

# When Dissent Becomes a Crime: The War on Political Speech Begins

by John W. Whitehead and Nisha Whitehead / March 14, 2025

JCRM  
Packet

*"Once the principle is established that the government can arrest and jail protesters... officials will use it to silence opposition broadly."*

~ Heather Cox Richardson, historian

MARCH 17  
2025

You can't have it both ways.

You can't live in a constitutional republic if you allow the government to act like a police state.

You can't claim to value freedom if you allow the government to operate like a dictatorship.

You can't expect to have your rights respected if you allow the government to treat whomever it pleases with disrespect and an utter disregard for the rule of law.

*There's always a boomerang effect.*

Whatever dangerous practices you allow the government to carry out now whether it's in the name of national security or protecting America's borders or making America great again – rest assured, these same practices *can* and *will* be used against you when the government decides to set its sights on you.

Arresting political activists engaged in lawful, nonviolent protest activities is merely the shot across the bow.

The chilling of political speech and suppression of dissident voices are usually among the first signs that you're in the midst of a hostile takeover by forces that are not friendly to freedom.

This is how it begins.

Consider that Khalil Mahmoud, an anti-war protester and recent graduate of Columbia University, was arrested on a Saturday night by ICE agents who appeared ignorant of his status as a legal U.S. resident and his rights thereof. That these very same ICE agents also threatened to arrest Mahmoud's eight-months-pregnant wife, an American citizen, is also telling.

This does not seem to be a regime that respects the rights of the people.

Indeed, these ICE agents, who were "just following orders" from on high, showed no concern that the orders they had been given were trumped up, politically motivated and unconstitutional.

If this is indeed the first of many arrests to come, what's next? Or more to the point, *who's* next?

We are all at risk.

History shows that when governments claim the power to silence dissent – whe – that power rarely remains limited. What starts as a crackdown on so-called "threats" quickly expands to include anyone who challenges those in power.

President Trump has made it clear that Mahmoud's arrest is just "the first arrest of many to come." He has openly stated his intent to target noncitizens who engage in activities he deems contrary to U.S. interests – an alarmingly vague standard that seems to change at his whim, the First Amendment be damned.

If history is any guide, the next targets will not just be immigrants or foreign-born activists. They will be American citizens who dare to speak out.

If you need further proof of Trump's disregard for constitutional rights, look no further than his recent declaration that boycotting Tesla is illegal – a chilling statement that reveals his fundamental misunderstanding of both free speech and the rule of law.

For the record, there is nothing illegal about exercising one's First Amendment right of speech, assembly, and protest in a nonviolent way to bring about social change by boycotting

private businesses. In fact, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 8-0 in *NAACP v. Claiborne Hardware Co.* (1982) that nonviolent boycotts are a form of political speech which are entitled to First Amendment protection.

The problem, unfortunately, when you're dealing with a president who believes that he can do whatever he wants because he is the law is that anyone and anything can become a target.

Mahmoud is the test case.

As journalists Gabe Kaminsky, Madeleine Rowley, and Maya Sulkin point out, Mahmoud's arrest for being a "threat to the foreign policy and national security interests of the United States" (note: he is not actually accused of breaking any laws) is being used as a blueprint for other arrests to come.

What this means is that anyone who dares to disagree with the government and its foreign policy and express that disagreement could be considered a threat to the country's "national security interests."

Yet the right to speak out against government wrongdoing is the quintessential freedom.

Indeed, the First Amendment does more than give us a right to criticize our country: it makes it a civic duty. Certainly, if there is one freedom among the many spelled out in the Bill of Rights that is especially patriotic, it is the right to criticize the government.

Unfortunately, the Deep State doesn't take kindly to individuals who speak truth to power.

This is nothing new, nor is it unique to any particular presidential administration.

Throughout history, U.S. presidents have used their power to suppress dissent. The Biden administration equated the spread of "misinformation" with terrorism. Trump called the press "the enemy of the people" and suggested protesting should be illegal. Obama expanded anti-protest laws and cracked down on whistleblowers. Bush's Patriot Act made it a crime to support organizations the government deemed terrorist, even in lawful ways. This pattern stretches back centuries—FDR censored news after Pearl Harbor, Woodrow Wilson outlawed criticism of war efforts, and John Adams criminalized speaking against the government.

Regardless of party, those in power have repeatedly sought to limit free speech. What's new is the growing willingness to criminalize political dissent under the guise of national security.

Clearly, the government has been undermining our free speech rights for quite a while now, but Trump's antagonism towards free speech is taking this hostility to new heights.

The government has a history of using crises – real or manufactured – to expand its power.

Once dissent is labeled a threat, it's only a matter of time before laws meant for so-called extremists are used against ordinary citizens. Criticizing policy, protesting, or even refusing to conform could be enough to put someone on a watchlist.

We've seen this before.

The government has a long list of "suspicious" ideologies and behaviors it uses to justify surveillance and suppression. Today's justification may be immigration; tomorrow, it could be any form of opposition.

This is what we know: the government has the means, the muscle and the motivation to detain individuals who resist its orders and do not comply with its mandates in a vast array of prisons, detention centers, and concentration camps paid for with taxpayer dollars.

It's just a matter of time.

It no longer matters what the hot-button issue might be (vaccine mandates, immigration, gun rights, abortion, same-sex marriage, healthcare, criticizing the government, protesting election results, etc.) or which party is wielding its power like a hammer.

The groundwork has already been laid.

Under the indefinite detention provision of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA),

the President and the military can detain and imprison American citizens with no access to friends, family or the courts if the government believes them to be a terrorist.

So it should come as no surprise that merely criticizing the government could get you labeled as a terrorist.

After all, it doesn't take much to be considered a terrorist anymore, especially given that the government likes to use the words "anti-government," "extremist" and "terrorist" interchangeably.

This is what happens when you not only put the power to determine who is a *potential* danger in the hands of government agencies, the courts and the police but also give those agencies liberal authority to lock individuals up for perceived wrongs.

It's a system just begging to be abused by power-hungry bureaucrats desperate to retain their power at all costs.

Having allowed the government to expand and exceed our reach, we find ourselves on the losing end of a tug-of-war over control of our country and our lives. And for as long as we let them, government officials will continue to trample on our rights, always justifying their actions as being for the good of the people.

Yet the government can only go as far as "we the people" allow. Therein lies the problem.

This is not just about one administration or one set of policies. This is a broader pattern of governmental overreach that has been allowed to unfold, unchecked and unchallenged. And at the heart of this loss of freedom is a fundamental misunderstanding – or even a deliberate abandonment – of what sovereignty really means in America.

Sovereignty is a dusty, antiquated term that harkens back to an age when kings and emperors ruled with absolute power over a populace that had no rights. Americans turned the idea of sovereignty on its head when they declared their independence from Great Britain and rejected the absolute authority of King George III. In doing so, Americans claimed for themselves the right to self-government and established themselves as the ultimate authority and power.

In other words, as the preamble to the Constitution states, in America, "we the people" – sovereign citizens – call the shots.

So, when the government acts, it is supposed to do so at our bidding and on our behalf, because we are the rulers.

That's not exactly how it turned out, though, is it?

In the 200-plus years since we boldly embarked on this experiment in self-government, we have been steadily losing ground to the government's brazen power grabs, foisted upon us in the so-called name of national security.

The government has knocked us off our rightful throne. It has usurped our rightful authority. It has staged the ultimate coup. Its agents no longer even pretend that they answer to "we the people."

This is how far our republic has fallen and how desensitized "we the people" have become to this constant undermining of our freedoms.

If we are to put an end to this steady slide into totalitarianism, that goose-stepping form of tyranny in which the government has all of the power and "we the people" have none, we must begin by refusing to allow the politics of fear to shackle us to a dictatorship.

President Trump wants us to believe that the menace we face (imaginary or not) is so sinister, so overwhelming, so *fearsome* that the only way to surmount the danger is by empowering the government to take all necessary steps to quash it, even if that means allowing government jackboots to trample all over the Constitution.

Don't believe it. That argument has been tried before.

The government's overblown, extended wars on terrorism, drugs, violence and illegal

immigration have all been convenient ruses used to terrorize the populace into relinquishing more of their freedoms in exchange for elusive promises of security.

We are walking a dangerous path right now.

Political arrests. Harassment. Suppression of dissident voices. Retaliation. Detention centers for political prisoners.

These are a harbinger of what's to come if the Trump administration carries through on its threats to crack down on any and all who exercise their First Amendment rights to free speech and protest.

We are being acclimated to bolder power grabs, acts of lawlessness, and a pattern of intimidation, harassment, and human rights violations by government officials. And yet, in the midst of this relentless erosion of our freedoms, the very concept of sovereignty—the foundational idea that the people, not the government, hold ultimate power – has been all but forgotten.

“Sovereignty” used to mean something fundamental in America: the idea that the government serves at the will of the people, that “we the people” are the rightful rulers of this land, and that no one, not even the president, is above the law. But today, that notion is scarcely discussed, as the government continues its unchecked expansion.

We have lost sight of the fact that our power is meant to restrain the government, not the other way around.

Don't allow yourselves to be distracted, derailed or desensitized.

As I make clear in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* and in its fictional counterpart *The Erik Blair Diaries*, the moment these acts of aggression becomes the new normal, authoritarianism won't be a distant threat; it will be reality.

Constitutional attorney and author John W. Whitehead is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. His latest books *The Erik Blair Diaries* and *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* are available at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). Whitehead can be contacted at [johnw@rutherford.org](mailto:johnw@rutherford.org). Nisha Whitehead is the Executive Director of The Rutherford Institute. Information about The Rutherford Institute is available at [www.rutherford.org](http://www.rutherford.org).

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#### **Author: John W. Whitehead**

Constitutional attorney and author John W. Whitehead is founder and president of the Rutherford Institute. His new book, *The Freedom Wars*, (TRI Press) is available online at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). Whitehead can be contacted at [johnw@rutherford.org](mailto:johnw@rutherford.org). Information about the Rutherford Institute is available at [www.rutherford.org](http://www.rutherford.org).

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The world is in greater peril from those who tolerate or encourage evil than from those who actually commit it.

– Albert Einstein

# Tocqueville Was Not a Prophet of American Doom

CHRISTOPHER JAMES WOLFE

The late Tocqueville scholar Peter Augustine Lawler used to say that Tocqueville believed things were “getting better—and worse—all the time.”

ESSAY MARCH 14, 2018

**B**Y THE WAY HE HAS BEEN DISCUSSED RECENTLY, ONE might be led to think that the only thing Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) wrote about was America’s decline and fall. Patrick Deneen, a Tocqueville scholar by training, recently penned a book titled *Why Liberalism Failed* in which he claims Tocqueville’s predictions about American moral subjectivism (“individualism”) and statist dependence on government (“soft despotism”) have come true, with corrosive effects for intermediary institutions such as religion and the family. The root of both of those errors is Americans’ love of equality, a love that suggests no authority can “tell us what to do,” so to speak. For that reason, Deneen blames the American Founding itself for fostering the idea that every individual person is “created equal” and has a natural right to “liberty.”

The truth, however, is that Tocqueville was not sure America was destined for a fall. He made many predictions in *Democracy in America*, basing them on how Americans were living and what he knew about the necessities of human nature. But he never claimed any of those predictions were “inevitable,” or that history necessarily was going to lead Americans from the natural rights of the Founding to the moral subjectivism of today. The late Tocqueville scholar Peter Augustine Lawler, who passed away last year at age 66, used to say that Tocqueville believed things were “getting better—and worse—all the time.”

That went for America too, despite Deneen’s and others’ attempts to paint Tocqueville purely as a pessimist. Lawler cautioned against overstressing Tocqueville’s “soft despotism” prediction; and indeed, the creation of our administrative state by Progressive leaders, sometimes against the will of a majority of the American people, does not exactly match the dire description of bureaucratic tyranny in *Democracy in America*. Lawler also believed that greatness could still be found in modern America, and that its spiritual resources were by no means exhausted. He even saw the stress on the natural rights of individual persons encouraged by the Declaration as a source of spiritual strength, because it bolsters the Christian awareness of God’s personal and Trinitarian nature.[1] Lawler argued such things not because he was an optimist, but because of what he knew about Tocqueville. To be a true Tocquevillian today involves more than just being a prophet of doom.

Tocqueville once mentioned in a letter two authors he read every day for inspiration.[2] One was the historicist political philosopher and French-revolution inspirer Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778); the other was the philosopher and probability theorist Blaise Pascal (1623-1662). One might ask: which author was more important to Tocqueville, Rousseau or Pascal?[3]

Lawler argued that the Christian philosophy of Pascal was far and away Tocqueville's most important influence. Tocqueville explicitly rejected Rousseau's ideas about historical determinism because he held to the Christian truths about free will and responsibility. Even the ideas that Tocqueville did accept from Rousseau were appropriated from Pascal, Lawler argued. Lawler's book *The Restless Mind: Alexis de Tocqueville on the Origin and Perpetuation of Human Liberty* (1993) lays out the many ways Pascal's ideas can be found in Tocqueville and why Pascal is the key to understanding him. So it's helpful to cite some passages where Lawler clearly puts the Pascalian Tocqueville into conversation with other thinkers. Page numbers refer to passages in *The Restless Mind*:

-(128): "The movement toward democracy is human progress and is just because it reveals that all human beings have some greatness about them. Their minds, as we have seen, have all become restless. They have discovered, as Pascal describes, the misery of man without God... The American spectacle is evidence, contrary to the prideful prejudices of aristocrats, that Christianity is in some sense true... All Americans are capable of feeling human misery and manifesting human liberty. They all have souls."

-(159): "[Current liberals] do not make it clear enough that the revolution of 1989 should be viewed as a defeat, at least for now, of all Rousseau-inspired projects to eradicate the restless disorder of human individuality on behalf of security or contentment. They do not make the connection Tocqueville does between Pascal's description of human misery and Rousseau's misanthropy."

-(170): "[Francis] Fukuyama contends that the time of both Christianity and the revolution have come to an end... he finds human beings today completely recognized in their freedom, and apparently without any genuine desire for immortality. But we must observe, with Tocqueville, that, whatever the reason, the Americans and Europeans hardly seem satisfied. Even Fukuyama refuses to say that historical progress has made them happy. They seem particularly anxious and restless, and not only about their comfortable self-preservation or their status as citizens. Their many forms of status anxiety flow from the individualistic disorder of their souls... Today's dissatisfaction, Pascal and Tocqueville would say, is most of all with the human condition as such."

Pascal's emphasis on the restless character of human beings, generated by the angelic and bestial sides of our nature and the lonely awareness that our earthly existence is finite, can be found beneath the surface of nearly everything Tocqueville wrote. As Lawler puts it, "Tocqueville follows Pascal in showing that the need for faith is at the core of man's greatness. He knows that 'the incomplete joys of this world will never satisfy the heart'" (144). These elements can be seen in *Democracy in America*, but are even more evident in Tocqueville's angst-filled recollections on the Paris social uprising of 1848, *Souvenirs*. One terrific feature of Peter's book *The Restless Mind* is that he takes the opportunity to compare the 1989 overthrow of Communist dictatorship in Eastern Europe to France's 1848 uprising. Tocqueville would have seen these two revolutions as similarly great, because they flushed socialism out of the body politic and allowed for a truer liberty for individuals. It also allowed great democratic leaders such as Vaclav Havel the opportunity to shine.

As many of us now find ourselves asking "What would Peter Lawler say?"

about any number of people and events, we ought to recognize that the question Lawler himself was asking was “What would Pascal say?” Of course, Peter wouldn’t have said it exactly that way. But his insightful posts on blogs such as *National Review*, *Law and Liberty*, and *Big Think*, were always searching for the kind of greatness the Pascal-inspired Tocqueville lived to discover. Some of what Lawler pointed out as “great” may be interpreted by Deneen as the mere residue or remnant of Christian culture in America. But we shouldn’t forget that that Christian remnant is an extremely *American* Christian remnant if that’s what it is, its greatness can’t be considered apart from its natural home in our restless America.

Greatness in this sense is anything truly extraordinary and divine that can be found in the human realm; it is “openness to the truth, disinterestedness or personal integrity, an ability to comprehend human distinctions, ‘elevation of the spirit’ or breadth of soul, political passion, courage, and a willingness and ability to take responsibility for the most weighty, primarily political, matters” (113). These are the qualities of greatness Lawler was looking for in the seemingly mundane (though always somewhat nutty) corners of American life: at Waffle House and Panera Bread, in Walmart, on TV shows like *Friday Night Lights*, at movies such as *MUD* and *American Sniper*, and in soul-filled Southern music. These are the qualities of greatness that other Pascal-inspired thinkers look for, even (and especially) amidst ugliness: the Flannery O’Connor’s, Charles Portis’s and Walker Percy’s whom Lawler loved so much. In Tocqueville’s sense of the term, Peter Lawler’s project was to show how to make America “great” again.[4]

[1] See Peter Lawler and Richard Reinsch, “Freedom and the Human Person,” *National Affairs* (Fall 2014).

[2] Letter to Kergorlay, November 10, 1836.

[3] This is the question about Tocqueville that Thomas G. West ends with, and Peter Lawler begins with. West provides the best critiques of *Democracy in America* from an American perspective. See “Misunderstanding the American Founding” in *Interpreting Tocqueville’s Democracy in America*, ed. Ken Masugi. Savage, Md: Rowman and Littlefield, 1991. p177.

[4] Special thanks to Carl Eric Scott for his recent review of our friend Peter’s book, which inspired me to do a close reading of *The Restless Mind*. “How Lawler’s Understanding of Tocqueville Helped Me Understand Myself,” *Perspectives on Political Science* (2018).Vol. 47, No. 1. p21-24.

Christopher James Wolfe is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of St. Thomas at Houston. He has previously taught at the University of Dallas, North Lake College, and Founders Classical Academy.

## Wearing Of The Green

IRISH AIR

*Moderately*

1. Oh! Pad-dy, dear, and did you hear the news that's going round, The shamrock is for -  
 2. Then since the col-or we must wear, is England's cruel red, Sure Ireland's sons will  
 3. But if at last our col-or should be torn from Ireland's heart, Her sons with shame and

bid by law to grow on Irish ground; Saint Patrick's day no more we'll keep, His color can't be  
 ne'er forget, the blood that they have shed; You may take the shamrock from your hat, and cast it on the  
 sorrow from the dear old soil will part; I've heard whisper of a country that lies far beyond the

seen, For there's a blood-y law a-gin' the Wear-in' o' the Green; I  
 sod, But 'twill take root and flourish still, tho' un-der-foot'tis trod; When the  
 say, Where rich and poor stand e-qual, in the light of freedom's day; Oh,

met with Nap-per Tan-dy and he tuk me by the hand And he said "How's poorould  
 law can stop the blades of grass from growing as they grow, And when the leaves in  
 E-rin must we lave you, driv-en by the tyrant's hand, Must we ask a moth-er's

Ireland, and how does she stand?" She's the most dis-tressful country, that  
 summer time their verdure dare not show; Then I will change the col-or I  
 welcome from a strange but happy land? Where the cruel cross of England's thraldom

ev-er you have seen; They're hanging men and women there for wearing of the green.  
 wear in my cau-been, But 'till that day, I'll stick for aye to wearing of the green.  
 nev-er shall be seen, And where, in peace, we'll live and die, a - wearing of the green.

Repeat as Chorus



## ‘This Is the Hour of Darkness’ But the Light of Christ Will Pierce It

Due to the enormity of our sins and the horror of the public sins of nations and of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, our penance must be accompanied – and preceded – by the proclamation of the truth against lies.

March 13, 2025

Lifesite News

The divine liturgy accompanies us through the solar year as in a mirror, in which we see the history of the redemption summarized and represented.

The time of Advent takes us back to the expectation of the Messiah in the ancient law; the time of Christmas celebrates His most holy Incarnation; Holy Lent and Passiontide take us back to the times that preceded the Sacrifice of the Cross; the time of Easter celebrates the Resurrection and the Ascension of the Lord into heaven; the time of Pentecost retraces the earthly life of the Savior, His miracles, and His teachings; and at the end of the liturgical cycle – just as at its beginning – we are projected to the End Times, to the Universal Judgment, to the reward or condemnation of each and every person.

In a certain way the seasons of the year themselves accompany this sacred summary of salvation history, so that during the rigors of winter we understand the pains of the Child King born in a manger, and then as nature awakens during springtime we are able to see the homage of creation to the Lord who rises again and triumphs over death.

On Ash Wednesday, we entered into a time of penance and purification to prepare ourselves in body and spirit for this triumph of Our Lord: a real, historical triumph, witnessed by those who were its contemporaries, and celebrated by Christians of every age and place. To accompany us in this purification, the holy liturgy shows us what our fathers did in the Old Testament and points out to us the need to be ready in turn to face the great persecution of the End Times. Because one cannot fight without preparation, nor line up for a race without training for it.

In the Old Testament, the priests invoke mercy for the people: *Parce, Domine, parce populo tuo!* – “Spare your people, O Lord.” In the New Testament, it is Christ Himself, raised on the wood of the Cross, who intercedes for us: *Forgive them, O Father!* And together with Him, the Most Holy Virgin, all the saints, and the souls in purgatory also intercede before the throne of the divine majesty.

We ourselves, members of the communion of saints, offer our sacrifices to atone for our sins and those of our brothers and sisters. We pay a debt contracted with the infernal usurer: not with his false money, but with the purest gold of the Passion of Christ. That debt that each of us, in Adam, took on against the will of God and despite having received from Him true wealth, the most inestimable treasure.

This Holy Lent, which we begin by sprinkling ashes on our heads and fasting, occurs at a time of great social, political, and ecclesial upheavals. With each passing day new truths are coming to light, showing us an apostate society, a corrupt and perverted political class, and a sold-out and treacherous ecclesiastical hierarchy. Those whom we believed were taking care of the common good are now revealed as our enemies and the enemies of God.

Those whom we thought should defend the truth and proclaim the Gospel of Christ are now revealed as the followers of error and lies. And the authority that Our Lord, King and High Priest, has granted to our rulers – both civil and religious – has been used for the very opposite purpose of that for which He established it.

In the face of this global rebellion, and especially in the face of the betrayal of those who hold authority, we must return with greater conviction to clothing our souls in ashes and sackcloth, to prostrating ourselves before the Lord and repeating the cry of our fathers:

*Flectamus iram vindicem, ploremus ante Judicem; clamemus ore supplicii, dicamus omnes cernui: Parce, Domine; parce populo tuo: ne in æternum irascaris nobis. —*  
“Let us appease the vengeful wrath, let us weep before the Judge; let us call upon Him with a supplicating voice, let us prostrate ourselves and say all together: Forgive, Lord, forgive Your people, and do not remain forever angry with us.”

However, precisely because of the enormity of our sins and the horror of the public sins of nations and of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, our penance must be accompanied – and preceded, I would say – by the proclamation of the truth against lies. Because the truth is of God; indeed, the truth is God; and lies are the cursed mark of Satan.

Let all the veils and artifices that seek to conceal sin and vice, to deny it, to give it the appearance of good and virtue, come crashing down. Let all the masks that hide heinous crimes and evildoing in a network of shameful complicities among lost souls – crimes against God and against the little ones, first of all – all fall off. Let the fictions of a rebellious world, the lies of a perverted authority, of an infernal system that denies, offends, and fights against Christ and His children all crumble.

Let the lies and deceptions of a hierarchy and a papacy held hostage by the enemies of Christ who are enslaved to Satan all be exposed. Let the arguments and excuses that we give all too often to justify our laziness, our spiritual inertia, and our inability to take sides and remain under the banner of our divine King all come tumbling down. Let all the pretexts that we know how to find in order to postpone our conversion and our progress in holiness all fall down.

This is the hour of darkness, probably. But it is a darkness that is destined to be pierced by the Light of Christ, before which everything will appear as it truly is, and not as we would like it to be, not as would be more convenient to indulge our laziness.

And the first truth to proclaim, to shout from the rooftops, is that we are sinners, that there is a certain death, an irrevocable judgment, a hell to punish the wicked, and a paradise to reward the good. And that this ultimate and indefectible truth is part of our very being, is inscribed in our heart as a law of nature, is revealed in the Scriptures, and delivered by Our Lord to His Church so that She may faithfully preach it to all peoples.

Let us proclaim this truth without fear of contradiction, remembering the words of the Book of Ecclesiasticus: *Memorare novissima tua, et in æternum non peccabis* (Sir 7:40) – “Consider what awaits you, and you will never sin.” And so may it be.

+ Carlo Maria Viganò, *Archbishop*

## **Alleged Mossad Mole and the 1993 World Trade Center Bombing**

Joshua Shoenfeld

Today marks the 32nd year anniversary of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, which was carried out by followers of The Blind Sheikh. The convicted bomb-maker, Ramzi Yousef, entered the United States in 1992 with alleged Mossad mole Ahmed Ajaj, who was arrested at JFK Airport. Ajaj was carrying multiple passports, videos of suicide bombings, documents on fabricating fake IDs, and plans for constructing bombs. From prison, Ajaj played a major role in facilitating the 1993 World Trade Center Bombing.

Robert I Friedman reported in *The Village Voice* that Ajaj was a possible Mossad mole according to Israeli intelligence sources. Ajaj was identified by the FBI as a senior intifada activist and according to federal sources and the Israeli police, Israel expelled Ajaj in 1991 to Jordan for conspiring to smuggle weapons to Palestinian militant groups. However, according to an Israeli newspaper, Ajaj was never involved in intifada activities or with militant groups. Instead, Ajaj was a small-time criminal who was arrested in 1988 for counterfeiting U.S. dollars and was convicted and sentenced to prison. During his prison stay, the Mossad apparently recruited him per Israeli intelligence sources. Friedman wrote, “By the time he was released after having served just one year, he had seemingly undergone a radical transformation. The common crook had become a devout Muslim and hard-line nationalist. Soon after, he was arrested for smuggling weapons into the West Bank, allegedly for El Fatah.”

According to Friedman, Israeli intelligence sources asserted that the arrest for weapons smuggling, and Ajaj’s torture and deportation, “were staged by Mossad to establish his credentials as an intifada activist.” Also, the Mossad allegedly “tasked” Ajaj to infiltrate militant Palestinian groups operating outside Israel and to report back to Israel and that it is common for the Mossad to recruit common criminals.

# The Faulty Metaphors of Appeasement and Molotov Ribbentrop Pact

By Tóth András

March 12, 2025

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We all rely on metaphors to make the present more understandable. I did the same when I compared Trump's presidency to the era of Khrushchev.

The widely accepted narrative is that the historical parallel for Russia's military aggression against Ukraine lies in the political events preceding the outbreak of the Second World War. According to this view, Nazi Germany's successful aggressive moves to seize Austria and the predominantly German-populated territories of Czechoslovakia—facilitated by the West's appeasement policy—only emboldened Hitler's plans for world conquest. From this perspective, any appeasement of an authoritarian ruler is seen as a fundamental mistake, especially when the aggressor claims to be protecting an ethnic minority in a neighboring state. Compromise is deemed unacceptable, and only absolute victory is considered permissible over a reincarnation of the evil dictator seeking to revise borders.

This position has taken on the status of a moral absolute—one further reinforced by its indirect connection to the Holocaust. Anyone who thinks differently is marginalized. This othering is intensified by the perception that outcast politicians, such as Trump, are modern-day reincarnations of Chamberlain, mere puppets of Putin—today's Hitler—while their adversaries are cast in the role of Churchill.

A new parallel has emerged following President Trump's recent attempts to shut down the war: the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which divided Poland between Hitler and Stalin.

There are three problems with these widely used historical metaphors for understanding today's events.

1) First, while every politician possesses a certain degree of ruthlessness, ambition, and willingness to gain an advantage, not everyone is Stalin or Hitler. This is a crucial distinction.

2) Second, the infamous Munich Agreement was made before war had actually broken out. Chamberlain flew to Munich in 1938 to prevent another world war. For this reason, he made a concession to Hitler, agreeing that Hitler could occupy the part of Czechoslovakia that was predominantly populated by ethnic Germans. If there were any situation truly comparable to the Munich Agreement, it would have been if Biden had agreed to declare that NATO would not seek to expand eastward and had ended Ukraine's application process, while the European powers—the signatories of the Minsk Agreement—had forced Ukraine to implement the agreement with U.S. support in late autumn 2021, or, alternatively, if NATO had reached an agreement with Russia on the issues it demanded in the winter of 2021. However, both the U.S. and its European allies refused to make any concessions. They refused to appease Russia.

3) Third, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was also signed before the war broke out. In fact, the purpose of the pact was to prearrange the launch of a joint war against a third country, Poland, and to divide it between the signatories.

But in the case of Ukraine in 2025, we are in the third year of a war in which the U.S. has been supporting Ukraine against Russia. Therefore, the situation is entirely different from that of 1838–39.

Any agreement between the U.S. and Russia now is aimed at shutting down a war, not at preventing or starting a new one.

If one wants to find a better metaphor for understanding the Trump administration's position, even when compared to the period of World War II, a more fitting example is

the negotiation process between Stalin and Churchill in 1944, which led to the infamous Yalta Accord. The Western alliance—Churchill and FDR—had to confront the realities of the front lines: much of Eastern and Central Europe had been liberated (and simultaneously occupied) by the Red Army. Churchill and FDR opted to avoid a new war—this time against the Soviet Union—and accepted that Poland, Czechoslovakia, and several other Eastern and Central European countries would fall within the Soviet sphere, while Western and Mediterranean Europe would remain in the Western sphere of influence. It was a bitter compromise that abandoned the very two countries—Poland and Czechoslovakia—that had been central to the outbreak of World War II.

Churchill followed 'realpolitik' both in 1938–39 and in 1944. In 1938–39, it was reasonable to think that the combined forces of the British and French empires could win a war against Germany, while in 1944, realpolitik dictated not entering into a new world war, this time with the Soviet Union.

This time, Trump faces the fact that after three years of war, both Ukraine's human resources and the West's military resources are depleted. Despite a wall of sanctions, the Russian economy has not collapsed, and there is little appetite in the US or Europe to shift to a full-scale war economy, much less to escalate the conflict and risk provoking a new world war.

In this situation, the metaphor of the compromises of 1944 serves us better than the misleading claims of 'appeasement' or references to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Moreover, there are three key differences compared to 1944. First, Putin is not Stalin. Second, Russia is not the Soviet Union—a communist state that fully militarized itself to conquer the world following the dictates of a materialistic quasi-religion. Russia is a market economy whose population's well-being depends on commerce and good relations with as many countries as possible. Finally, the known Russian demands do not entail the complete submission of Ukraine but rather allow for the existence of a sovereign and neutral Ukrainian state. Although Ukraine would lose some territories under Russian demands, mostly populated by ethnic Russians or Russian speaking Ukrainians sympathetic to Russia, it would retain those mostly populated by ethnic Ukrainians and remain a large country, comparable in size to France or Spain.

War is the most destructive means of achieving human goals, and its effects go beyond mere destruction, poisoning human relations for generations. The best approach is to avoid war by seeking compromises whenever possible. Any compromise is bitter, involving the sacrifice of dreams and the perception of injustice.

Even more bitter are the compromises after three years of brutal war. Still, the key to any successful postwar reconstruction is ensuring free commerce as much as possible and avoiding a slide into a new cold war. My experience in Croatia offers an illuminating example. Croatia fought a bitter civil war with Serbia, yet today many tourists are Serbian. Last summer, on the way to the airport, a taxi driver told me that whatever happened in the past, Serbian tourists are welcomed today.



# Lessons from Reconstruction

By Wanjiru Njoya

Mises.org

November 4, 2024

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In "The Terror of Reconstruction," Lew Rockwell highlights the dangers of governments seeking to suppress their political opponents by an assault on citizens' liberties. He draws upon the experience of the South under military dictatorship during the Reconstruction years as an example of what happens when governments embark on social revolution. One tactic described by Rockwell is denying the vote to those who supported their opponents:

In the Reconstruction era, practically the entire white population was denied the right to vote. The disenfranchisement wasn't just confined to officials in the former Confederate government. Even those who had given money to help wounded Confederate veterans or who had bought bonds couldn't vote.

Another tactic, described by Charles Adams in his book *Human Events*, was to force free black people to vote in favor of the candidate preferred by the government. This seems to have been well known at the time, as Adams gives the example of a German paper with a cartoon titled "In the Polling Booth," which depicted a black man being forced to vote for the radical republicans. The caption read, "Ballots for Republicans! Bullets For Democrats! Death To Colored Democrats!"

The terror of Reconstruction illustrates the destruction caused by government regulations and interventions which are said to be necessary to bring about social harmony and good race relations. In his treatise *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, Jefferson Davis issues "a warning to the people against the dangers by which their liberties are beset." It is a warning to be vigilant in recognizing and opposing threats to liberty even when—or especially when—such threats emanate from the state. Davis details how the victorious federal government took the opportunity to occupy the South, sending in the army to enforce

...the universal denial of unalienable personal rights, the destruction of civil institutions, the disregard of laws, and the cruel and ignominious treatment, inflicted by the authority of the Government of the United States upon individuals in every part of the Southern country.

Davis shows that by this means, the federal government conferred upon itself the mandate and the power to regulate every aspect of life in the occupied South. For example, emancipation orders declared that "it is the duty of the army to maintain the freedom" of liberated slaves, followed by government orders "defining and regulating the relations of freedmen and whites." Although not explicitly stated, the implication of such government

edicts was that people in the South could not be expected to manage by themselves to live in peace without the federal authorities present to dictate every aspect of their lives.

Far from these interventions keeping the peace, they only sowed the seeds of further discord, which the government then tried to correct with even more regulations and ultimately the suspension of habeas corpus. Adams highlights the resentment and racial hostility fomented by the federal government pitting black against white in the occupied South:

The game plan of the Yankees was to use the ex-slaves to take over Southern society and wealth. It was easy to entice the ex-slaves with promises of glory—that they would soon be masters over the whites if they would only do as they were told. Unfortunately, they did.

Adams observes that, “the conduct of the returning black soldiers in Yankee uniforms...did more to turn Southern whites against all blacks than did the carpetbaggers and conquering armies of occupation.”

This is a tragic example of the upheaval and conflict that arises in the wake of government attempts to bring about social change through race-craft—politicians stoking racial grievances to earn more votes for themselves. It is a timely warning of the potential harm that could result from race-based electioneering, such as Kamala Harris’ plan to “plan to empower Black men as she tries to energize them to vote for her.” She has promised to give “forgivable business loans for Black entrepreneurs” of up to \$1 million, and “to ensure that Black men have opportunities to participate as a national cannabis industry takes shape.”

Not only does she promise to legalize drugs, but also to give preferences to black “entrepreneurs” in the cannabis industry. The disastrous outcome of the federal government’s reconstruction plans in the aftermath of the War for Southern Independence should serve as a warning against such cynical attempts to appeal to voters based on their racial identity.

**Note:** The views expressed on [Mises.org](https://mises.org) are not necessarily those of the Mises Institute.

I was in Europe when the Constitution was planned, and never saw it till after it was established. On receiving it, I wrote strongly to Mr. Madison, urging the want of provision for... an express reservation to the States of all rights not specifically granted to the Union.

– Thomas Jefferson, *Letter to Joseph Priestley* [1802]

## CHARLES A. COULOMBE

Having lived for the past seven years in Austria, I am in an interesting position of having gained a deeper understanding of our mother continent and the various countries from which the majority of the inhabitants of the United States come *and* a correspondingly deeper love for the land of my birth. Rather than a “shining city on a hill” or the “last best hope of mankind,” she is the country in which I was born, by God’s will. She has been very kind to my family and me, and I have a sacred duty toward her — patriotism being a religious virtue. As I am a Catholic, and she a non-Catholic country, part of that duty is to try to evangelize her. She did not begin in 1776 with the Declaration of Independence, or even in 1492, but in 1567 with the establishment of permanent European settlements on her soil. This is to say, her history is not merely that of her independent political institutions but of her colonial roots in Spain, France, and Britain. If those institutions should change radically, she would still be the country I love.

With that in mind, I cannot say whether the “American experiment” failed or succeeded because I do not believe in the concept. I believe in these United States. That they have declined culturally, morally, religiously, and politically in my lifetime is undeniable, as is the fact that the era of Irving Berlin and Norman Rockwell in which I first saw the light is gone beyond recall. But the country remains; even if she were to be dismembered like Austria-Hungary, a great deal would remain of her in the successor states to which her end would give rise. Were her Catholics energetic enough to convert her, she would become a great nation indeed, whatever shape her virtue would impress upon her institutions. Unless and until then, she shall flounder as she always has — and yet I shall love her until I die.

The necessity of conversion is not only individual, for each soul, but for the well-being of the country as a whole. Orestes Brownson knew this when he wrote, “The Roman Catholic religion, then, is necessary to sustain popular liberty, because popular liberty can be sustained only by a religion free from popular control, above the people, speaking from above and able to command them, — and such a religion is the Roman Catholic” (1845). Without the faith, the First Republic, as we might call the period of American history from 1783 to 1860, collapsed. So fell what we might call the Second Republic (1865-1941). From the Second World War emerged the First Empire, which is with us yet. But because we have failed to evangelize the nation, we Catholics have never had a place at the table, for the most part; nor have we deserved it, really.

Nevertheless, the accidents of history have made Catholics a majority in certain areas of the country: southern Louisiana, northern New Mexico, and various ethnic islands scattered throughout the Midwest, Northeast, and elsewhere. If the U.S. bish-

ops ever regain a strong grip on the faith, they would be in a position to exert a strong influence in certain localities. During the “Black Mass at Harvard” episode in 2014, I was one of a thousand who marched in a eucharistic procession from the chapel at Massachusetts Institute of Technology to St. Paul’s Church in Harvard Square, protesting the proposed satanic rite. There we joined a like number who were engaged in a holy hour of reparation. All this was arranged by the extremely able Catholic chaplaincy at Harvard University. It occurred to me as we marched, and cars honked in support and people dropped to their knees in the street, that the faith is far from dead in the Boston area — it just lacks real leadership. Had the archbishop of Boston stood up for the faith regularly as the Harvard chaplains did that day, politics in the Bay State would be considerably different. But so long as we are burdened by those who hid under their beds and abandoned their flocks during COVID, we shall have the conditions we have.

The question of what we should do in the face of the current situation is really the same one with which our ancestors grappled, and which they spectacularly failed to answer. Neither the formation of “intentional communities” nor political tinkering is going to solve the American conundrum; it is, in any case, a false argument because strategies should be seen as differing means toward the same end, rather than either-or propositions. So, too, the debate over integralism, wherein some see it as the threat of imposing “Catholic sharia” on an unwilling populace — which it most certainly would be today, given the infanticidal propensities of a majority of Americans. But abortion was not outlawed in ancient Rome until after its conversion — nor shall it be here. The medieval and early modern order to which the integralists look for inspiration was not purpose-built. Rather, as the peoples of Europe and elsewhere converted, their institutions organically altered in accordance with their populations’ new religion, and so was born Christendom. So, too, shall it be with the wonderful country God has given us, if ever American Catholics — clerical and lay — do their patriotic and religious duty and work toward her conversion (while not neglecting any necessary political efforts). That is the great hope for Catholic Americans, and for our country.

Charles A. Coulombe is a Contributing Editor of *CrisisMagazine.com* (and its European correspondent), *OnePeterFive.com*, and The European Conservative. He previously served as a columnist for the Catholic Herald and film critic for the National Catholic Register. A celebrated historian, his books include *Puritan’s Empire: A Catholic Perspective on American History*, *Star-Spangled Crown: A Simple Guide to the American Monarchy*, and, most recently, *Blessed Charles of Austria: A Holy Emperor and His Legacy*. He resides in Vienna, Austria, and Los Angeles, California.

# Fire the Washington War Party

ERIC MARGOLIS • FEBRUARY 21, 2025 • 600 WORDS • 1 COMMENT [Q&A](#)

President Donald Trump gets a lot of things wrong. Chief among them is his crazy plan to ethnically cleanse two million Palestinians from the smoking ruins of Gaza.

But he also gets some very important things very right.

Trump managed to end the longest war in US history, Afghanistan, by cutting off the money that fueled this absurd conflict. Without Trump's forceful intervention, this conflict could have dragged on for another decade and cost yet another \$2 trillion. None of the generals or politicians involved had the guts or sense to end this pointless war.

Now, it appears that Trump may be doing it again in the other pointless war, Ukraine. The US has lavished at least \$175 billion fueling the Ukraine War. Given that some of the US aid is hidden or obscured, the true figure may be over \$200 billion – this by the US which is deep in hock with a monster debt of \$36 trillion which it can't pay back.

The fact is that CIA and State Department mounted a coup costing \$5 billion (according to the senior State Department official, Victoria Nuland who organized it) that overthrew Ukraine's pro-Moscow regime. It's worth recalling that Ukraine was an integral party of Russia for hundreds of years – longer than Virginia has been part of the USA. Many Ukrainians want full independence from Moscow – others, particularly Russian-speakers, do not. The conflict in Ukraine is a civil war fuelled by the western powers in an effort to fragment the Russian Federation and Balkanize its parts.

For Washington's pro-war neoconservatives, further shattering the former Soviet Union is the ideal strategy. But the neocons and armchair amateurs who led the Biden administration were so blinded by their hatred of Russia and world power ambitions that they utterly failed to see how they were bringing Russia and the US to the edge of war. In fact, the US and some European allies were waging economic and military warfare against Russia that could have gone nuclear at any time.

Fortunately, Russian president Vlad Putin's iron nerves kept the crisis mostly under control. By contrast, the addlebrained Biden kept playing with matches instead of calming down this very dangerous crisis. The west's mighty propaganda machine kept the war alive. Too many people believed Kiev's propaganda that Ukraine was actually winning this war. Meanwhile, Ukraine was raking in huge sums of cash. I've done business in Ukraine and know how deeply corrupt it is – almost as bad as Detroit or Jersey City.

This foolish war not only brought us to the edge of nuclear war but also laid open the deep dementia of Washington's war party and fanatical anti-communist fringes. Trump is right when he warns of the 'deep state.'

We recall the heroic young man, Edward Snowden, who publicly revealed how much the National Security had been violating the law by bugging Americans.

During the long years of the Cold War, America's eighteen national security agencies became choc-a-bloc with ardent anti-Soviet/Russian senior employees. This included CIA, National Security Agency, Pentagon agencies, offices at State, Treasury, new anti-terrorism outfits, and all across our vast security bureaucracy. They are waging a rear-guard action to thwart reforms and/or reductions. They have repeatedly claimed that Trump was somehow being compromised by Russia.

These deep state minions don't want peace. They want sharp-edged confrontation with Russia and China, safeguarding the billions in Pentagon and intelligence budgets, and protecting their own careers. We saw how cabals of pro-war officials drove France and Britain into two world wars. This is why the idiotic war in Afghanistan lasted for two decades.

As the great Benjamin Franklin said, 'no good war; no bad peace.'