

Paradise Lost

August 1, 2026

By George F. Smith

As John Adams wrote to his wife Abigail following a congressional vote for independence on July 2, 1776, "[This date] ought to be Solemnized with Pomp and Parade with Shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more." The future father of the Alien and Sedition Acts was justifiably proud and excited. Consumer spending on Fourth of July fireworks will total around \$2.5 billion this year. Many people today don't know or care why we celebrate this event — nothing new about that. Nor is the fact that most Fourth concerts segue to fireworks with the rousing 1812 Overture something to ponder — we made Tchaikovsky an honorary American long ago.

But for those who took the risk of signing the Declaration, it was the document's affirmation of the individual over government that became the hill they would die on if necessary. Government was a necessary evil, as Paine wrote, but that wouldn't stop them from somehow putting the people at the top of the food chain.

To the revolutionaries, government meant sovereignty. That was the "necessary evil" part of any government. As Rothbard might have written in this context, any anarchist thoughts would be "outside the ken of the world at the time." But how were they going to implement the individualist principles of the Declaration in a government that placed the individual under the State? On November 15, 1777 Congress adopted the Articles of Confederation as their first formal attempt at governing themselves.

There were those in positions of influence, though, who wanted a more "energetic" government than the one provided by the Articles. Today these people would be calling for a new Pearl Harbor or 9/11 but since government coercion tends to create pushback, they didn't have long to wait for the needed catalyst.

Shays's Rebellion

In late 1786 farmers from western counties in Massachusetts were shutting down the courts in protest over onerous taxes. Newspapers described the rebels as "destitute," but this was propaganda. For every rebel who went to court as a debtor, another went as a creditor. As I wrote in a review of Leonard Richards' Shays's Rebellion,

It wasn't debt that triggered Shays's Rebellion . . . but the new state government and "its attempt to enrich the few at the expense of the many." The most glaring instance of this abuse was the decision of Massachusetts to consolidate its war notes at face value.



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Even when issued, the notes traded at about one-fourth par and later declined to about one-fortieth face value. Many soldiers were paid in these notes and out of desperation sold them at about one-tenth their value. Boston speculators swooped up eighty percent of these notes, with forty percent of them owned by just 35 men. Every one of those 35 men had either served in the state house during the 1780s or had a close relative who did.

Legislators praised the speculators as “worthy patriots” who had come to the state’s aid in its time of need. But these men did not buy the notes directly from the government; they bought them from farmers and soldiers at greatly depreciated prices, who were now being taxed to redeem them at full value. The speculators, most of whom had stayed home during the war, would now benefit at the expense of veterans.

Massachusetts Governor James Bowdoin called out the militia to suppress the rebellion, and when that failed he turned to Congress to provide special troops for the invented reason that an Indian war was pending in the Ohio Valley. Baron von Steuben, the Prussian drillmaster who had trained Washington’s troops, noted that

Massachusetts had 92,000 militiamen on its rolls. Theoretically, the militia system excluded the poor and transient. Members were men of substance with deep roots in the community. They were men of property. With such a force at its disposal, why would the Massachusetts government need outside support?

Answer: Only a government at war with its people.

Led by General Benjamin Lincoln — who on Washington’s order accepted the sword of British surrender at Yorktown — the army crushed the rebellion early in 1787. As Rothbard notes, General Henry Knox, Noah Webster, and especially Alexander Hamilton, along with George Washington and James Madison, characterized the rebels as levelers wanting to abolish all debts and redistribute property. It was a fear of future rebellions that attracted state delegates to the Federal Convention in Philadelphia, beginning on May 25, 1787.

Jefferson responds from Paris

While the Rebellion pushed most of the country’s leaders further right toward a strong national government, Thomas Jefferson, minister to France, went radically to the left. As he wrote to Colonel Edward Carrington on January 16, 1787,

I am persuaded myself that the good sense of the people will always be found to be the best army. They may be led astray for a moment, but will soon correct themselves. The people are the only censors of their governors; and even their errors will tend to keep these to the true principles of their institution. To punish these errors too severely would be to suppress the only safeguard of the public liberty.

He went even further, suggesting anarchy is preferable to oppressive government.

Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that every man should receive those papers, and be capable of reading them.

But watch out — if the people turn their backs on public affairs, the governors “shall all become wolves.”

In a letter to Madison on December 20, 1787, commenting on the yet-to-be adopted constitution, Jefferson wrote, “Let me add that a bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or particular, and what no just government should refuse, or rest on inference.” And so James Madison created a Bill of Rights with the hope it would limit the power of government over the people.

A government seeking “monsters to destroy”

In early 1917, with the Constitution having taken a beating since its inception, Democrat Representative Oscar Callaway of Texas reported in the Congressional Record that “the J. P. Morgan interests, the steel, shipbuilding, and powder interests” had purchased control of twenty-five great newspapers to further the preparedness campaign [for American entry into the Great War].

After Congress voted for war on April 6, the propaganda campaign still needed the draft to force American men overseas to kill and die in what became the First World War. Involuntary servitude in the military was not unconstitutional, according to the State. Jefferson’s “opinion of the people” had been replaced by experts who knew better, and who would shed no blood for their decision.

From that point on war became a major engine of state growth, placing us where we are today, with overseas wars a perpetual backdrop to everyday American life, all in violation of the Constitution.

Conclusion

On January 6, 1789 Paine wrote a letter from London to his recently-married friend, Kitty Nicholson Few, expressing his

homesickness for his adopted country amid worry about its future:

A thousand years hence (for I must indulge in a few thoughts), perhaps in less, America maybe what England now is! The innocence of her character that won the hearts of all nations in her favor may sound like a romance, and her inimitable virtue as if it had never been. The ruins of that liberty which thousands bled for, or suffered to obtain, may just furnish materials for a village tale or extort a sigh from rustic sensibility, while the fashionable of that day, enveloped in dissipation, shall deride the principle and deny the fact.

Turns out he was overly optimistic.

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West Bank Settlers Held Rep. Ro Khanna at Gunpoint at Destroyed School

Democrat lawmaker says IDF arrived during incident, sided with the settlers

by Jason Ditz | July 11, 2026 at 12:50 pm ET | Israel, Ro Khanna, West Bank

US Representative Ro Khanna (D – CA) reports that he was held at gunpoint for more than an hour earlier this week during his visit to the occupied West Bank when Israeli settlers confronted his entourage as he toured a destroyed Palestinian village.

“We were at a village that Israeli settlers had destroyed, they had destroyed the school, they had destroyed that village, and we were just looking at it,” Khanna said. “And these hoodlums come in with machine guns – M4, an American-made machine gun – and they detain us. They block off the road.”

The incident took place at the destroyed village of Khirbet Zanuta, a village near Hebron that was reported “ethnically cleansed” by settlers in 2023. Khanna reported that the settler group summoned the IDF and that the IDF sided with the settlers over the Americans.

Rep. Khanna’s aide, Cameron Kasky, said the group was held for more than an hour and called the US Embassy in Jerusalem for help. Eventually, police arrived at the scene and dispersed the settlers, ending the incident.

The IDF said their troops and police officers arrived on the scene and “dispersed the Israeli civilians” but doesn’t address Khanna’s report that the initial troops that arrived sided with the settlers over the matter.

Israeli officials said Khanna had not coordinated the visit with them, so that’s why they weren’t provided with a security escort, which would be normal for an official visit to the West Bank.

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TOLKIEN'S INSIGHTS INTO THE MASCULINE SOUL

What is a woman? People today find it difficult to answer this question. How many could answer the related question, *What is a man?* For modern psychologists and those influenced by them (which is practically everyone), “masculinity” and “femininity” are not directly equivalent or applicable to “man” and “woman.” You can just as easily be a feminine man or masculine woman, “identifying” contrary to your biological sex and then trying, through clothing, cosmetics, pronouns, and even surgery, to conform your body and appearance to this subjective identity. Though this attempt is disordered, it also unintentionally reveals something: Masculinity is intrinsically associated with being a man, and femininity with being a woman.

What does this have to do with J.R.R. Tolkien? As a traditional Catholic, not merely a “product of his time” but a product of the Truth, which is universal and perennial, he believed what most people clearly recognized before the proliferation of feminism, psychologism, and transgenderism: The body is a gift from God that, in union with the soul, forms one integral person. Therefore, the sex of your body is determined by God and is perfectly suited to your soul; it’s not something to be bulldozed and rebuilt according to the mechanistic mentality of the Industrial Age.

In this light, Tolkien knew that men and women are inherently distinct in both body and mind, while still being equal in their shared human nature, and that these distinctions are expressed as masculinity and femininity. How each is represented in individual men and women varies, of course, and what determines their precise forms depends on culture and changing fashions — but the distinction will always exist and thus should be upheld as an immutable principle. As Tolkien wrote in his explanation of the pre-existence of the Music of the Ainur in the mind of Ilúvatar: “It is the view of the Myth that in (say) Elves and Men ‘sex’ is only an expression in physical or biological terms of a difference of nature in the ‘spirit,’ not the *ultimate* cause of the difference between femininity and masculinity” (*The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, 2012).

Tolkien shows this distinction in his stories, while also corroborating them in his nonfiction writings. I addressed the topic of femininity in “Tolkien’s Insights into the Feminine Soul” (Nov. 2025). Now I would like to focus on his portrayal of men and masculinity.

For Tolkien, as a reasonable man and a devout Catholic, a man is properly a father, just as a woman is properly a mother. Even men who never beget children or enter the covenant of marriage remain called to fatherhood in one form or another. For this reason, the men in Tolkien’s legendarium can be judged as men according to their fatherly virtues — including those, such as the hobbits Bilbo and Frodo and the wizard Gandalf, who are effectively celibate. From the very beginning in the Garden of Eden, the first man, Adam, was a father, the father of

all mankind. As a father, he was charged by God his Father, “of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named” (Eph. 3:15), with the mission “to work and to guard” the Garden, as theologian John Bergsma explains (*Jesus and the Old Testament Roots of the Priesthood*, 2021), cultivating it and protecting it from any threat. Adam was thus the “primordial priest” (and Eden the “primordial sanctuary”).

God then gave Adam a wife, who was taken from his side, as St. Thomas Aquinas explains, “to signify the social union of man and woman.” A woman “should neither ‘use authority over man,’ and so she was not made from his head; nor was it right for her to be subject to man’s contempt as his slave, and so she was not made from his feet” (*Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 92, a. 3). However, Adam failed in his fatherly mission, allowing Eve to be seduced in his presence and then joining her in Original Sin, so that both were cast out of Eden. Now, the sons of Adam must work “by the sweat of their brow” to fulfill their original duties of tilling and guarding, while their sexual relationships and interior control over their passions are distorted by the “hard spirit of concupiscence,” which, Tolkien says, “has walked down every street, and sat leering in every house, since Adam fell” (*op. cit.*).

The fatherly virtues of a man extend from the original duties of Adam to cultivate the earth and to defend the world — those entrusted to his care and ultimately himself — against the evils of sin and Satan. Throughout history and unto today, men are thus tasked with the twin responsibilities of providing and protecting, both of which involve leadership and authority — making a man the head, or king, of his family — as well as self-sacrifice, moral example, and instruction, duties characteristic of a priest and a prophet. Adam possessed these traits prototypically, but they were truly fulfilled in the three *municipia*, or offices, of Jesus Christ, the New Adam and the perfect Son of Man: priest, prophet, and king.

Tolkien shows this dual nature of masculinity, of original and fallen fatherhood, in many of the male protagonists of his legendarium. I would like to focus on two in particular: Boromir and Gríma Wormtongue in *The Lord of the Rings*.

It could be said without much argument that Boromir was the most famous man of his time. From his great leadership abilities to his heroic acts of self-sacrifice in defense of his homeland alongside his fellow soldiers of Gondor, he was a true man of honor, doing whatever was required of him to guard those entrusted to his care and provide them an example of integrity, valor, and courage. For this reason, Boromir’s father, Denebor, the Steward of Gondor whose talents lay more in intellectual knowledge than in battle, believed his people to be doomed to destruction by Sauron, the demonic ruler of Mordor, upon learning of Boromir’s death. Other men, such as Éomer of Rohan, expressed a similar sorrow.

The failures of a man can be judged by his lack

of the fatherly virtues of priest, prophet, and king. Boromir, like his father, thought little of wisdom. Though Denethor confused wisdom with mere accumulated knowledge, Boromir valued strength of arms above both. In this way, he was deficient in the office of prophet — not due to simple ignorance, which has never hindered a man from being a good father, but from the foolishness that results from a lack of wisdom and leads to imprudent and even malicious choices. Ultimately, Boromir attempted to steal the One Ring of Power from its appointed bearer, Frodo, in order to use it as an evil means, justified by the good end of protecting Gondor and defeating Sauron. By contrast, Éomer and Faramir, Boromir's younger brother, both of whom shared many traits with Boromir, chose to obey the higher wisdom of doing what is right, even against the wishes of their human rulers, King Théoden of Rohan and Denethor, respectively. By following St. Peter's principle that "we ought to obey God, rather than men" (Acts 5:29), they retained their full honor.

Despite this grave mistake, Boromir redeemed himself, proving his manly virtue and heroism by giving up his life as a kind of priestly sacrifice to protect two young hobbits, Merry and Pippin. Though they were captured anyway, and so in worldly terms Boromir was a failure, in truth he corrected his betrayal of Frodo, whom he had been charged with protecting. Through his service to the Fellowship, a brotherhood of Free Peoples who banded together to destroy the One Ring, he also gained the humility to recognize Aragorn, Tolkien's primary typological representative of the kingship of Christ in Middle-earth, as his true king, being "satisfied of that claim," according to Frodo. This submission of a man's royal office to his true king is the highest fulfillment of masculine virtue: All Christian men are called to be kings in knightly fealty to the King of Kings; in a diaconal role through the baptismal priesthood, acting as "an ambassador" (Eph. 6:20) of Christ the High Priest; and as prophets of the Word of God, conforming their lives to His truth as given through the tradition of the Church.

Tolkien's friend and fellow Inkling C.S. Lewis, in his essay "The Necessity of Chivalry" (1940), which should be required reading for every man (and every parent of a son), identifies one of the greatest contributions of medieval Christendom as the virtue of chivalry. He describes this virtue as the harmonious balance between gentleness toward friends and ferocity toward enemies. Through chivalry, the best medieval knights were able to go to battle against the foes of Christendom and perform legendary feats of valor and gallantry, only to return home and write poetry, uphold courtly manners, be modest and respectful toward women and fervently pious in religious devotion, and maintain strict household discipline. As Lewis explains, this was not a kind of two-faced hypocrisy or even a "happy mean between ferocity and meekness; he is fierce to the *n*th and meek to the *n*th." This chivalrous ideal is represented by few men, whether today, in history, or even in Middle-earth, as

most tend to favor one quality at the expense of the other. Attaining the ideal balance requires rigorous training. But it is a uniquely Christian achievement not found even in the greatest heroes of antiquity, though it is evident in Boromir and forms the highest ideal for any man. As Lewis writes:

The medieval ideal brought together two things which have no natural tendency to gravitate towards one another. It brought them together for that very reason. It taught humility and forbearance to the great warrior because everyone knew by experience how much he usually needed that lesson. It demanded valour of the urbane and modest man because everyone knew that he was as likely as not to be a milksop.

Every man from boyhood wants to be a hero, a chivalrous knight in service to a king and a cause greater than himself, to sacrifice himself to save others and to vanquish evil. It takes time for boys to realize that they can do this by wisdom and moral virtue, even if they lack martial strength — or that they can forgo it altogether, as do priests and religious. It is the duty of parents to discern the aptitudes and weaknesses of their sons, encouraging their God-given gifts and helping them learn how to compensate for and correct what they lack, while also accepting their special vocations in life.

Tolkien gave a supreme example of this higher heroism in the character of Frodo, who, Tolkien admits, "'failed' as a hero," according to his task of destroying the Ring, but who succeeded morally by exhibiting pity and mercy, for which God rewarded him. Even so, each man, regardless of his vocation, should strive after Lewis's chivalrous ideal, one which, he observed, is rejected both by the "'liberal' or 'enlightened' tradition which regards the combative side of man's nature as a pure, atavistic evil, and scouts the chivalrous sentiment as part of the 'false glamour' of war," and by the "neo-heroic tradition which scouts the chivalrous sentiment as a weak sentimentality, which would raise from its grave (its shallow and unquiet grave!) the pre-Christian ferocity of Achilles by a 'modern invocation.'"

Unfortunately, in Middle-earth, Gríma Wormtongue, chief advisor to King Théoden, lacked formation in chivalry. Despite growing up in Rohan, where kingly strength and priestly self-sacrifice were prized far above prophetic wisdom, Gríma preferred the latter and wholly eschewed the others. He thus fell into the effeminacy characteristic of modern men in "developed" nations, where the "liberal" or "enlightened" rejection of chivalry is standard and used to beat masculinity out of men from their youth, to make them ashamed of being men (just as feminism makes women ashamed of being women). This goes some way toward explaining why many, though not all, of the men in Peter Jackson's film adaptations of *The Lord of the Rings* are less masculine than those in the books (e.g., Viggo Mortensen's portrayal of Aragorn and his so-

called “masculine wars”), or else are barbaric in the “neo-heroic” form Lewis describes.

In this vein, a term commonly heard today is “toxic masculinity,” for which Boromir would be the most likely example in *The Lord of the Rings*. This term, however, derives from the standard “liberal” notion of masculinity that generally regards men as a negative force in the world, amenable only insofar as they can be feminized. The truth is that masculinity is good in itself, as is femininity, but both are liable to corruption. For masculinity, this takes one of the two forms Lewis described, whereas chivalry is the true fulfillment and perfection — not “correction” — of masculinity. Gríma is an example of the “liberal” corruption, and Boromir could be given as an example of the “neo-heroic” corruption, though perhaps other, less chivalrous alternatives could be found, such as the barbaric warriors from Dunland, Rhûn, and Harad, who only valued strength of arms without any concern for mercy or restraint. Neither Gríma nor Boromir, however, represents “toxic masculinity” but a false masculinity corrupted by sin.

Alongside Aragorn (and the hobbit Sam), Faramir is arguably the best representative of purified and ennobled chivalrous masculinity in *The Lord of the Rings*, someone whose willingness to lead and fight was coupled with a strident adherence to principle (he was unwilling to take the Ring even “if it lay by the highway”), a profound sense of mercy (as toward Gollum), and a deep respect for lore and prophetic wisdom (for which he earned the pejorative title “wizard’s pupil” from his father due to his friendship with Gandalf). Likewise, Sam (not Faramir, as in the film version) showed a truly Christian appreciation for the dignity of every person when he reflected on the death of a Haradrim warrior: “He wondered what the man’s name was and where he came from; and if he was really evil of heart, or what lies or threats had led him on the long march from his home; and if he would not really rather have stayed there in peace.”

Gríma desired wisdom, to be a prophet like his hero, the wizard Saruman. But by failing as a priest and a king, he became a mere politician, using schemes, deceptions, and manipulations to appease Saruman, who thus usurped Gríma’s true sovereignty, Théoden. By Gríma’s machinations, Théoden became similarly effete, abandoning his home to invaders and even imprisoning his faithful nephew, Éomer. Gríma, having become, by his effeminacy, unworthy of the affections of a good woman like Théoden’s niece Éowyn, expected to win her as a reward for his obeisance to Saruman, a mere object, a prize he did not deserve. In the end, Gríma would finally rebel against his slavery and slay Saruman, though this act, like the suicide of Judas Iscariot,

was no longer one of love or honor but only a final display of cowardice and failure as a man.

Even in our modern, classless society, where the old form of chivalry is practically (but not utterly) dead, men are still called to recover and live up to it as the highest fulfillment of their fatherly vocation, no matter their individual calling in life. In this heroic quest, examples like Boromir, Aragorn, Faramir, Sam, and Éomer can inspire us, while others like Gríma and Gollum can caution us. Lewis concludes:

Now, it seems, the people must either be chivalrous on its own resources, or else choose between the two remaining alternatives of brutality and softness.... The ideal embodied in Launcelot [the greatest knight] is “escapism” in a sense never dreamed of by those who use that word; it offers the only possible escape from a world divided between wolves who do not understand, and sheep who cannot defend, the things which make life desirable.

As Tolkien understood, true escapism is not a “fugitive” escape *from* reality (*On Fairy-Stories*, 2008) but an escape deeper *into* it — to go “further up and further in,” as Lewis’s Aslan says in *The Last Battle*, the eschatological climax of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Today, we cannot depend on cultural impetus or inherited tradition to make men manly (or women womanly); the Enlightenment and the Sexual Revolution severed us from the lifeblood of civilization through which our ancestors received these norms of common sense. Now, as Lewis exhorts, we must rediscover reality for ourselves by recovering our lost tradition and seeing the world as our ancestors did — and as God created it. To live as, or to raise, good men means following the examples of great men in history, both historical and fictional, including the heroes of Middle-earth, and disciplining our God-given masculinity with the virtue of chivalry, as they did, to become good fathers as priests, prophets, and kings — exemplifying not toxic, not effete, but self-sacrificing, controlled, protective, and providential masculinity. ■

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THE CALL OF CHIVALRY

Bedouins With A-Bombs

by Eric Margolis | Jul 30, 2026 | 0 Comments

Washington has opened talks with Saudi Arabia to consider nuclear capability for the desert kingdom.

The Americans and Saudis insist they are only discussing peaceful nuclear weapons. Don't believe it. The Saudis argue they must have nuclear capability to generate energy when their oil begins to wear out. Every oil-producing nation can rightly make the same argument. When the oil runs out, no more gold beds, French furniture, show girls and disposable Rolls-Royces.

The only really admirable Saudi king in recent memory, Faisal bin Saud, reportedly said, 'we are riding in expensive cars, but I fear one day soon we will end up riding camels again when our oil runs out'. This noble far-seeing ruler was assassinated in 1976 by a nephew who was said to be demented. Some Saudis suspected Faisal was killed by a western power.

Saudi has only 38 million tribal people scattered over a vast, arid nation. Libya's late chief, Muammar Gaddafi told me 'The Saudis are very rich people who live behind high walls. They are terrified of their neighbors.' Gaddafi was himself murdered by the French and Americans.

Traditionally, the Saudis have turned to militarily powerful Pakistan for protection. The late Pakistani President, Zia ul Haq, commanded an important contingent of Pakistani troops protecting the Saudi royal family. Zia told me he had a low opinion of Saudi military capabilities. In fact, the Saudis have never developed a significant military force to protect their vast oil wealth for fear of coup d'etat from the army, a common event across the Arab world and Africa.

The US stations large numbers of mercenaries and American troops across the Mideast, estimated at 50,000, as well as large contingents of CIA agents and other security forces to protect the Egyptian regime.

Saudi and the US also use the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for 'kinetic' i.e. shooting operations and are deeply involved in wars in Sudan, Somalia and Central African Republic. But wealthy Saudi Arabia is the real prize.

Now, the Trump administration is trying to arm-twist the Saudis into abandoning their half-hearted support of the Palestinians and get into bed with Israel, using the lure of a supposedly civilian nuclear program. How well this would work out for the Saudis is uncertain. The Saudis are so behind the times they must import bakers from Egypt or India and Pakistan. There is no cadre of nuclear technicians in Arabia. Some could be hired, as Egypt tried to do in the 1960's. Israel killed many of them. Now, Israel might allow it again but with the greatest caution.

Israel's policy is to assassinate nuclear specialists who come to assist the Arab nations. Saudis would think three times before using a nuclear device against Israel because it has at least 100 nuclear weapons poised to strike – over the entire Arab world – not to mention submarine-launched nuclear missiles that are invulnerable to a surprise first strike.

The Saudi royal family relies on the United States for protection. It has consistently betrayed the Palestinians. But Riyadh must at least show some support for Palestine to keep up the pretense of helping the Arab cause. In reality, the Saudis fear Palestinians as dangerous revolutionaries drawn to socialist causes or states. Interestingly, the biggest expulsion of Palestinians since Israel's creation in 1948 was by Kuwait. Saddam Hussein promised to create a Palestinian state out of the British-created state of Kuwait. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat welcomed the offer. Kuwaitis were outraged and expelled their many Palestinians residents.

Now, the Saudis want to be the big shots of the Mideast. America can't resist fawning Arab states. Will the volatile Saudi Bedouins be trusted with nuclear weapons?

How Does a Refinery Built to Process Sour Crude Differ from a Refinery to Process Sweet Crude?

LARRY C. JOHNSON • JULY 29, 2026 •

You may think this is a stupid or irrelevant question to be asking when news is just breaking that Iran has launched some per-emptive strikes on US bases in the Persian Gulf and Jordan, but trust me, it is a very relevant question. (Note: I will deal with the military fallout from today's new attacks in my post on Wednesday.)

The short answer to the question I posed above is that a sour-crude refinery is built around one dominant problem that a sweet-crude refinery is largely spared — sulfur — and almost every hardware difference cascades from that. But there are actually two variables doing the work here, and they're usually conflated: **sulfur content** (sweet vs. sour) and **density** (light vs. heavy). They correlate in the real world — most sour crudes are also heavy (Arabian Heavy, Urals, Canadian dilbit, Venezuelan), most sweet crudes are lighter (WTI, Brent, Bonny Light, US shale) — so a “sour refinery” in practice is usually also a “heavy refinery,” and it's worth keeping the two axes distinct because they drive different equipment.

Sour means high sulfur (roughly >0.5%, and Gulf grades run 1.5–4%+). Sulfur is a problem in two ways: it's a contaminant you have to strip out to make spec-compliant fuel that you can sell, and it corrodes the plant itself. So a sour refinery is defined by four hydroprocessing and sulfur-handling systems that are not present in the same scale in a sweet refinery. I am talking about the following:

Hydrotreaters, and lots of hydrotreating capacity — units that combine the feed with hydrogen over a catalyst to convert sulfur into hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) so it can be pulled out. Every major cut (naphtha, kerosene, diesel, gasoil) needs its own treating.

A hydrogen source at scale. All that hydrotreating (and hydrocracking) consumes enormous volumes of hydrogen, so a sour/heavy refinery typically runs a dedicated **steam methane reformer** to manufacture hydrogen. A simple sweet refinery can often subsist on the hydrogen thrown off as a byproduct of its catalytic reformer.

Amine units + a Sulfur Recovery Unit (Claus process) + tail-gas treating. This is the back end that takes the H₂S you've stripped and converts it to elemental sulfur for sale. A sweet refinery may have a token SRU; a sour refinery's sulfur block is a major, capital-intensive part of the plant. A big Gulf refinery can produce thousands of tons of sulfur a day as a side product.

Metallurgy. Because H₂S and organic acids attack carbon steel — via sulfidation and, where hydrogen is present, hydrogen-induced cracking and high-temperature hydrogen attack — sour plants are built with **upgraded metallurgy**: stainless and chrome-moly alloy cladding in the crude unit overhead, hydrotreater circuits, and hot sections. That alloy content is a big reason sour refineries cost more to build even before you count the extra units.

Are you with me so far? Let me explain why this asymmetry between sour crude refineries and sweet crude refineries matters strategically — The two plant types are not interchangeable, and the switching costs run mostly one direction.

A refinery configured and optimized for a specific sour/heavy diet (say, Urals, or Arabian Heavy, or Venezuelan/Canadian heavy) can't freely swap to another crude without yield and economic penalties — its coker, hydrogen balance, and hydrotreater sizing were tuned to that feed. This is exactly why sanctioned-crude reroutings are sticky: Indian and Chinese refiners that took discounted Urals, or the Gulf/Chinese teapots' appetite for heavy sour, reflect plants built for that assay, not spot opportunism.

A complex sour refinery can process sweet crude (it's over-built for it, so it just runs its expensive units under-utilized — inefficient but feasible). A simple sweet refinery generally cannot process sour crude — it lacks the hydrotreating, hydrogen, sulfur recovery, and metallurgy to handle it at all. That one-way flexibility is why global sour/heavy conversion capacity is the real constraint, and why losing a specific complex refinery (or a specific heavy-crude supply it was built around) can't be quickly back filled elsewhere.

So when you see the US or Iran strike a specific refinery, or a crude grade knocked off the market, the question that determines the real supply impact isn't barrels-for-barrels — it's *which configuration* was hit and whether the displaced crude has anywhere else to go that was actually built to digest it. A million barrels of Arabian Heavy stranded by a Hormuz disruption can't be absorbed by simple sweet refineries sitting idle in some other region; it needs deep-conversion capacity specifically, and that capacity is concentrated, expensive, and slow to build.

The core asymmetry is that the crude coming out of the Gulf is overwhelmingly heavy and sour, and only four geographically concentrated set of refineries were ever built to digest it. These are:

Reliance's Jamnagar (Gujarat, ~1.4 mbpd across two refineries) is the single most important node — it's among the highest-complexity refineries on earth, purpose-built to run cheap heavy sour from anywhere and crack the resid into clean products.

China's mega-refineries and Shandong teapots are the second great sink. The state-of-the-art complexes (Rongsheng/ZPC at Zhoushan, Hengli at Dalian) plus the independent teapot cluster in Shandong are configured for heavy sour and are the designated home for sanctioned barrels — Iranian Heavy, Venezuelan Merey, discounted Russian ESPO/Urals. This is the destination that makes Iran's crude exports viable at all, and it's Hormuz-and-Malacca exposed.

Northeast Asia — South Korea (SK, GS Caltex, S-Oil) and to a lesser extent Japan — runs high-complexity plants on a steady Gulf sour diet (historically heavy Saudi, Kuwaiti, and pre-sanctions Iranian). These are among the most Hormuz-dependent refiners in the world, with almost no domestic crude and limited ability to swap feed quickly.

The US Gulf Coast is the outlier that matters for the strategic picture — it's enormous deep-conversion heavy-sour capacity (Valero, Motiva's Port Arthur, ExxonMobil Beaumont, the coking belt), but it is *not primarily Gulf-fed*. It was rebuilt in the 2000s around Venezuelan and Mexican Maya, and now leans heavily on Canadian heavy via pipeline. So the USGC is heavy-sour hungry but largely insulated from a Hormuz event — which is exactly why it can't easily backfill stranded Gulf barrels for Asia: it's already running its coke drums full on Western Hemisphere heavy.

So the vulnerability isn't measured in barrels off the water — it's measured in *coking and hydrocracking capacity that has lost its designed feed*, and that capacity is concentrated in four places (Jamnagar, coastal China, Korea, and a USGC that's already full on Canadian). That concentration is the thing worth watching: a sustained double-chokepoint event doesn't ripple evenly across the refining world, it lands almost entirely on those Asian deep-conversion hubs and on the diesel market they anchor.

What I have outlined and discussed above just scratches the surface of the enormous economic stakes that are at risk if the Strait of Hormuz remains closed for an extended period of time. Besides the shortage of the sour crude and shortage of sulphur, there are also major deficits in urea, LNG and helium. It is conceivable that the economic damage from the US war on Iran will exceed any physical damage inflicted by missiles and bombs.

By liberty I mean the assurance that every man shall be protected in doing what he believes his duty against the influence of authority and majorities, custom and opinion.

— Lord Acton

Burying Lindsey Graham Won't Be Easy

By Karen Kwiatkowski

July 31, 2026

LewRockwell.com

Long ago, great Senators existed. Resolute and accountable, they represented their governors and state legislatures and asserted those interests in Washington. They aspired to conduct themselves as statesmen; we the people expected statesmanship. We the people also hoped they would be better than we could be, while we agreed with the fundamental truth of Colonel Ludlow in Legends of the Fall.

No longer. A regal Senate with a bold populist House of Representatives do not exist. What we call Senate and House do not make federal law, nor do they perform the small number of defined duties described in Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution. The making of law has become the work of lobbyists and the regulatory bureaucracy, while other Constitutional duties have become entirely too frightening to even consider, much less perform. The hydra-headed executive branch has become the permanent ruler, the center of state power, poisonous and deadly. The Senate would need 100 Hercules to behead the beast, and the House 500 loyal and brave nephews to cauterize the wounds to prevent two more heads from emerging from every wound.

The United States has been in a constant state of Congressionally undeclared war for over 60 years, war that enriches those connected to imperial policies and resources, and is paid for by lives wasted, currency debased, morals eroded, and our economy perpetually unbalanced, warped, and sclerotic. Election after election, voters support the candidate they see as less likely to take us to war and destruction, and in our repeated disappointment, we too become economically unbalanced, morally warped and politically sclerotic.

This is what Elon Musk was talking about a year ago, when he said government is unfixable. This is what Tom Woods was talking about when he quipped "No matter who you vote for, you get John McCain." Continuity of government is not a disaster plan, it's the only plan. Our role in this plan is both unrepugnant and undemocratic: it is to obey, to fund, and to die for the state.

Lindsey Graham was aggressive and brave when far from the battlefield, obsequious and submissive to Benjamin Netanyahu as he carried the water for a foreign nation and the traitorous military industrial complex. As noted by Jack Hunter, writing in *Responsible Statecraft*, South Carolina has done far better in its recent past, recalling Graham's predecessor Senator Fritz Hollings;

After his retirement, Hollings contended that the Iraq war killed more people than the U.S. supposedly tried to liberate, creating more terrorists and helping to lionize al-Qaeda leader and 9/11 architect Osama Bin Laden in parts of the Middle East.

Hollings' controversial column suggesting the U.S. fought in Iraq for Israel's security was published on May 10, 2004. He was inevitably, and swiftly, accused of anti-semitism. He did not back down.

The executive branch hydra moved immediately to ensure that South Carolina

voters will not deliver a better advocate. Instead, with a phone call to the governor, and a quick, unholy Trump endorsement, Lindsey's sister is flattered to be asked to serve the [executive] state. Her qualifications are dubious, but her tribe is solid.

Not one Hercules is allowed, as we saw with the \$30 million dollar House Primary race to unseat Thomas Massie with a guy who dodged every debate, and promised to bring back the draft to the good people of northeastern Kentucky. His name is unimportant; it is his abject inability to represent the peaceful and independent principles of the 4th District that matters.

Upon Graham's sudden death at 71, the nation does not grieve. Graham's service was not to the nation, but to empire, war, and the dark arts of politics. In 2026, a gay Republican is not subject to blackmail, nor held in ridicule. Log Cabin Republicans proudly recall and celebrate the first Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, based on Lincoln's well-advertised philosophy of liberty and equality, and his intense friendships. A inverted valuation of privacy has today normalized both the sexual affairs – and the financial profiteering – of elected officials. Those seeking to leverage a politician today must find – or manufacture – more frightening crimes like rape, pedophilia and manslaughter. Luckily for them, this is apparently not difficult.

The ceremonies in Washington for Graham were both solemn and cheerful. The deep state enters the Washington National Cathedral as if it owns the place, confident in continuity. It does, and it is.

A state funeral can demonstrate transition, and mark a public loss. It can unify a nation, and mobilize them, as we saw recently with in Iran and around the world, as the religious leader of Iran, and global Shia Islam, was finally laid to rest after the US government assassinated him five months ago. It can also demonstrate the coalescence and the creed of a state system that is disconnected from its people, and its laws. The hydra was captured in video at Graham's funeral, as Netanyahu forcefully issued his latest orders to Rubio and Hegseth.



Elections will not save the United States, only the ending of executive-directed and imperially profitable wars and the parasitic crony class that feeds off the state, ourselves, and our children. The state is busy adopting the murderous and deceitful practices of our "best" ally; perhaps we could follow in the recent footsteps of some members of the IDF, as they conducted a small mass defection from the notorious Israeli prison in Sde Teiman.

To bury what ails the United States requires understanding, then courage, and only then, a Herculean American effort to kill the hydra and cauterize its thousand sprouting heads. If we the people evaluate what killing the hydra requires, as one in three members of our founding generation did, and decide to do our individual parts toward that end, we just might be able to have a state funeral worth attending.

Digitization and Tokenization: The Great Taking of "All" Private Assets

By Gary D. Barnett

GaryDBarnett.com

July 30, 2026

"I do believe that we're just at the beginning of the tokenization of all assets,, from real estate, to equity, to bonds.."

Larry Fink, CEO Blackrock

This is a subject that I have discussed on many occasions for years, but the acceleration of this atrocity of mass government theft is now progressing at lightning speed, and openly admitted to by the powers behind the throne. The evildoing Larry Fink, the CEO of Blackrock, who by the way, was Trump's first choice for Secretary of the Treasury, (Position now filled by Scott Bessent) is also the Chairman of the heinous World Economic Forum (WEF). He also was a staunch supporter of Hillary Clinton and her run for president in 2016. His past is rife with far left-wing politics, so any notion that there is any difference between the democrats and republicans should by now be dismissed.

As well reported today by Parallel Mike of Parallel Systems, Romania's entire land registry, and every back-up, was fully erased by a cyberattack; just as has been endlessly warned (threatened) about by Fink's WEF organization. Every single property in Romania was threatened, due to no ownership records being available. All real estate markets, mortgage applications, notary services for land transfers were shut down. When no hard copy of deeds exist, and all is digitized, no one effectively owns anything, but that is exactly where we are headed. This is already the case with stocks and bonds, but the ruling class of globalists, desire to tokenize every asset on earth, including all property, financial assets, and even all individuals and their identities. If (when) this occurs, you will own nothing, and will lose control of everything you have ever worked for during your life.

This cyberattack scenario has happened many times in the near past, and seems to be a play to set up universal taking by way of digitizing and then tokenizing assets. Does this sound impossible to you? Does this sound like a 'conspiracy theory?' Does this sound like science fiction? It is none of these things, except a true conspiracy, as this attempt to take over every single asset on earth (The Great Taking) is not only well on its way to coming to fruition, it has been codified into law in Trump's 'Genius Act.' This heinous piece of legislation is meant to tokenize every single asset class, by placing a monetary value on every asset by digital asset exchange. A Digital Asset Service Provider will have power to affect:

(i) exchanging digital assets for monetary value;

(ii) exchanging digital assets for other digital assets;

(iii) transferring digital assets to a third party;

(iv) acting as a digital asset custodian; or

(v) participating in financial services relating to digital asset issuance.

The monetary unit that will be used is Trump's 'Stablecoin,' which will be dependent on treasury bond backing (forced debt) administered by a private/government partnership, (Fascist) which will have a wide open back door, making it more dangerous and thieving than a Central Bank Digital Currency. (CBDC) This of course was the plan all along, as Trump used lies to claim his denial of any use of CBDCs while all the time knowing that his Stablecoin was nothing more than a CBDC on steroids.

I was in the finance business for 31 years as a Registered Principal with the SEC, and watched as physical paper stock and bond certificates were over time replaced by digital ownership, which is just one step away from full tokenization. I fought against this, and advised many clients to keep holding onto the physical certificates, but to no avail, as digitization of assets was demanded by most firms. When one does not hold an actual physical ownership certificate, when it becomes digital, the bank or digital holder now takes ownership of that asset away from the actual owner. 'Legally,' you no longer have any real claim to that asset, and with tokenization, control over assets by legitimate owners becomes impossible. This is theft by government fiat, and any excuse, any claimed 'emergency,' any political dictate, has the ability to program use and/or ownership of all assets tokenized.

Tokenization, the next step after digitization, is the process of converting ownership of an asset into a digital token on a blockchain. This of course is sold to the 'public' as a safer way to hold assets, with more convenience, but what is not normally (almost never) discussed is the loss of ownership capability, and the vastly increased risk of theft by government technocrats, and the ability for thieving fascist government partners, to have instant programmable control over all tokenized assets. Do you understand what this means? It means that as Larry Fink's organization, the WEF, was telegraphing the desired future when the evil Klaus Schwab said; *"You will own nothing and be happy."* His statement was not some ideological hope, it was a statement of solidifying a sought after and pursued outcome that is now close to becoming completed.

Once assets are tokenized, a total loss of control becomes the norm. What this means, is that any asset you may own, or thought you owned, can become subject to theft by the State at any moment, and for virtually any reason made up by the controllers of these tokenized assets. The plot is to tokenize absolutely everything, every property, every asset on earth, financial, real estate, stocks, bonds, hard assets, including your own identity and body. This, if allowed to take place, would eliminate all property rights entirely, leaving the masses void of any property, and therefore fully dependent on the State. Your life in entirety would become one as a renter beholden to the very masters you allowed to lord over you under the guise of a 'benevolent' government. Nothing of the sort has ever existed, and it never will exist.

*"Trump administration's White House Crypto Council, chaired by Crypto Czar David Sacks, **issued** recommendations to foster digital asset growth in 2025. One key suggestion in the President's Report on Digital Assets urges banking regulators to adopt a technology-neutral stance on how banks may hold tokenized securities." This tokenization is now in high gear, and expanding exponentially.*

Tokenized securities, which leverage blockchain or distributed ledger technology to represent assets via digital tokens, fall under the category of real-world assets (RWAs). The report advocates for regulatory clarity that the method of representation—whether traditional or tokenized—should not alter the risk weight applied to a bank's capital calculations. In other words, this is simply a way to shield banks from liability from the 'actual' real owners of assets digitally held.

*Though technical in nature, this approach gained traction when the FDIC, Federal Reserve, and OCC **issued** a clarification on the capital treatment of tokenized securities in the form of a FAQ, affirming equivalent treatment for tokenized securities that confer **"identical legal rights"** to their non-tokenized counterparts. This development carries significant implications. It paves the way for tokenized securities to scale, with market projections estimating trillions of dollars by 2030. Major players, including the NYSE, Goldman Sachs, Nasdaq, DTCC, BlackRock, BNY Mellon, Citi, and JPMorgan, have already initiated pilots or platforms for tokenized equities, funds, and deposits. As I mentioned, this process of "The Great Taking" of all assets is not only well underway, but significantly and constantly advancing. When in place, remember, that you will own absolutely nothing! If knowledge of this does not bring about a massive awakening, nothing will, especially considering that this is a monstrous consumer society.*

Of course, this sought-after stealing of all assets will not be admitted to by this abominable governing system, its corporate partners, its AI systems, the fascist NGOs, or the prostituted media, as these entities will claim to be your savior, and will claim to be building a safety net to protect you, by titling all your assets in their name, after propagandizing the lie that you are at risk from outside interests, hackers, and cyber-attacks. This all while they plot to claim all assets on earth as their own.

It is up to you, all of you, to stop this horrendous plot. Do not allow an AI takeover. Do not allow biometric identification. Do not allow digitization of everything, tokenization of everything, and abandon this hellacious system. If you attempt to change things from within, if you attempt to vote your way out of this, you will fail. Time is now severely limited. If you do nothing, you will own nothing. You decide.

"And with technology, as we know, it can go very, very rapidly."

Donald Trump

The Unz Review • An Alternative Media Selection

A Collection of Interesting, Important, and Controversial Perspectives Largely Excluded from the American Mainstream Media

A Free Society Is an Educated Society

RON PAUL • JULY 27, 2026 • 500 WORDS • 5 COMMENTS

A survey of 2,253 Americans conducted by Morning Consult and the Cato Institute provides some good news but also raises serious concerns about the future. The good news is that the survey indicates 55 percent of Americans believe the Constitution should put firm limits on government power and 58 percent say no political party should be trusted with too much power.

However, the survey also indicates that four in ten Americans would approve of a president they voted for “stretching” the Constitution to accomplish their goals. This is not surprising since it is common for people’s positions on presidential power to change when their candidate ends up in the Oval Office.

A disturbing result of the survey is that 53 percent of people in Gen Z (defined as those born between 1997 and 2012) have a favorable view of socialism while only 45 percent have a favorable view of capitalism. Fifty-one percent of Gen Z said they are more likely to vote for a candidate who identifies as a “democratic socialist.” This support for democratic socialism among young people means America will likely travel further down the path to totalitarianism, as younger voters respond to problems caused by government intervention in the economy with calls for more government.

Students who are not taught the history of America’s founding, including the importance of limiting government to a few well-defined functions and separating power among three branches of government and between the federal government and the states, will be less likely to support constitutional government. Similarly young people who are not taught that prosperity comes from free markets, private property, and sound money will be more likely to believe the socialist delusion that the key to prosperity is surrendering our liberty to politicians.

The lack of education in basic economics is why many confuse our current economic system with the free market and thus blame capitalism for problems caused by the government. This lack of education also allows President Trump to get away with denouncing socialism while taking at least partial control of private companies, a policy right out of the socialist handbook.

One factor in the decline of knowledge about American history, sound economics, and the principles the American republic is the neglect of history and civics education. The federal government insists that government schools focus on preparing children for mandated reading tests, as well as emphasize science and technology education. Teaching reading, math, and science is important, but that does not justify neglecting history and economics.

Parents looking to give their children a well-rounded education that includes focus on the history and ideas of liberty may want to explore my homeschooling curriculum.

My curriculum provides students with a solid education in history, literature, mathematics, and the sciences. It also gives students the opportunity to create their own websites and Internet-based businesses. Starting in the fourth grade, students are required to write at least one essay a week. Students also take a course in public speaking.

The curriculum emphasizes the history, philosophy, and economics of liberty, but it never substitutes indoctrination for education. The goal is to produce students with superior critical thinking skills. If you think my curriculum may meet the needs of your child, please visit www.RonPaulCurriculum.com for more information.

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Two More Israeli Soldiers Kill Themselves Amid Crisis Driven by Horrors of Genocide

“As humans,” explained one psychologist, “we can be both victims and perpetrators.”

by Brett Wilkins | Jul 30, 2026 | News | 1 Comment

Two more Israeli soldiers killed themselves over the past two days, bringing renewed scrutiny to what experts say is a worsening mental health emergency inside the Israel Defense Forces during 33 months of genocidal war on Gaza and enduring stigma around seeking treatment.

According to the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, two female IDF troops – a combat soldier and an intelligence officer – died by suicide this week. Israeli Military Police said they are investigating both deaths, which bring the number of active duty IDF troops who have killed themselves this year to at least 16. *Haaretz* said that at least nine former IDF soldiers have also committed suicide after completing their military service in 2026.

The latest deaths underscore what military officials, mental health professionals, and veterans have increasingly described as one of the most severe psychological crises the Israeli military has faced in decades.

Earlier this year, *Haaretz* reported that Israeli military suicides reached 21 in 2024 and 22 in 2025 – the highest annual totals in roughly 15 years. Israel’s oldest daily newspaper also found that the military had reduced the number of mental health officers available to soldiers despite unprecedented demand for psychological services.

The crisis has been exacerbated by repeated troop deployments since the October 7, 2023 Hamas-led attack – itself the cause of tremendous trauma and some suicides by survivors – and Israel’s subsequent assault on Gaza, which has been characterized by what prosecutors at the International Criminal Court in The Hague say are crimes against humanity and war crimes, and what a United Nations panel of experts said is a genocide.

More than 250,000 Palestinians have been killed or wounded by Israeli forces in Gaza, some of them reportedly executed at close range.

IDF troops and Israeli and international medical workers have described the deliberate and indiscriminate shooting of Palestinian civilians, including women and children, some of whom were reportedly executed. Former Palestinian prisoners and Israeli troops and doctors have also reported torture and sexual abuse of detainees, and of civilians including children and even a toddler. Such carnage and abuse has taken a toll on the perpetrators as well as their victims.

A persistent stigma surrounding mental health treatment also discourages many soldiers from seeking the care they need. Some fear being viewed as weak or worry that treatment could adversely affect their military service or relationships, despite ongoing efforts to destigmatize the issue.

A senior IDF commander told the Israeli public broadcaster Kan last year that “most of the suicides resulted from the complex reality created by the war,” adding, “War has consequences.”

Earlier this year, Reuters reported that the IDF had recorded a nearly 40% increase in post-traumatic stress disorder among its troops since September 2023, with 60% of the 22,300 people being treated for war wounds experiencing PTSD. The news agency cited an Israeli parliamentary committee’s finding that 279 soldiers had attempted to kill themselves in the period from January 2024 to July 2025, and that IDF combat soldiers comprised 78% of all suicides in Israel in 2024.

Some observers – especially Palestine defenders – have little sympathy for IDF soldiers who kill themselves, pointing to the widespread crimes being committed in Gaza and throughout illegally occupied Palestine, including apartheid, settler colonization, and ethnic cleansing.

Others, recognizing their humanity and the moral injury that experts say afflicts many participants in war, mourn these deaths while maintaining that compassion for soldiers must never eclipse accountability for crimes against Palestinians.

After Eliran Mizrahi, a 40-year-old Israeli father of four, killed himself in 2024, his sister told CNN, “He always said no one will understand what [he] saw.”

Mizrahi’s mother said that “he saw a lot of people die. Maybe he even killed someone. [But] we don’t teach our children to do things like this... so, when he did this, something like this, maybe it was a shock for him.”

US psychologist Rachel Kabasakalian-McKay coined the term “complex implication” to define how “history often implicates us in networks of harm, even as we carry our own traumas.”

“As humans,” she explained in a 2025 interview with Psychology Today, “we can be both victims and perpetrators.”

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Brett Wilkins is is staff writer for Common Dreams. Based in San Francisco, his work covers issues of social justice, human rights and war and peace. This originally appeared at CommonDreams and is reprinted with the author’s permission.

The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny.

– James Madison, *The Federalist No. 47* [January 30, 1788]

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Why the Blanche Nomination Should Be Rejected

By Andrew P. Napolitano

Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche is not qualified to be the attorney general of the United States because he has demonstrated a hopeless conflict between the rule of law — which he has sworn an oath to support — and his sense of personal loyalty to President Donald Trump, whom he represented for several years in a notorious and disreputable criminal case in New York.

What to do with a nominee as chief law enforcement officer in the land who has and cannot disavow this conflict? Reject him.

Here is the backstory.

For America's first 100 years, there was no Department of Justice. Federal laws were enforced by state authorities in federal courts. This was part of James Madison's genius to divide governmental power between the states and the feds.

The modern presidency sits at the intersection of two powerful and often conflicting ideas. One is the unitary executive theory, which argues that because Article II of the Constitution vests "[t]he executive Power" in the president, every official exercising executive authority ultimately answers to him.

The other is the longstanding expectation that the DoJ, while undeniably part of the executive branch, should administer the law impartially and according to facts, evidence, caselaw, precedent and professional ethics rather than presidential preference.

Today, the tension between these principles has become especially visible in the nomination of Blanche.

Supporters of the unitary executive theory argue that the president cannot faithfully execute the laws if subordinate officers are free to disregard his lawful directives. In this view, all executive officials exercise authority only because the president has delegated it to them. If DoJ lawyers become independent centers of power, democratic accountability suffers because voters elect only one chief executive.

The DoJ, however, has always occupied a somewhat unusual position. Legally, there is no constitutional independence. The attorney general serves at the pleasure of the president. United States attorneys are presidential appointees. Federal prosecutors exercise executive authority. Nothing in the Constitution establishes the DoJ as a fourth branch of government insulated from presidential supervision.

Yet, over many decades, norms have developed to preserve public confidence in criminal prosecutions. Presidents of both parties have generally avoided directing



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individual prosecutorial decisions. Attorneys general have frequently emphasized that charging decisions should be based upon evidence, applicable law and the likelihood of obtaining a sustainable conviction — not political advantage.

Adding another layer to this tension are the professional obligations of DoJ lawyers themselves. Federal prosecutors are not simply political appointees. They are attorneys licensed by state authorities and bound by professional rules of ethics. Their paramount duties include candor toward tribunals, honesty in representations to courts, disclosure obligations, fidelity to their client and the prohibition against presenting evidence they know to be false.

Those ethical responsibilities do not disappear because a president expresses a preference. If a presidential directive would require an attorney to violate professional ethics or mislead a court, a prosecutor should resign rather than participate in conduct believed to be unethical.

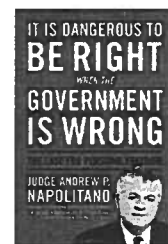
That is precisely where the theoretical collision occurs. A strong version of the unitary executive theory suggests the president should ultimately control every exercise of executive discretion. We know from history and common sense, however, that certain prosecutorial judgments require legal expertise and professional competence inherently independent from political influence. Neither principle entirely eliminates the other. Instead, both coexist in uneasy tension.

Blanche finds himself squarely within that difficult intersection. Two notorious cases, one involving government murders of innocents and the other involving a swindle of taxpayer dollars, came across Blanche's desk recently, and in both cases, he rejected the rule of law and bowed to presidential whim.

Blanche surely knows the basics of due process — notice, hearing, right to appeal — whenever the feds want life, liberty or property. Yet he permitted and accepted as appropriate the presidential order to enforce U.S. laws against drug trafficking by murdering 221 persons in 67 speedboats on the high seas. Needless to say, none of these folks received due process, and Blanche must answer for that.

The better known of Blanche's ethical failures involves Trump suing the IRS for \$10 billion because an IRS employee criminally revealed the contents of Trump's tax returns. Two weeks ago, the U.S. District Court in Miami excoriated both Trump's present personal lawyers and his former lawyers for engaging in a false cause of action — one where there was no adversity between the parties because both sides wanted the identical result.

In response to the lawsuit, Trump's DoJ lawyers agreed to give his personal lawyers a fund of \$1.776 billion from the federal Treasury to disburse to Trump's



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supporters at Trump’s personal discretion; and Trump’s IRS lawyers agreed that neither Trump personally nor his family or closely held corporations could be audited by the IRS.

According to the DoJ, none of the \$1.776 billion has been spent and the fund is now dormant. But Blanche refuses to renounce it or negate his own signature on a document he filed establishing the fund. The federal court ruled the lawyers on both sides of this matter did not act in good faith because all sought to please Trump at taxpayer expense.

Lawyers in litigation have a duty of zealous advocacy and unimpeachable loyalty to their clients. They cannot secretly or openly aid their client’s adversary. If they are morally or personally or legally conflicted, they must withdraw from the case.

Blanche remains bound by the same ethical obligations governing every federal prosecutor. He cannot simply substitute presidential preference for legal analysis.

If Blanche can’t do the right thing on cases where the law is obvious and unambiguous, how can he be trusted with complex decisions? Courts, disciplinary authorities and history judge attorneys according to established legal standards rather than partisan loyalty. In the case of Todd Blanche, the Senate should do the same — and reject his nomination.

To learn more about Judge Andrew Napolitano, visit JudgeNap.com.

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