 million in collateral was required, which means either (i) Trump’s illiquid assets are almost worthless rather than worth the billions he claims, or (ii) no insurance carrier is willing to accept his valuations [because he was just found liable for lying to his lenders about exactly this](#).

None of the foregoing was foregrounded by the major-media coverage of the pending bond proposal from Trump, which elision has the effect of obscuring how stunning it is that *any* company worldwide finally determined it was willing to bond Trump—and underscoring why *Proof’s* breaking news coverage of **Kremlin** ties to the **Chubb Bond Proposal** is so significant.

But there’s also a *second* significance to the facts above. If in fact Trump is now broke, it means all of the following are both true and confirmed:

1. Trump has been lying to *all U.S. voters* about his situation throughout the primary;
2. he’s been lying to the **RNC** about his situation throughout the primary;
3. he’s been lying to both *small donors and mega-donors* about his situation throughout the primary;
4. any hostile foreign power could compromise Trump by promising him solvency;

5. his attempt to take over the RNC via his daughter-in-law **Lara Trump** is far more likely than we previously realized to be part of a **Criminal Conspiracy** to violate **campaign finance laws** and steal money from the Republican Party *not just* to pay his own legal fees (which in some cases is allowable) but to stay solvent and evade personal bankruptcy at least until **Election Day**, which use of RNC funds would be illegal; and
6. in order to secure a bond, he had to put himself at the mercy of his bondsman by revealing that [unless he's bonded he might have to declare personal bankruptcy](#), an even that could so dismantle his political image that it would make his 2024 re-election to the **White House** an impossibility.

This last point is critical because it inextricably entwines Trump's bond proposal with not just his financial future, not just the future of his liberty (pursuant to his pending criminal cases), but *also* his political future. Which means questions about whether Chubb CEO Evan Greenberg had a political motive in bonding Trump are amplified in importance, as **bonding Trump now effectively means saving his political career and buying a portion of his future domestic and foreign policy.**

This is a major national security issue, especially if Trump's eleventh-hour emergency lender should be found to have any Kremlin ties at all. As established via the **Mueller Report** and multiple bipartisan congressional investigations, Trump has previously sought to receive financial benefits from the Kremlin at the same time that he was making public promises of government actions benefitting the Kremlin and its allies.

Donald Trump Has No Realistic Chance of Becoming President Again

This seems like an incredibly bald statement given that [the latest presidential polling](#) shows Trump and President **Joe Biden** neck-and-neck, with Biden winning three of the last five polls and topping 50% in the most recent poll for the first time in a year.

But consider the fact that the Chubb Bond Proposal isn't the second, or third, or fifth, or even the *tenth* in the parade of legal challenges Mr. Trump is going to face in 2024.

Rather, it is just the *first*.

Here are some of the others:

1. His March 17 [injunction date](#) in **Delaware Chancery Court** over alleged **Fraud** in financial transactions involving **Truth Social** and (more broadly) **Trump Media**;
2. his March 25 trial on 34 felonies in New York City;
3. his March 25 deadline to secure a bond *five times the size of the Chubb Bond Proposal* in the **Trump Organization** case he just lost to the **New York Attorney General's Office**;
4. his April 25 oral argument before the **U.S. Supreme Court**, which, if he loses, as expected, will strip any slight veneer of "**presidential immunity**" from him for all present and future criminal *and* civil cases;
5. his May trial on federal felonies in **Florida**;
6. his July trial on state felonies in **Georgia**;
7. his August trial on federal felonies in **D.C.** (subject to a delay related to #4, above);

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

March 9, 2024

8. three [federal civil suits](#) over January 6—two brought by elected **Democratic Party** officials in their personal capacity, and a third one brought by two federal law enforcement agents—that have just survived *summary judgment* and will now be heard at hearings throughout 2024;
9. a possible third **Defamation** suit to be filed against him by E. Jean Carroll in 2024 in view of the now-presumptively defamatory statements he made about her at a recent **Michigan** campaign rally (statements made *following* his *second* loss to her in federal court on *the very same issue* in federal court);
10. the [ongoing](#) 2022 **DHS** and **DOJ** investigation into whether Trump’s trusted political director and agent **Anthony Ornato** ordered **U.S. Secret Service** agents to illegally wipe their phones after January 6 as part of a criminal conspiracy;
11. possible additional federal indictments in D.C. over January 6 to be brought by DOJ independent special counsel **Jack Smith**;
12. the nearly inevitable federal investigations into whether Trump will be violating federal law in raiding Republican Party coffers to pay what the law establishes as “**personal**” expenses;
13. likely civil litigation to be filed by past Trump attorneys to recover more than **\$50 million in still-unpaid legal fees**;
14. a likely federal **Tax Fraud** investigation over a [just-revealed fake \\$50 million “loan”](#) Trump used to steal money from the federal government and American taxpayers;
15. a likely state **Perjury** investigation, now that the **New York State Attorney General’s Office** [has no doubt that Trump lied under oath](#) in a late 2022 deposition about the amount he had available to pay future civil judgments;
16. a federal counterintelligence investigation to be conducted over the coming months [to determine if Trump has cleared any or all of his past red flags](#) to become eligible to receive counterintelligence briefings this summer as the Republican Party’s presidential nominee; and
17. inevitable overseas civil proceedings pursuing Trump over **a nearly \$400,000 debt** he [now owes](#) to former **MI6** agent **Christopher Steele** due to a frivolous lawsuit Trump filed against him, which judgment there is no way Trump will willingly pay pre-election due to his contempt for Steele, his contempt for foreign courts, the possible fallout from such a payment for his narrative on Russian collusion, and his history of not paying even debts he privately acknowledges as legitimate.

This is a *non-exhaustive list* of what we can expect Donald Trump to be facing over the next nine months—all of it *outside* of his conventional political maneuvers in seeking to regain the **Oval Office**.

So if Trump has in fact failed to get a *valid* bond in the *first* of his eighteen (minimum) 2024 extrapolitical legal battles, in what universe is he going to win an election that’s now a toss-up? As not just an attorney and a curatorial journalist but also a longtime political columnist, this author would term Donald Trump to now be at the very cusp of the most extraordinary nine-month shellacking in the history of American politics—keeping in mind that the above itemizing of his present obstacles is non-exhaustive.

Every entry above, for instance, has some sort of ancillary type of legal emergency that could accrue to it.

These range from bail revocation hearings in his many criminal cases to emergency interlocutory appeals

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

March 9, 2024

to the Supreme Court in all his cases; from congressional and law-enforcement subpoenas Trump on no account wants to honor to court proceedings stemming from his likely refusal to honor them; from “pile-on” lawsuits that use the success of January 6 civil suits against Trump thus far to justify new litigants bringing nearly identical lawsuits to new disclosures by associates about past Trump wrongdoing if and when those associates determine that Trump is going down for the count; and litigation over any post-conviction penalties in his criminal cases—for instance over whether and when he can be incarcerated, and whether such incarceration can be effectuated in a federal facility given Trump’s Secret Service protection—to ongoing ad hoc investigations into his physical state, likely addictions, mental health, cognitive abilities, and presumptive severe psychological conditions.

And none of this takes into account all of the hearings that will take place in federal courts in New York City should Trump’s March 11 and still-pending March 25 bond proposals be rejected and state officials begin seizing—and selling off—large Trump properties to pay his nearly half a billion dollars in personal debt. Given that Trump appears considerably more attached to his wealth than to his public service career, as a Trump biographer I would caution avid Trump fans against believing that Trump’s focus will continue to be on presidential politics as or when his real estate empire is facing state and federal liens and forced below-market sell-offs—as at that point only the prospect of being sentenced to state or federal prison in pending criminal cases will keep him even intermittently focused on winning the **White House** for the GOP.

No candidate in American history has faced even a fraction of what Trump is going to face in 2024, which on top of everything else places under a microscope whether the man can handle the stress of it all or will crack entirely—in consequence engaging in some new offense (e.g. a return to the public incitement of violence we saw on January 6) that will add to the long list above new federal criminal investigations that outstrip in scope and severity anything I’ve already itemized here.

All this said, it’s certainly not a *good* sign that so far major media, which very much wants and *needs* there to be a lucrative horse-race between President **Joe Biden** and Trump over the next nine months, is side-stepping almost every component of this first legal challenge Trump faces in order to make it seem to be one he already solved.

He hasn’t.

And beyond the major breaking news on this issue that *Proof* published yesterday—

Breaking News: [Source of the Money for \\$91 Million Bond in Trump’s Defamation and Rape Case Appears to Have Major Kremlin Ties](#)

America is now in the midst of a five-alarm national security crisis—as the presumptive Republican nominee for president looks to be compromised by a hostile foreign power via foreign entanglements.

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

March 9, 2024

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{Update on March 8, 2024 at 6:12 PM: The New York Times is now [confirming](#) that prior to Mr. Trump getting this supersedeas bond on an emergency basis—as today is the last business day before a court-mandated deadline—“there [was] clearly a problem [for the Trump team]...in acquiring a bond.” The exclusive reporting below appears to be the shibboleth that explains why this particular bond-seeker was able to get a bond from this particular carrier at a time when no other carrier worldwide was willing to involve itself due to Mr. Trump’s [long history of debt evasion](#).}

Just days after Donald Trump ally and war criminal Vladimir Putin—now engaged in an invasion of Europe Trump not only [endorses](#) but said he will [reward](#) with the gift of a sizable piece of Ukraine to Russia—[swore](#) that the Kremlin wouldn’t interfere in the 2024 U.S. presidential election on Trump’s behalf as it did in [2016](#) and [2020](#), it appears it [may have done just that via an intermediary](#) who has made possible Trump [paying the massive \\$91 million bond](#) in his Rape and Defamation case in New York.

Trump has paid approximately 10% of the bond’s value as a non-refundable purchase, with the rest of the bond value thereafter being put up as [a returnable outlay of funds](#) by Chubb. Needless to say, if Trump had \$91 million in liquid assets (he [recently said in a sworn deposition that he had \\$400 million](#), a statement that now appears to have been an act of Perjury), it would have saved him almost \$10 million to put up the \$91 million himself. Apparently neither this nor—until Chubb stepped in to save the day—a bond purchase was an option for Trump until just a matter of hours ago.

But none of this is shocking. What is *shocking* is who at Chubb would have *approved* this otherwise inexplicable decision by the major, ordinarily well-respected carrier.

The background of this major breaking news is easy to relate. [Known Kremlin agent](#) Dimitri Simes, who presently [works as a Kremlin-approved propagandist for Russian state television](#), was [a top advisor on Russia](#) for Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign at a time he was also head of the Center for the National Interest in Washington, DC.

Simes quickly [fled](#) the United States for Moscow—and employment by the Kremlin—after the arrest of the top Russian “honey trap” spy inside the United States in 2015 and 2016, the [eventually caught and indicted](#) Maria Butina, who had been in contact with the Trump campaign as well as in a romantic relationship with Trump advisers [Patrick Byrne](#) and [Paul Erickson](#). By fleeing the United States literally under cover of darkness, Simes thereby evaded any interrogation by the FBI about his ties to Butina, her handler ([Trump campaign ally](#) Alexander Torshin), or [the Kremlin whose employ he was fleeing to](#) following Butina’s surprise arrest.

But neither Butina nor Torshin nor Putin were Simes’s most important contacts in the United States as Trump [publicly sought Kremlin aid in winning the presidency](#): those were Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner, Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort, and Putin’s chief spymaster in the United States, Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak (the man Trump National Security Advisor Michael Flynn [coordinated with](#)

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

March 9, 2024

[illegally on the subject of dropping all sanctions on Russia for invading Ukraine in early 2014](#), just a matter of weeks after Trump [self-admittedly met with Kremlin agents in Moscow](#)).

During the 2016 presidential campaign, Simes worked closely with Kushner, Manafort and other top Trump campaign advisors (such as [Kremlin agent](#) Richard Burt, [self-described Kremlin adviser](#) Carter Page, and [proud, self-admitted Kremlin go-between](#) George Papadopoulos) to (a) [devise the most pro-Russia foreign policy platform in the history of American politics](#) and (b) connect Trump campaign officials and advisors—[even Trump himself](#), at an event Simes and his Center for the National Interest jointly orchestrated with Mr. Kushner and the [later indicted and convicted Kremlin agent](#) Manafort—with the aforementioned Kremlin spymaster Kislyak, who has [since fled America](#). Following his April 2016 meeting with Kislyak, Trump [infamously disclosed classified intelligence to him](#) and another top Kremlin agent, Sergey Lavrov ([widely reported to have been the Kremlin's lead on 2016 pro-Trump election interference](#)) in the Oval Office in early 2017. (You can find an English translation of a long Russian-language interview of Lavrov by Kremlin agent and former Trump campaign adviser Simes at [this](#) Russian government link.)

Prior to fleeing the United States, Simes had spent most of his career at the Center for the National Interest acting hand-in-glove with the Chairman of that [controversially pro-Kremlin entity](#), Maurice Greenberg. While Greenberg departed CNI in 2014, as of March 8, 2024, his son Evan Greenberg [remains](#) one of CNI's nine Advisory Council members.

Readers will be interested to know that the elder [Greenberg was at](#) the 2016 Trump campaign's Transition Offices [during the period](#) of time [Trump, Kushner, and other top Trump advisers were holding meetings with Kremlin agents and officials](#) for which entry into Trump's home was routinely made through a door not under media surveillance. Indeed, Greenberg's [December 12, 2016 private meeting with Trump and/or his transition team](#) in Trump Tower came [just 24 hours before](#) Kushner [met](#) with [Russian-intelligence-linked banker and known Kremlin agent](#) Sergey Gorkov in the same space. Kushner had met with Sergey Kislyak in the transition offices a week and a half before Greenberg's arrival, during which meeting he told the spymaster that Trump wanted to find a way to establish "a secret back-channel for communications" with the Kremlin.

As *The Daily Beast* reports, Greenberg's ties to Russia are so significant that [he owned a sizable piece of a Russian bank and communicated directly with Maria Butina](#), the aforementioned Russian spy overseen at the highest level by Kislyak. The Butina-Greenberg meeting, which also involved Butina's immediate supervisor as a Kremlin spy, Torshin, came [just weeks before Trump announced his 2016 run](#) in June of 2015.

Mr. Greenberg has also been [received at the Kremlin by Vladimir Putin himself](#), a rare honor deemed significant enough to be captured by Getty Images.

Greenberg set up [a lucrative ongoing business partnership with Putin](#) as [early as 2003](#), not long after Putin came to power in Russia and Trump [awarded](#) the Miss Universe crown to Putin's [rumored then-](#)

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

March 9, 2024

[girlfriend](#), Oxana Federova. As revealed with sourcing in the *New York Times* bestseller *Proof of Collusion* (Simon & Schuster, 2018), Trump worked to rig that contest so that Federova would win it. Not long after, a man then representing himself as a Kremlin whisperer, Felix Sater, took up residence at Trump Tower and [began assisting Trump in trying to do real estate deals with Putin's Russia](#)

Maurice Greenberg was Chairman of CNI in 2014, the year Mr. Trump began privately revealing to associates that he would be running for President of the United States in 2016, and the year Mr. Putin launched his first invasion of Ukraine with the aid of the by-then-fully-activated Kremlin agent Paul Manafort (who was advising the Kremlin-puppeted Kyiv government at the time). Two years later, Manafort—who [passed key proprietary campaign data to Russian intelligence during the 2016 presidential race](#)—would be [working with Maurice Greenberg's associate Dimitri Simes](#) to get Trump in the same room as Putin's spymaster (Kislyak) at the Mayflower Hotel, a scheme that succeeded. 2014 was also the year Eric Trump [told a reporter](#) that the Trump Family “has all the funding we need out of Russia”, apparently referencing Russian banks—perhaps even one Greenberg co-owned, though Trump's second son didn't specify.

As noted above, Maurice Greenberg's son is a man named Evan Greenberg, one of just nine Advisory Council members at the pro-Kremlin Center for the National Interest, the entity whose head was for many years Kremlin agent and Trump adviser Dimitri Simes and which hosted Trump's [public announcement of his historically pro-Kremlin foreign policy](#) in April 2016. It was at a VIP party just before the event hosted by Evan Greenberg's group that Trump met Putin's spymaster Kislyak for the first time, under a year before he would leak classified intelligence to the aged spy in the White House.

Evan Greenberg is the man who [just green-lit a \\$91 million bond for Donald Trump to help him evade consequences for defaming and raping journalist E. Jean Carroll](#). (Yes, a federal court [confirmed](#) that Trump's finding of liability for Sexual Abuse was in its practical form and function a finding that a rape had occurred.)

Greenberg is CEO of Zurich-based Chubb Limited, Trump's newest lender, as well as a Chairman Emeritus like his father: in his case, of the US-ASEAN Business Council.

None doubt that Chubb's CEO would have to have been closely consulted prior to the issuance of a loan this politically explosive and objectively dangerous for Chubb.

And Trump would have had no confusion at all about the fact that this largesse—a multimillion dollar loan to a rapist who is [not only apparently approaching personal bankruptcy](#) and a known career criminal but infamously doesn't pay back his loans (and even [lies to](#), then [sues](#) into [oblivion](#), those [lenders](#) who [dare to attempt to collect debts from him](#))—had come to him via individuals sympathetic to, familiar with, and who in the past have worked to advance the cause of top officials at the Kremlin and Russia generally.

{Note: Nor has new Donald Trump lender Evan Greenberg remained aloof from his father and Simes's [infamously pro-Kremlin](#) Center for the National Interest; [here he is at a CNI event](#), should anyone need evidence that being a CNI Advisory Council member is not merely a title. The appearance of the CNI

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

March 9, 2024

and its extended family once again leaping to aid Trump in his attempts to assist Putin and Russia in illicit international designs is therefore unmistakable. Moreover, Chubb has [a major subsidiary operating in Russia](#) as Chubb Insurance Co., LLC.

While Evan Greenberg left AIG, the company run by his father, [in September of 2000](#), he had worked there for 25 years before departing—meaning that if the massive Kremlin-AIG pact signed in February 2003 had been in the works for several years, as would seem necessary, the younger Greenberg might well have been in a position to directly work on it with the Kremlin.

What is certain is that the last time Trump sought to sell future U.S. foreign policy to Russia in exchange for aid, he did so while working with the top brass at CNI. The court about to deny or approve Trump's new \$91 million bond in New York City is almost certain to take into account that Trump is again a candidate for President of the United States as he was in 2016; again in possession of classified intel that he has made clear he believes he can trade, as he was in 2016; and is again receiving a massive benefit in part due to the otherwise inexplicable largesse of the top brass at CNI. The last time such a confluence of strange events occurred, it led to the largest federal criminal investigation of the last century besides the January 6 probe, at least six federal congressional investigations, and a series of events that finally ended with the first impeachment trial of then-President Trump. Both E. Jean Carroll and the court in New York overseeing Trump's Sexual Abuse and Defamation case would appear to have just cause to apprehend that Trump's shockingly sourced, eleventh-hour-issued new bond could in the future be invalidated by a state or federal investigation into both its provenance and any collateral—whether real or inchoate—Trump might have privately promised to secure it.

Certainly, as The Associated Press [reports](#), as recently as three days ago Trump was so sure he would not be able to secure a supersedeas bond that he was begging for a new trial, instead.}

The New Republic further [notes](#) that “In 2018, Trump appointed Chubb's CEO Evan Greenberg to a White House advisory committee for trade policy and negotiations.”

*2018 was, of course, at the height of the Trump-Russia scandal. Thus, more broadly, the possibility that Trump *could* have held out a promise of future employment in a second Trump presidential administration to someone who was previously a Trump adviser is certainly yet another reason to think the court in E. Jean Carroll's New York City case might schedule a *show cause hearing* after it leans of all this new evidence on Monday, March 11. At such a hearing, one imagines Evan Greenberg—possibly even Maurice Greenberg as well—being cross-examined by [Carroll lawyer](#) Roberta Kaplan.*

*[Almost no banks will lend to Trump](#)—a situation [that's been well-publicized](#) since at least the first decade of this century—but now the Kremlin-linked Greenberg Family has done so at a time Trump needs to pay his bills to stay in the 2024 presidential race, and needs to *win* the 2024 election in order to aid the Kremlin with its illegal invasion of Europe and [its scheme to destroy](#) the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).*

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

March 9, 2024

We don't yet know whether the Kremlin was *directly* involved in the otherwise truly inexplicable generosity of the Greenbergs, but surely it's now imperative for the U.S. intelligence community not only to find out but to immediately report to Congress its findings. What is clear is that a family that has long worked to advance the position of the Kremlin in the United States and abroad has now effectively done so yet again by assisting the Kremlin's favorite American politician when no one else would do so—and was refusing to do so for unassailable business reasons.

News of Donald Trump again becoming entangled with Kremlin allies in a way that meets the conventional definition of *compromise* comes just a day after [major media reports confirmed that Trump will begin receiving classified intelligence briefings this summer](#). He remains [on trial in a federal court in Florida for illegally retaining classified documents following his presidency](#), and has made clear in interviews that he believes himself [entitled to sell any classified information in his possession](#) (often falsely citing a precedent allegedly involving disgraced former Republican President Richard Nixon in doing so).

Candidate Trump's evasion of consequences for his crimes and torts is now arguably being sponsored by Kremlin allies. Given that Trump is the presumptive Republican Party presidential nominee, this places America into a state of national emergency.

Addendum

Despite its ties to Russia—among many other countries—the involvement of Chubb *as an entity* is, as noted above, far less significant to this major breaking news than is the apparent sign-off by its CEO on a *supersedes bond* for Trump [apparently no other reputable carrier would issue](#).

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Chubb, with Evan Greenberg at the helm, has [led the charge to underwrite Russian oil and gas expansion](#)—which, as it happens, is key to Trump's 2024 energy agenda. Despite the fact that, under President Joe Biden, the United States is [producing more oil than any country ever has in the history of the world](#), candidate Trump has been adamant in lying about this unchallenged fact as part of his bid to get American voters to back *his* energy plans, instead. And what do those plans entail? Readers of national bestseller *Proof of Corruption* (Macmillan, 2020) will have an idea, but the upshot is that Trump and his inner circle have always been avidly invested in the success of—and this will come as no surprise to *Proof* readers—the Russian and Ukrainian energy sectors. Indeed, this ongoing obsession of Trump's is one of the themes that runs through all three books of the bestselling [Proof Trilogy](#).

Certainly, Biden's surprisingly aggressive (one might even say “America First”) drilling policy is bad for the Russian oil and gas industry Chubb and Greenberg are invested in, and bad for the long-range business designs and investments of his associates. But it is *good* for Trump's odds of receiving continued Russian election interference in his favor.

There is clearly much more to be learned about the relationship between Trump, the Greenberg Family, and the Kremlin. For instance, Maurice [and Evan Greenberg](#) are members of the well-known Council on Foreign Relations, an organization whose April 1, 2016 event in Hawaii Carter Page [felt it necessary to attend](#)—

along with only a small group of others—rather than be at the first and only live gathering of candidate Trump and his National Security Advisory Committee. A picture of Mr. Page at the Hawaii event is below; [Kremlin sympathizer](#) (and [possible 2024 Trump running mate](#)) Tulsi Gabbard is at its center.

It is significant that Page is [also a member](#), just like the Greenbergs, of the Council on Foreign Relations, as the elder Greenberg was at Trump Tower during the very period of time self-described “Kremlin adviser” Page was selected—an election that [shocked the national security establishment](#) inside the United States—to be the first member of Trump’s national security advisory corps. To date, there has been no explanation as to how or why someone [who had previously been investigated as a possible Kremlin spy](#) got so close to the national security apparatus of a major-party political candidate. A recommendation from the Council on Foreign Relations has long been suspected.

Trump a worse appeaser than Neville Chamberlain, leading Democrat says

Jim Himes says comparisons between Trump’s attitude to Putin and 1930s PM’s stance on Hitler ‘give Trump way too much credit’

Thu 7 Mar 2024 00.01 EST

Donald Trump is a worse appeaser in his attitude to Vladimir Putin and Russia than the 1930s British prime minister [Neville Chamberlain](#) was towards Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany, a senior Democrat on the House intelligence committee said.

Jim Himes of Connecticut, the ranking Democrat on the committee, also said Trump acted like a “single-cell organism” in obstructing aid to [Ukraine](#).

Comparisons between the all-but-certain Republican presidential nominee and Chamberlain, who failed to avoid world war by appeasing Hitler, gave Trump “way too much credit”, Himes said, in an interview with the [One Decision Podcast](#), co-hosted by Sir Richard Dearlove, a former head of the British intelligence service MI6, and [Indira Lakshmanan](#), a guest host.

“They both may be undertaking an act of appeasement,” Himes added, “but Neville Chamberlain, love him or hate him, I think probably thought this through.

“Donald Trump is a little bit of a single-celled organism: he responds to one stimulus and one stimulus only, which is, ‘Does this make me feel good or does it make me feel bad?’ And Ukraine makes him feel bad because he got impeached over Ukraine.”

Trump’s [enthusiasm for Putin](#) and other authoritarians is also widely discussed but Trump’s first impeachment did arise from attempts to blackmail Ukraine, withholding military supplies needed to fend off Russian aggression while demanding dirt on rivals including Joe Biden.

Acquitted by Senate Republicans, Trump was impeached and acquitted a second time for inciting the deadly attack on Congress of 6 January 2021.

Three years on, notwithstanding 91 criminal charges and multimillion-dollar civil penalties, Trump is all but confirmed as the Republican nominee to face Joe Biden in November. As such, he has ensured that Republicans led by the House speaker, Mike Johnson, have [blocked](#) new Ukraine aid.

Most observers believe that in the third year of war, Kyiv faces stalemate or damaging defeats against its Russian invaders if US support ceases.

Dearlove called Himes, 57 and in his eighth term in Congress, “one of the sanest political voices that I’ve heard recently in the United States, given all the concern about forthcoming presidential election”, adding that Himes should be “listened to carefully ... particularly about Ukraine”.

Under Trump’s “America first” outlook, Himes said, “two things are happening in the Republican party. One, some people are channeling that traditional isolationism which we’ve lived with in this country forever. And by the way, it’s not a terrible instinct, right? There are episodes in our history where we probably should have been a bit more isolationist.

“But then you have Donald Trump as a single-celled organism saying ‘Ukraine bad’ and his acolytes ... saying, ‘The boss thinks it’s bad.’ And, you know, an awful lot of my colleagues just realise that if they stand up and say things contrary to what the cult leader is saying, they’ll put their own careers at risk.”

At the recent Munich security conference, Himes said “Republican after Republican” told him it was “absolutely essential that we get this aid done”.

But referring to a touted congressional mechanism by which Johnson might be bypassed and aid advanced, he said: “The question I want [Republicans] to answer is, ‘Will you sign a discharge petition, which will get you in trouble with the speaker? Is it that important? And the answer ... is no.

“They’re not going to take a risk on behalf of Ukraine.”

The Real Reason Trump Loves Putin

A new book explores the American right’s tendency to admire and want to emulate foreign dictators.

© The Atlantic By [Franklin Foer](#) MARCH 1, 2024

For nearly the entirety of the past decade, a question has stalked, and sometimes consumed, American politics: Why do Donald Trump and his acolytes heap such reverent praise on Vladimir Putin? The question is born of disbelief. Adoration of the Russian leader, who murders his domestic opponents, [kidnaps](#) thousands of Ukrainian children, and interferes in American presidential elections, is so hard to comprehend that it seems only plausibly explained by venal motives—thus the search to find the supposed kompromat the Kremlin lords over Trump or compromising business deals that Trump has pursued in Moscow.

But there’s a deeper, more nefarious truth about people on the right’s baffling unwillingness to criticize the Kremlin: They actually share its worldview. Putin worship isn’t even an aberration in the history of conservatism, merely the latest instance of a long tradition of admiring foreign dictators. Over the past

century, without ever really blushing, the American right has similarly celebrated the likes of Adolf Hitler, Francisco Franco, and just about every Latin American military junta that called itself anti-communist. The right hails these dictators as ideological comrades in the war to preserve traditional society, the values of order and patriarchy, against the assault of the decadent left. Unlike conservative politicians in the United States, these foreign leaders don't even need to bother with mouthing encomiums to concepts like tolerance, freedom, and democracy. They can deliver reactionary politics in the unvarnished form that some hard-liners on the American right have always hoped would take root in their own country. As the journalist Jacob Heilbrunn argues in [America Last](#), his history of conservatives' romance with dictators, "Conservatives have searched for a paradise abroad that can serve as a model at home."

Heilbrunn makes the interesting decision to begin his history on the eve of World War I. A primary villain in these chapters is the newspaper columnist H. L. Mencken, perhaps the most celebrated curmudgeon in the history of American letters. Walter Lippmann called him "the most powerful influence on this whole generation of educated people." A conservative movement as such did not exist in the earliest decades of the 20th century, just a constellation of reactionary intellectuals and their wealthy patrons who nodded in agreement, nostalgic for the antebellum South and a world before mass suffrage. Mencken, the most eloquent of the reactionaries, put their cantankerous thoughts into ornate, often quite funny prose.

Mencken believed fervently in the superiority of German civilization—and in the leadership of its racist, war-mongering monarch, Kaiser Wilhelm. This reverence stemmed from ancestral pride; Mencken's paternal grandfather came from Saxony. But his affection for Germany also grew from his disdain of American democracy, which he believed ceded control of society to mediocre politicians. By contrast, he liked that Germany was "governed by an oligarchy of its best men." Just before America officially entered World War I, he submitted an article to *The Atlantic* in which he imagined that Germany might one day conquer the United States and create a new utopia on its shores. Ellery Sedgwick, then the editor of this magazine, had the good sense to reject it. "I have no desire to foment treason," Sedgwick wrote him.

At the height of the war, Mencken worried that he might be persecuted for propagandizing for an enemy regime, so much so that he buried the German keepsakes he collected and a diary from his wartime visit to the country in his Baltimore backyard. But in the years that followed the conflict, he returned to extolling the virtues of Wilhelmine autocracy. His publication, *The American Mercury*—perhaps the greatest literary journal of the age and also home to retrograde political opinions—ran revisionist accounts of the war, which shifted blame away from Germany.

Looking back on World War I, there were compelling conservative reasons for considering intervention a catastrophe. Financing the war required the imposition of a federal income tax, which never went away in peacetime. And no matter one's political stripe, the war's staggering body count was hard to justify. But what emerged on the right in the aftermath of the fighting wasn't a form of pacifism—rather, it was a set of conspiratorial arguments that became a dishonorable tradition of isolationism. This pattern would repeat itself at the onset of every war: The isolationists would point an accusatory finger at bankers, whom they accused of being eager to profit off bloodshed. They would describe the authoritarian

enemies of the United States as helpless victims, peaceful governments minding their own business. In the course of casting the dictators as the injured party, conservatives airbrushed their records of militarism and racism. Minimizing these sins wasn't just a matter of rhetorical convenience; it was an act of sympathy. In the case of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, a significant segment of the intellectual American right shared their racist views about the superiority of Nordic peoples.

Heilbrunn isn't the first to tell the story of the right's barely submerged affinity for Hitler. Philip Roth's great counterfactual novel, [The Plot Against America](#), takes this affinity as its premise—as does Rachel Maddow's recently published history, [Prequel](#). But it's always bracing to be reminded of how former President Herbert Hoover made excuses for Hitler before the war and how the press baron William Randolph Hearst commissioned stories by him.

The biggest fans of fascist autocracy weren't yokels shaking their pitchforks, but cultivated patricians from the oldest New England families. Benito Mussolini's American fan section consisted of the eminent literary critic Irving Babbitt, a legendary Harvard professor, and the modernist poet Ezra Pound. Not just Hearst but also Henry Ford and others among the nation's richest men were some of the chief apologists for Nazi Germany. Their attraction—sometimes subconscious, but quite often stated flatly—was born of fear that America was slipping away from them, as immigrants poured into the country and mass democracy took hold. Fascism represented a hopeful example of a revanchist elite reversing the tide.

Hitler's defeat, and the full knowledge of the horrors of the Holocaust, did little to spur the right to rethink its admiration of authoritarianism. In fact, the historian Fred Siegel once described the late 1940s and early '50s as the moment when the isolationists attempted to exact revenge. Senator Joe McCarthy and his allies tried to tear down the reputations of the internationalist proponents of the New Deal who most fervently advocated for the war, by smearing them as Communists. But McCarthy was also waging a retrospective argument about World War II: that the Americans had no claim to superiority over the Germans. When he burst onto the scene, in 1949, McCarthy held hearings into what he described as the mistreatment of a Nazi Panzer division, on trial for murdering dozens of American prisoners of war. McCarthy speciously argued that the Germans were being tried on trumped-up evidence. Such accusations about America's supposed abusive treatment of Nazis became a right-wing trope. Henry Regnery's publishing house provided an outlet for criticism of the Nuremberg trials, before it went on to print books by William F. Buckley, James Burnham, and Whitaker Chambers that launched the modern conservative movement.

In its Cold War guise, the revived right made the celebration of autocrats abroad a foundation of its foreign policy. Buckley's magazine, *National Review*, the flagship of the movement, published regular panegyrics to anti-communist generalissimos, heaping adoration on the likes of the Dominican Republic's Rafael Trujillo, Portugal's Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, and Spain's Francisco Franco. Regardless of how many opponents they murdered or how many dissidents wasted away in their jails, they were described as the true defenders of Christendom against the heathen mob. The implication was that these dictators weren't just on the right side of the Cold War; they possessed spine and ideological fervor that American leaders lacked.

30 Days with The Orange Wrecking Ball

March 9, 2024

Because the American right was so quick to extol foreign dictators in hyperbolic terms, its members were frequently treated like suckers by those regimes. During the Reagan era, the lobbyist Paul Manafort—who would go on to be Trump’s 2016 campaign chairman—made a fantastically lucrative living by trying to bolster the image of autocrats as latter-day incarnations of Thomas Jefferson. In the late ’80s, Manafort took the Angolan guerrilla leader Jonas Savimbi, a former Maoist, and whisked him around Washington think tanks, touting him as a “freedom fighter.” That label required overlooking, among other inconvenient facts, how Savimbi’s army conscripted women into sexual slavery.

The Cold War, at least, provided a plausible geostrategic case for supporting these goons—and many of the socialist movements they battled were unsavory in their own ways. In fact, one school of foreign-policy thought, embodied in the realism of Henry Kissinger, a name that goes strangely unmentioned in Heilbrunn’s book, argued that alliances with dictators made sense on purely utilitarian grounds. Aligning with Chile’s Augusto Pinochet and the apartheid government in South Africa was a matter of national interest, nothing more, nothing less. The moral calculus of realism was repugnant in its own way, because it turned a blind eye to human suffering caused by dictatorships. But it was very different from the right-wing celebration of autocracy, which was a matter of shared values. That reactionary faction of the right continued to espouse affection for dictatorship even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when there was no longer an overriding foreign-policy justification for championing such regimes. Those affections persisted, because the impulse to find an alternative to America’s democracy

Heilbrunn’s book opens with verve, then becomes a touch slapdash as the narrative drives toward the present. Even though Trumpism is his hook, Heilbrunn spends exceedingly few pages on the subject. But the present moment should be the shocking culmination of his narrative: Foreign dictators are now thoroughly attuned to the tendency that *America Last* describes. How else to explain why Putin grants exclusive interviews to Tucker Carlson, or why Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán hosted a gathering of the Conservative Political Action Committee? These autocrats understand that the American right’s tendency to treat its favored leaders, domestic and foreign, with servile devotion makes it a supremely useful ally. If Trump returns to power, Putin can count on him to turn a blind eye to his military adventures, and Orbán can count on him to refrain from criticism of his power grabs.

But what makes Heilbrunn’s history, ultimately, so poignant is that the American right no longer needs to project its displaced desires onto leaders in other countries. It doesn’t have to shop abroad for a tribune who channels the movement’s deepest, most subversive desires. Trump is the foreign dictator that they craved all along.