

Is America Strong Enough to Withstand the Authoritarian Direction of the GOP?

The most influential person on the right is no longer Donald Trump, it is Tucker Carlson, who last week took his viewers to Hungary, where he portrayed the authoritarian rule of Viktor Orban as his picture of what the United States should be like in the future.

Really? Are his followers, who were groomed by Donald Trump to despise the free press and immigrants, going to fall in line behind a platform based on authoritarian rule? It's a frightening prospect.

Lovers of democracy in America should be alarmed at the breadth of the Republican attack on our system. Here are the major components, which should hearten the enemies of America:

1) **Treat voting as a privilege, not as a right**, just like under Jim Crow. Make it as hard as possible for the poor and powerless to vote, since they can be expected

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Talking Turkey



By Jim Smith

to vote for Democrats.

2) **Destroy faith in the electoral process** by claiming, despite lack of evidence, that any victory by a Democrat must be due to election fraud.

3) **Through gerrymandering**, enable Republicans to control legislatures (and congressional seats) even when the majority of votes statewide were Democratic.

4) Use that control of state legislatures to **pass laws restricting ballot access** and, best of all, a law allowing that Republican legisla-

ture to **take the administration of elections away from counties**, the most populous of which lean Democratic.

5) **Pass laws in those states allowing the legislature to rule a presidential election fraudulent, without evidence, and send its own slate of electors to the Electoral College.** (With such a law, Donald Trump could have won in 2020.)

6) **Destroy confidence in the mainstream media** by labeling anything contrary to the conservative agenda or about Republican corruption "fake news." Do this primarily by creating your own news media and channels that allow followers to believe they are fully informed when they're not.

7) Subtly, or not so subtly, **embolden**

white supremacists to mobilize against minorities and progressives. They can be counted on to use death threats and actual violence to intimidate non-believers. It helps to have free access to mass casualty assault rifles, so oppose all gun control laws.

These and other strategies, amplified by social media, can do immense damage to our democratic system. The question is can we survive the assault?

We can take some comfort from the fact that the majority of Americans have not been infected by the GOP virus. However, given the above strategies, it is going to take more than a simple majority opposing those strategies to prevail. If we can keep the "Trumpers" to about 40% of the population, we might squeak through.

Our system does have its own checks and balances, the biggest of which is the U.S. Supreme Court. One would hope that despite its rightward movement with three Trump-appointed justices creating a 6-3 conservative majority that the justices would not return us to the days of old when the court came down on the side of white supremacy and voter suppression — although it did show signs of going in that direction with a July 1 decision upholding two Arizona voter suppression

laws. As the New York Times put it, **the Court ruled that "states don't have to wait for fraud to occur before enacting laws to prevent it."**

Our last and strongest protection is freedom of the press. Authoritarian regimes like Orban's, so admired by Tucker Carlson, benefit from shutting down media with which they disagree. We hear it around the world, including in Hong Kong, that opposition to the regime is considered traitorous and can be silenced.

If we see that line crossed by our Supreme Court (which would have to adjudicate it), then we are truly facing the ending of the American experiment.

Let's not allow that to happen. As I said, it will take a super majority, not a simple majority to prevail and begin the process of reversing democracy's decline.

A History Lesson on Voting Rights

As a history major myself, I appreciate the perspective that Prof. Heather Cox Richardson brings to our political dilemma with her nightly email newsletter, **Letters From an American.**

Her Aug. 6th email will take you to school on the subject of voting rights in America. You can find a link for it at www.TalkingTurkey.online.