

Elections Matter

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Since Donald J. Trump's first inauguration in 2017, the term "judicial activism" has played a vigorous role in the Democrat Party's opposition to his administration's policies. Most recently, as *Just the News* reports, U.S. District Judge Lynn Winmill ruled that "the U.S. Constitution protects a right to 'therapeutic' abortion, including to prevent a pregnant woman from self-harm, notwithstanding the *Dobbs* precedent overturning federal abortion rights from *Roe* four years ago."

But this no longer qualifies as "news."

Why?

Because Judge Winmill is a Democrat, appointed by President Bill Clinton over a quarter-century ago.

And since then, activist Democrat judges have weighed in on countless significant issues with a common goal: to employ lawfare to impede, or even reverse, President Trump's efforts to repair the damage inflicted by the Obama-Biden policies that enabled everything from massive voter fraud and illegal immigration to eroding the fundamental issues regarding life, family, and religious rights.

Trump's success in addressing the crisis has forced the left to pull back the curtain on its operations, which in the past have been conveniently ignored by the usual suspects in the legacy media. Activist judges now feel no pain in defying the Constitution and the Supreme Court regarding their jurisdiction, and Democrat senators like Chuck Schumer and a radical cast of nominees for various federal and state offices openly declare their desire to solve the problem by destroying the Supreme Court, if necessary, by making it a virtual subsidiary of the Democrat National Committee.

This new wrinkle is troubling indeed, but it represents only the latest stage in a long-standing saga of the left's struggle to overcome the Constitution's limitation on federal powers altogether.

The Origins Of Judicial Review

In *Federalist* 78, Alexander Hamilton writes that the federal courts described in Article III of the Constitution are "the least dan-

By CHRISTOPHER MANION

gerous branch" of the proposed government. "It may truly be said to have neither *force* nor *will*, but merely judgment," he assures us.

Just in case, Article III, Section II empowers Congress to restrict or even forbid the jurisdiction of the federal courts "with such exceptions, and under such regulations as the Congress shall make."

Thomas Jefferson warned in 1798 that "In questions of powers, then, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution." When *Marbury v. Madison* was decided, Congress could have followed Jefferson's lead and passed legislation declaring (in layman's terms), "No More *Marburys*!" Had Congress perceived the "partisan coup" identified by Edward S. *Corwin*, it could have exercised its constitutional powers and impeached Chief Justice Marshall to drive their point home.

They chose not to.

From the beginning, the Legislative Branch was reluctant to defend its constitutional powers, a weakness that continues to this day.

In 1907, New York Gov. Charles Evans Hughes could write, "We are under a Constitution, but the Constitution is what the judges say it is" — an audacious remark at the time. As chief justice a quarter-century later, Hughes presided over the Supreme Court as Ku Klux Klan alumnus Hugo Black and his radical colleague William O. Douglas dissolved Jefferson's chains altogether, to the applause of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The "court-packing plan" of Senate Democrat Leader Chuck Schumer relies on the precedent set by Roosevelt after his 1936 reelection victory. FDR acknowledged Gov. Hughes' 1907 affirmation of the powers of the court — after all, Hughes was now chief justice, and the Hughes court had declared several of FDR's New Deal programs to be unconstitutional.

Instead of asking a friendly Congress to limit the court's jurisdiction, or demanding Hughes' impeachment, Roosevelt threatened to expand the number of justices on the court from nine to 15. The

Hughes Court "got the message," according to the Social Security Administration's history page, and responded by upholding as constitutional the National Labor Relations Act and the Social Security Act.

By 1958, the radical Warren Court went so far as to declare solemnly for itself the power that Hughes had asserted half a century earlier. In *Cooper v. Aaron*, the court blithely stowed the rights of states protected by the Tenth Amendment safely in cold storage. Flexing its muscle-on-steroids, the court then banned prayer in public schools (*Engel v. Vitale*, 1962), banned Bible reading in those schools (*Abington School District v. Schempp*, 1963), and overturned state laws nationwide that prohibited abortion (*Roe v. Wade*, 1973). The die was cast. Today, who gets to use what bathroom is up to the Supreme Court.

Lawfare Takes The Stage

In the past 40 years, Democrats upped the ante. In the summer of 1986, Joe Biden, guided by Ralph Neas, director of People for the American Way, led their first battle to derail a federal court nominee appointed by President Ronald Reagan. Nancy Kassebaum (R-Neb.) was a dependable supporter of "abortion rights" at the time, and Biden was enraged when she cast the deciding vote in favor of Judge Daniel Manion for the Seventh U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Democrat Minority Leader Robert Bird (D-W.Va.), a former Grand Cyclops of the Ku Klux Klan, had to shut Biden up when Joe raged on the floor of the Senate during the debate.

But again, the die was cast. Neas quickly became the most able advocate of "abortion rights" of his generation in Washington. In the following year, he led the battle to defeat Reagan's nomination to the Supreme Court of Robert H. Bork, who was a member of the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit at the time.

Elections Matter

If you don't defend your rights, they will be taken away — it's that simple. When federal judges aggressively employed "judicial

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review” in the 20th century, Congress seldom objected. After all, federal judges don’t have to run for reelection, while senators and congressmen do. And while the Constitution’s Article I confirms upon Congress the right to impeach federal judges, history shows that Congress normally exercises those powers only in cases of fraud and scandal, rather than cases involving judicial overreach.

In like manner, appointees of Republican presidents exercise their powers under judicial re-

view far less frequently than appointees of Democrat presidents.

The reason is simple. As the recent explosion of its nominees for office who flaunt their Communist sympathies demonstrates, the Democrat Party today is interested in maximizing its power rather than in protecting the constitutional rights of Americans. Today, it makes no bones about its willingness to use the Constitution itself in its lawfare, in order to achieve the ultimate goal of destroying it.

And thus, Democrats will use elections to do so as well. While Republican presidents choose their judicial nominees on the basis of their experience, their qualifications, and their judicial temperament, the record shows that Democrat nominees need to meet only one requirement: they must pledge to use their judicial powers to advance the party’s agenda to destroy the Constitution’s limits on federal power altogether.

They’re willing to do it, they’re determined to do it, and they’re doing it today.

And that’s why elections matter.

US Ambassador Breaks With President, Says Israel Is ‘Occupying’ Golan

During his first term, President Donald Trump recognized the Golan Heights as Israeli territory. The UN calls for Tel Aviv to return the territory to Syria.

by Kyle Anzalone | August 23, 2026 at 11:32 am ET

Update: US Ambassador Tom Barrack walked back the remarks he made on Friday. “United States policy on the Golan was set by President Trump in 2019 and is unchanged,” he said in a statement to The Associated Press on Sunday.

The US Ambassador to Turkey said the Golan Heights should be returned to Syria. President Donald Trump recognized the territory as part of Israel.

Speaking with Mario Nawfal on Friday, Tom Barrack said, “In the Golan with Syria — they still occupy the Golan against the [United Nations] resolutions, against all of the international order which has said the Golan is Syria’s.”

In 1967, Israel seized the Golan Heights from Syria during the Six-Day War. Damascus failed to reclaim its territory during the Yom Kippur War in 1973. Then, in 1981, Tel Aviv annexed the Golan Heights and built several settlements in the territory, ignoring UN resolutions.

No other nation recognized the Golan as Israeli until 2019, when President Trump declared it was Israeli territory. Earlier this month, Colombia also recognized Israel’s claim.

After Syrian President Bashir al-Assad was overthrown in 2024, the IDF invaded the region surrounding the Golan, and the IDF has continued to expand its occupation of Syria slowly.

In the interview with Nawfal, Barrack said Israel was unlikely to continue its occupation of southern Lebanon. “No matter what they are doing. In the long run, I think they are looking and saying ‘that is probably unlikely that anybody is going to allow us to do that’. America’s support is waning. Even the young Democrats are coming against them,” he explained.

Barrack, who is also serving as the US envoy to Iraq and Syria, also discussed a recent Israeli airstrike in Idlib, Syria. He suggested the attack was a mistake despite top Israeli officials saying it was a threat to Turkey. He also warned Tel Aviv’s actions could have “unintended consequences.”

Barrack went on to say that the Israeli attack could have been intended to “bait” Turkey into an escalation ahead of the October elections in Israel.

When War Comes Home: A Constitutional Warning

by Andrew P. Napolitano | Sep 10, 2026 | 8 Comments

A failed war does not end when the drones stop flying. It creates a new danger: A government that refuses to admit defeat and a president who, having failed abroad, seeks muscular victories elsewhere.

The war against Iran is a case study in the limits of military power, the dangers of presidential overreach and the enduring wisdom of the Constitution's separation of powers. It was unauthorized, unconstitutional, illegal, strategically incoherent and — by the standards by which wars must be judged — a geopolitical failure.

The American people were told that force would achieve clear objectives. Iran would be compelled to surrender. Somehow, American security would be enhanced. The region would become more stable.

Instead, the United States expended enormous resources, consumed scarce munitions, deepened regional instability and failed to produce the political outcome President Donald Trump promised. Senior military officials just last week warned him that extending large-scale operations risked exhausting critical military capabilities and weakening America's ability to respond elsewhere.

The United States can destroy buildings, eliminate targets, deploy aircraft, ships, missiles, drones and troops anywhere on the planet. But war is not a video game in which the destruction of enemy assets automatically produces political surrender. War is a contest of wills, societies, culture and endurance.

And here is the constitutional question that should have been asked before the first bomb was dropped: Who gave the president the authority to begin this war? The Constitution did not.

Article I, Section 8 gives Congress — not the president — the power to declare war. The framers deliberately rejected the British model in which kings could drag nations into conflicts based upon personal judgment, ambition or political convenience. James Madison warned that the executive branch was "the branch of power most interested in war," and therefore the Constitution placed the decision to enter war outside the president's constitutional reach.

The president is commander in chief. He commands forces after lawful congressional decisions have been made. He does not possess the power to transform his title into a personal authority to begin wars.

That principle has been repeatedly recognized by the Supreme Court. In cases such as *Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co. v. Sawyer*, the Court rejected the idea that President Harry Truman had unlimited power simply because he claimed national security. Justice Robert Jackson's famous concurrence warned that executive power is most dangerous when it operates in a "zone of twilight" where presidents attempt to expand authority beyond constitutional boundaries and without congressional concurrence.

The Iran war belongs precisely in that twilight — where executive ambition collides with constitutional restraint.

The administration may argue that modern threats require flexibility. That argument has been made by presidents of both parties for decades. But flexibility is not the same as unlimited authority. The Constitution was written for difficult moments, not easy ones. It was designed to restrain presidents even when they believe they have compelling reasons to act.

The military failure abroad has created a political dilemma at home. A president who promised victory must now confront the reality that victory was never achieved.

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The danger is what happens next.

History teaches that political leaders who suffer public humiliation abroad often seek demonstrations of strength elsewhere. Foreign-policy failure can produce domestic overreach. Leaders who cannot achieve the desired result overseas may attempt to prove their power through actions at home.

That is where the war comes home.

The president, frustrated by military limitations, may turn toward radical immigration enforcement, Supreme Court-prohibited tariffs, statutorily prohibited domestic deployments of military forces, stealing foreign-owned oil, and assertions of executive authority that collide with free speech and free association.

But the Constitution does not permit a president to substitute disappointment for law.

The Fifth Amendment guarantees that no person — not just Americans — shall be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law. The Sixth Amendment guarantees all persons — not just Americans — from whom the government seeks life, liberty or property the right to a public trial before an impartial jury, and other constitutional protections. These protections apply not because accused persons are necessarily innocent but because government power is too dangerous to operate without restraints.

Evidence is not conviction. Accusation is not guilt. Presidential assertion is not judicial judgment.

The executive branch cannot simply identify alleged criminals in speedboats or elsewhere, declare them enemies and impose punishment without trial. That is a system the American Revolution rejected.

The same principle applies to the use of military force inside the United States. The founders were deeply suspicious of standing armies being used for law enforcement. That suspicion produced constitutional protections and later statutes prohibiting the military's role in civilian law enforcement.

The military exists to defend the nation from foreign threats. It is not a presidential police force.

Likewise, Congress — not the president — defines crimes and establishes punishments. A president cannot create new categories of enemies and decide their fate by executive command. The Constitution does not authorize a monarchy with aircraft carriers.

Every generation faces a temptation to exchange freedom for security. Every generation is told that normal rules cannot apply because a crisis is too serious, an enemy too dangerous and a moment too urgent.

The founders knew that argument well and they rejected it.

The Constitution was written precisely because government officials would sometimes believe that their objectives justified employing extraordinary power. The separation of powers, congressional war authority, judicial review and due process protections are not obstacles to effective government. They are safeguards against government becoming the threat it was created to prevent.

The ultimate question is not whether a president is strong enough to exercise power. The question is whether the president is restrained enough to obey the laws he has sworn to uphold.

That is the fear of a republic when the war comes home. To paraphrase the author Herman Melville, beware the president weeping when he bares an iron hand.

Last Monday, a day before the Republican-controlled House passed a resolution condemning socialism, the Pentagon’s Office of Strategic Capital announced that it had acquired a 35 percent stake in North American Blue Energy Partners, one of Venezuela’s largest private oil producers.

In the deal, the Venezuela government gives the company a hundred years lease for some oil fields. The deal also provides the US government with veto power over appointments to the company’s board of directors. Having power over appointments to the board gives the US government control over the company.

This deal makes the US partners with the same Venezuelan government whose president, Nicolás Maduro, was removed by the US military in January. It is also the same government that has been denounced as socialist by US politicians of both parties and that has been the target of US inspired regime change operations since the late Hugo Chávez assumed the presidency in 1999. One of those failed regime change efforts took place during President Trump’s first term.

Some may find it ironic that the Trump administration is partnering with a socialist government when President Trump regularly warns about the threat of socialism arising from the increasingly influential socialist wing of the Democratic Party. While President Trump may sincerely oppose some socialism, he is an avid promoter of corporatism. Corporatism is a socialism variant where businesses are nominally private but are controlled by the government.

Since President Trump returned to power in 2025, the US government has “invested” in over 30 private companies. Government investment in private businesses distorts the market as it forces business owners and managers to make decisions (or have decisions made for them) based on what will please politicians and bureaucrats rather than consumers. It also encourages other businesses to divert resources toward attracting government investment instead of attracting consumers and private sector investors. Corporatism can also lead politicians and bureaucrats to base decisions on what will generate the greatest return on government’s investments.

Combining corporatism with foreign interventionism is a particularly harmful policy. This is illustrated by the US government’s new partnership with the Venezuelan government. Many Venezuelan citizens oppose the deal. If the current government were to be replaced, the new government may try to void the agreement or at least renegotiate it. So, the US government now has an interest

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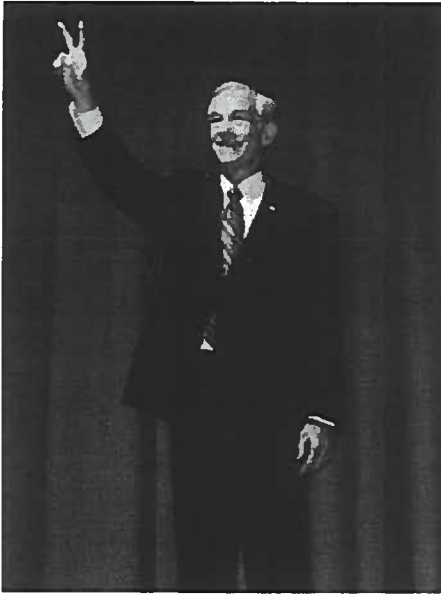
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6 in ensuring Hugo Chavez's heirs remain in power. The next time the US military intervenes in Venezuela it could be to defend the socialists.

If the US government continues to make investment deals with foreign governments, the need to protect the investments could become a reason for deployment of US troops abroad. The US government could even use the military to "convince" other countries to do business with the US government.



President Trump's corporatist merger of big government and big business enriches the well-off and well-connected at the expense of the rest of the population. Combining corporatism with foreign interventionism enriches corrupt and authoritarian foreign leaders while boosting the military-industrial complex. Because corporatism maintains the appearance of capitalism, and because many proponents of corporatism encourage this confusion, it is easy for socialists to blame corporatism's failings on the free market. Supporters of the free market must be as outspoken in opposition to

Republican corporatism as they are in opposition to Democratic socialism.



PERSIAN TILE WORK SAFAVID ERA MID 17th CENTURY

SOMETIMES IT IS ENLIGHTENING to set unrelated events side by side.

The day is August 19, 1692. A man of God stands on a platform with a trap door beneath his feet. His head is in a noose. A crowd has gathered to see him and four others hanged. Among them, on horseback, is one of the most learned men of his place and time, there in all his zeal to witness the executions, to rejoice in justice done, and to address the crowd.

The man about to be executed is George Burroughs, a minister much esteemed by his neighbors and congregants. But he was accused, from distant Salem, of being the head of a coven of witches. His accusers, dominated by teenage girls in a frenzy of bloodlust, terror, and madness, said that he could carry objects beyond the capacity of mortal man, and move from one place to another with supernatural speed. They said he presided over their black Sabbaths. For his part, Burroughs had expressed his disbelief in witchcraft—and that, for the learned Cotton Mather, the man eager to see him swinging at the end of a rope, was *additional* evidence of his guilt.

Burroughs then began to recite the Lord's Prayer without a hitch. That caused some people in the crowd to call a halt to the proceedings, but before they could get themselves together, the trap was opened and the man was dead. Reverend Mather, to the end of his life in 1728, continued to defend what others had come to see as madness and murder.

If only he had been able to go back in time two hundred years! He might have met Juan de Zumárraga, first bishop of Mexico and, by title and office, Protector of the Indians. Bishop de Zumárraga would have told him about the "witches" he had questioned in Spain—old women suffering hallucinations. But perhaps Mather would have shrugged. His father was president of Harvard, after all. Who was a Spanish bishop to advise him? Especially one whose church was full of "savages."

■ POWERS OF DARKNESS ■

It is Saturday, December 9, 1531. Bishop de Zumárraga is in his residence. He has been in Mexico for three years, he is not a young man, and he has had many troubles that Cotton Mather and indeed very few of the settlers in the northern reaches will ever have. By comparison with lands north of the Rio Grande, Mexico was densely populated, a civilization built on the mass cultivation of maize and beans. The ruling Aztecs were hated by those they had subjugated. Human sacrifice no doubt had much to do with that, with human blood so thick on the walls of their temple at Tenochtitlan—now the site of Mexico City—that it could never be washed out. If ever there was cause to associate the natives with demonic powers, it was in the Aztec temple.

But the Spanish missionaries, Fray de Zumárraga now foremost among them in Mexico, came to bring the Gospel to the natives and to set them free from the darkness of error and ignorance. Nearly two centuries before Cotton Mather published his second book defending his actions, Zumárraga printed the first book in the New World, a brief catechism to teach the Indians, whose intelligence he admired, as they had so quickly mastered the Spanish language. The originals of this book have been lost, but before he died he published another like it—and by then, there was a printing house in Mexico. I'll translate a sentence most germane to Our Lady: "The first article we must believe with firm faith and hold without doubt is that God, to redeem the human race, was conceived in the womb of a Virgin without spot, in a unique way, by a wondrous conception beyond the power of nature."

Think of the difference between the humble Christ, born among the poor in the darkness of this world, to conquer that darkness, and the ruthless nature gods of the Aztecs,

of sun and wind and rain, to whom, according to both the Spanish and the Aztecs, 80,400 captives were slaughtered in four days in 1487, to rededicate the Great Pyramid of Tenochtitlan.

Do we wonder then that the conquistador Hernán Cortés destroyed the Pyramid, along with its implements of human sacrifice?

But Cortés, an ally of the bishop, was pressed on one side by the natives and on the other by the most rapacious and cruel of the Spanish, whose depredations—torturing and enslaving the Indians and abusing their women—brought outcries from such men as Bartolomé de Las Casas and Bishop de Zumárraga, more temperate and judicious than Las Casas but no less solicitous for the welfare of his new flock. And old ways die hard. What do you do with a man who wants to become a Christian, but has several wives? How do you preach peace to people accustomed to violence, among themselves and from their rulers, both the old and, all too often, the new?

■ OUR LADY'S EYES ■

Such was the situation when the peasant Juan Diego came to the bishop on that winter day in 1531, saying that Our Lady told him that a temple should be built on the spot where she appeared.

If you go there now, you will see several impressive buildings—the beautiful rococo shrine with golden domes, for one, and the new basilica, a modern structure broad and flat, like an inverted clam shell, covered with bronze sheaths above, with their pleasing green patina. Inside the basilica, the *tilma* of Juan Diego, a sackcloth poncho made of agave fibers, is on prominent display, visible from every angle, without any pillars to obtrude upon your line of sight.

It is a plaza of triumph, to be sure. But to return to that late autumn day. The bishop was neither credulous nor cunning. Many a conqueror in man's sorry history has pretended to divinity to awe the people. Thus do Diocletian, persecutor of Christians, who did not believe in his own divinity but used it as a ploy, and the true-believer Montezuma, the last Aztec emperor, stand side by side. Zumárraga asked Juan Diego for a sign.

On December 12, the Indian ran to fetch a priest because his uncle was dying. Not wanting to be delayed, he avoided the spot where Our Lady had appeared, but suddenly he saw her again. She allayed his fears for his uncle, who was cured from that instant, and when he said that the bishop had asked for a sign, she told him to climb a nearby hill to gather roses. That would suffice; roses do not bloom in December.

When he arrived before the bishop, he opened his cloak to show him the roses, and there on his cloak was the image of Our Lady that millions of pilgrims over the years have beheld. Our readers may know of its miraculous features. The *tilma* should have decayed and fallen apart in twenty years; it is intact after five hundred. No brush strokes can be detected. The sacking was not prepared for paint. The pigments have not been identified. The cloth is coarse, with innumerable gaps between the fibers; but the image is visible from either side. Our Lady is portrayed as an Indian princess, both virgin and with child. Her look is humble and meek, yet she stands triumphantly on a symbol of an immeasurably famished Aztec god, fed so abundantly with human blood. Microscopic investigation of her eyes reveals the image of two men, one of them the bishop, as if the eyes had been a photographic plate.

We should consider that those eyes saw more than the men in that small room. She saw the Americas, and millions of natives rushing to become Christians: five million, by 1536.

■ MOTHER OF MEXICO ■

What did Our Lady of Guadalupe mean to the Mexican people? No less than that they became a people, a true nation.

In the Denver Art Museum, there is a gloriously florid 1779 painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe, oil on copper plate,

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by the Mexican artist Sebastián Salcedo. Here the meaning of the apparition is set forth in splendor. Above Mary, two cherubs carry a scroll that reads, *NON FECIT TALITER OMNI NATIONI*: He has not dealt thus with any other nation. That is from Psalm 147, referring to the Jewish people and the Law of Moses. How powerful that is, applied to Mary and the Mexican people!

Inscriptions abound, along with scenes from the event itself, a panorama of the plaza, several saints and angels, Pope Benedict XIV, the emperor of Mexico, and much more. I will end with two items. Representing all martyrs, we see, opposite David and his harp, Saint Bartholomew. He is holding the knife his persecutors used to flay him alive. He is the highest human figure in the painting. Why else, but

that the Aztec priests used knives to carve the hearts of their living victims? Guadalupe is a Spanish-Arabic name in the Nahuatl tongue it sounds like "Coatlaxopeuh," who crushes the serpent." And one of the inscriptions reads *Ipsa conteret caput tuum*, "She shall crush your head, consummate curse upon the serpent in Eden, that is, Satan."

Human sacrifice? Slaying the helpless? We in the Americas need Our Lady of Guadalupe now more than ever.

(Anthony Esolen is translator of Augustine's Confessions (1994), translator and editor of Dante's Divine Comedy (Random House, 2003), and author of four volumes of essays, How the Church Has Changed the World (MAGNIFICAT).

GOD'S LITTLE HELPERS

by Eric Margolis | No Comments | Add a Comment

☐ Email this

September 4, 2026

Stalin once said, 'The death of one person is a tragedy. The death of thousands is a mere statistic.' He was quite right, of course.

Palestine is the current example of Stalin's cynical observation. There, young, violent Israeli hoodlums – known as 'settlers' in western media – have been trying to terrorize Arab villagers into flight. It's all part of a broad plan of genocide against peaceful Palestinian villagers.

In fact, this is a repeat of what happened in the region in the 1940's and 50's when close to a million Palestinians were driven from their homes in Palestine and Galilee by armed Jewish vigilantes. Britain and the US allowed this to happen – or even encouraged it – under the slogan 'a land without people for a people without land.' It was a big lie but very effective.

Now, seven decades later, and repeated ethnic cleansings, there are nearly 5 million Palestinian refugees, among them many Arab villages in Gaza.

Last week, Jewish 'settlers' attacked another Palestinian household in Gaza. They tore up its fields. They cut down its cherished olive trees, which take a century to mature before bearing fruit. But worst of all for me, as one who respects and loves animals, they seized a little donkey from that farm, tied it to their jeep, and dragged the little animal to its death. This crime was shown on French TV. It would not have appeared on heavily censored U.S. TV.

Donkeys are sweet, gentle animals. They protect sheep from predators. They like to playfully nip humans. One of them bore Jesus to the manger in Bethlehem. They are God's little creatures.

Sadly, they are the main method of transport across the Arab Mideast. They are starved, overworked, whipped and abused even though the Prophet of Islam urged his followers to be gentle to all animals.

I help support donkey sanctuaries in Israel and Puslinch, Canada with joy and satisfaction. I even bought hay last year for the Israeli refuge, something very new for me as a New Yorker.

I wish Israel's police would cease closing their eyes to their 'settler's' vandalism and provide protection to its animals. Before she came to me, one of my cats was run over in Tel Aviv and her back was broken. Excellent Israeli vets kept her in traction for months until she healed. That's the humane side of Israel. The inhumane side is all the savage attacks we see against animals – mostly innocent little donkeys whose ears are cut off and, worse, that are set on fire by young hoodlums, Arab and Jewish. These Jewish sadists are being used by Israel's far right Netanyahu government. What a shameful blot on the honor of the Jewish people.

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This post is in: Gaza, Israel

The reality that surrogacy shamelessly commodifies children is on full display in the case of the surrogate mother who refused to abort her child.

In case anyone doesn't think that surrogacy shamelessly commodifies children, exploits women, and is an utterly evil and dehumanizing process, they should pay attention to the story unfolding in Texas with surrogate mother McKenna West and her baby Gabriel.

Originally from Alaska, West was contracted to carry a baby for California couple Nausheen Gilkar and Omar Ahmed. At 20 weeks, an ultrasound revealed that the baby had a congenital heart defect that would require immediate medical treatment after his birth. When the intended parents learned about this, they demanded that West abort the baby, evidently not wanting to deal with the hassle of heart surgery. Although contractually obligated to comply with the couple's demands, West refused to abort Gabriel and sought custody of the baby in an Alaska court, which then punted the matter by redirecting her to a court in California to make the decision.

Desperate, West decided to seek sanctuary in Dallas, Texas. She petitioned the court to remain in the state and find treatment for the baby. Under the direction of Attorney General and U.S. Senate candidate Ken Paxton, the court granted this request and provided the necessary surgery after birth to keep the baby alive. However, West does not have custody of the baby and has "been forbidden from any contact with the baby after his birth." Despite wanting to abort their son and even denying him treatment after his birth, Gilkar and Ahmed are presumably still his legal guardians, but they are not allowed to move him out of Texas after he is born.

Although Gabriel will be allowed a chance at life—as of the time of this writing, Gabriel has just been born and is now in the hospital receiving treatment—the questions of where he will live and who will raise him are unresolved: Gilkar and Ahmed have not issued any statements about the court order; West's brother has reached out to adopt Gabriel; and West has no legal claim to the baby despite gestating him and saving his life. For the time being, Gabriel will spend his first days outside the womb in North Texas as the details about who will raise him are worked out.

While pro-lifers should rightly celebrate this outcome, they should also acknowledge that this happy ending is the exception not the rule. Typically, a surrogate mother will terminate a pregnancy if the intended parents demand it. Worse still, an abortion after 20 weeks is a horribly traumatic procedure for the surrogate. As West described it in court, "doctors would inject the baby with 'a solution that will stop his heart and then he'll be literally ripped apart and dismembered as he's taken from [my] uterus.'"

Even when the pregnancy goes well, the whole transaction is **deeply exploitative**, which is why poorer countries like India have **banned** it. Whatever the participants might say, no woman hopes to make her money carrying other people's children in her womb if she can help it. In the case of West, she was a single mother working as a nurse. She likely needed the money and was told that renting out her womb would be an easy thing to do.

It's unlikely that she was told of the primal wound she would inflict on the child she was carrying. As child advocate and fellow *Federalist* contributor Katy Faust explains,

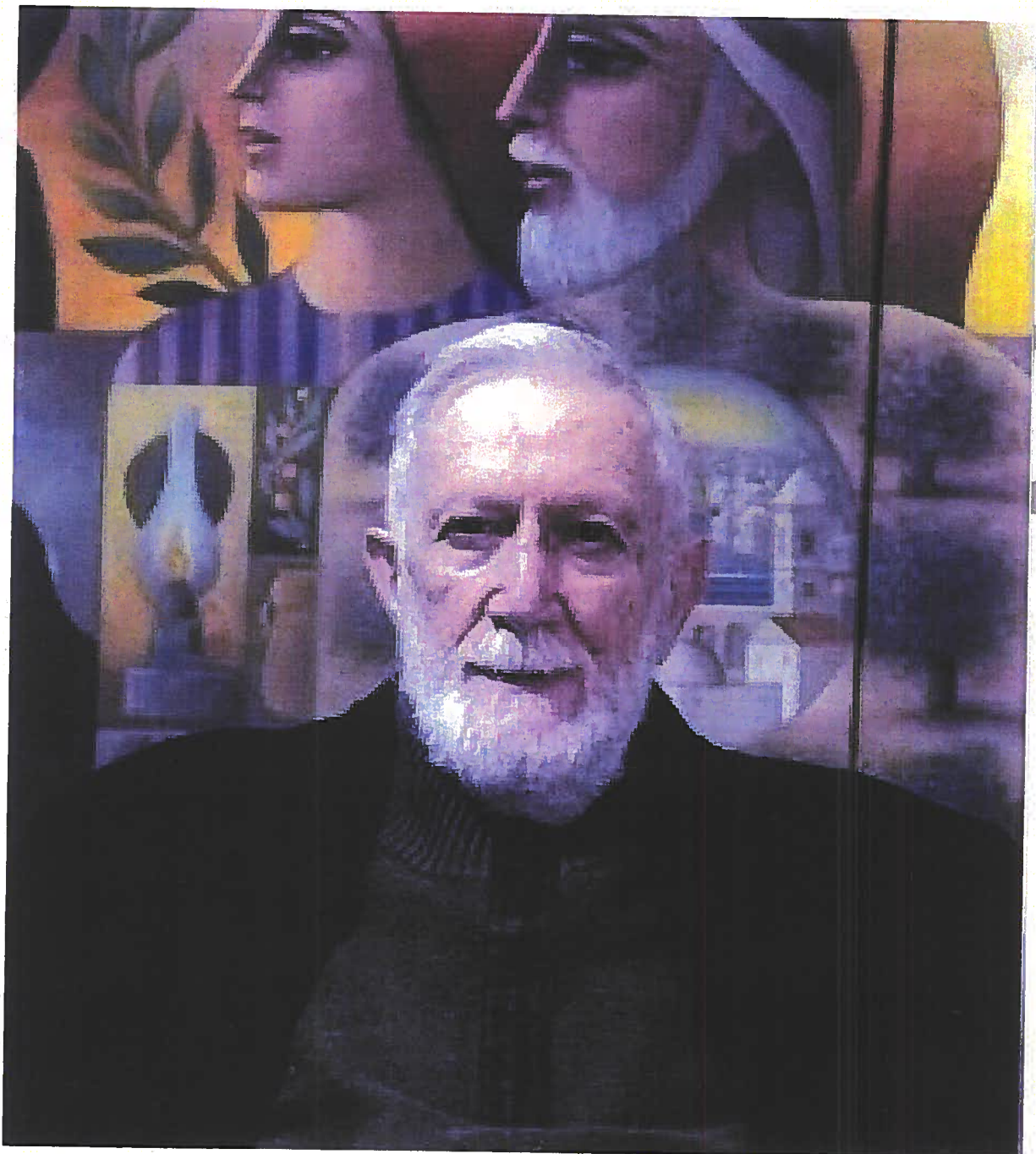
*parental separation, at birth or later in life, results in what many adoptees refer to as a **primal wound**, one which can result in ongoing trust, attachment, and emotional issues. That wound doesn't magically heal after a child is placed with loving parents.*

Furthermore, as West's story illustrates, the children of surrogacy do not actually have a right to life, nor are they protected from human trafficking. While there are many laws regulating adoption which require

extensive screenings of parents to prevent people from buying a child for nefarious purposes, few such laws apply to surrogacy. Anyone with enough money can have a baby without having to show themselves to be responsible adults. Even couples who hoped to kill their adopted baby, like Gilkar and Ahmed, are still somehow able to have custody over the child.

Despite all these evils associated with surrogacy, supporters will still insist on the whitewashed image of a loving, committed couple struggling to conceive and a consenting able-bodied woman happy to help them. There is never any mention of the complications, failures, and the crimes it brings, nor does anyone consider the implications of turning childbirth into a profitable business. Sure, both children and women are instantly objectified, but such concerns should be set aside for a pair of friendly gay guys who are willing to pay top dollar to play pretend.

While heterosexual couples who struggle with infertility really do deserve compassion and support, stories like McKenna West and her baby Gabriel demonstrate that surrogacy is not the way to do this. It makes a morally incoherent mess of bringing children into the world. Babies, even ones with heart defects, deserve to be born of loving parents—not swapped around and discarded like defective merchandise.



SULEIMAN MANSOUR

The Straw That Broke the Camel's Back

Dina Ramadan
October 05, 2016 – 12 min read



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In January 2015, Christie's announced that a painting by the Palestinian Suleiman Mansour, *Camel of Burdens II* (Jamal al-Mahamil), would be the highlight of its annual auction of modern and contemporary Arab, Iranian and Turkish art held in Dubai. The piece was listed as the second version of the 19

In January 2015, Christie's announced that a painting by the Palestinian Suleiman Mansour, *Camel of Burdens II* (Jamal al-Mahamil), would be the highlight of its annual auction of modern and contemporary Arab, Iranian and Turkish art held in Dubai. The piece was listed as the second version of the 1973 original, which was thought to have belonged to Muammar al-Qaddafi, the long-time Libyan dictator, and to have been destroyed in the US bombing of his Tripoli military compound in 1986. An iconic portrayal of Palestinian steadfastness (*sumud*) in the struggle for a homeland, it was expected to sell for somewhere between \$200,000 and \$300,000.

But the piece's authenticity was called into question when a London-based collector who saw the auction catalogue objected that he owned the original 1973 artwork. Upon investigation, Christie's was able to verify the collector's claim and further reveal that Mansour had in fact produced not two but three versions of the painting. [1] The second, 1975 version, it now appears, was the one that burned up in Qaddafi's stronghold. On display in Dubai was *Camel of Burdens III* (2005), the result of Mansour's eventual decision to recreate his painting, which he had been thinking about doing since hearing news of the bombing. Version three ultimately sold for \$257,000 to Ramzi Dalloul, a Palestinian economist and investor who has the largest private collection of Arab art with over 3,300 works.

Still another incarnation of *Camel of Burdens* had popped up before the public eye several months before the auction, in the streets of Cairo and other Egyptian cities. This rendition, not by Mansour, refashioned the visual paeon to Palestinian resistance into a poster backing the candidacy of Field Marshal 'Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi in Egypt's May 2014 presidential election. Dozens of other iterations of pro-Sisi graphic design took well-known images out of context, and it is hardly a novelty in Arab politics to appropriate the Palestinian struggle for partisan advantage, as this particular poster did. But the Sisi poster is indicative of something else as well: The mutation of *Camel of Burdens* on its travels from the West Bank to Libya, Dubai and Egypt also endows the image itself with a different set of meanings, often in tension with the original message. The transformations of this painting are inextricable from the transformations of the region's political geography.

Traveling Camels

Camel of Burdens, also known in English as *Camel of Hardships*, began its life in Suleiman Mansour's West Bank hometown of Birzeit. Mansour, a key figure in Palestinian art since the 1970s, was first trained in portraiture. He studied at the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem. Especially early in his career, he was central to the development of an iconography of the Palestinian struggle. [2] Key images that recur in his paintings have emerged as quintessential symbols of resistance to dispossession and Israeli rule: The orange tree and olive tree, respectively, represent the *nakba*, the military defeat and mass displacement of 1948, and the *naksa*, the Israeli occupation of the remainder of historical Palestine in 1967. Scenes of village life figure prominently in Mansour's oeuvre, as does traditional Palestinian embroidery, in vivid detail. The Palestinian woman, the mother who both births and protects the nation, is likewise a main protagonist. [3] Within this rich repertoire, *Camel of Burdens*, which was given its original Arabic title by the novelist Emile Habibi, is not only one of Mansour's most famous works, but also the focus of much critical analysis.

(12)



In the original 1973 oil painting, an elderly porter, facing right, dominates the canvas. He bends under a heavy load, a large sack ocular in shape and strapped to his forehead with a thick, braided rope. Inside the bundle is the dream of a Palestinian homeland, with the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem shining at the center. The image of Palestine inside an eye appears repeatedly in Mansour's paintings, and commentators have suggested it refers to the Arabic idiom that describes the beloved as the "pupil of one's eye." [4] In the aftermath of the 1967 war, Jerusalem, the fractured and lost capital of Mansour's student years, is like a boulder on the porter's back. And yet he stoically bears his burden; he is old, he is tired, his journey has been long, but he perseveres, slowly, doggedly, the very essence of *sumud*. Most striking to the viewer is the exaggerated size of the porter's hands and feet; both are strong and steady, and there is a reassuring tautness in the muscles of his forearms, despite his otherwise worn features. The background, the road he has come down, is undefined; beyond the horizon, little else is distinguishable. His gaze is determined; he looks straight ahead to the future, uninterested in what lies behind him. He is a wanderer, an exile, destined to carry the dream of his homeland wherever he goes.

Shortly after Mansour painted *Camel of Burdens*, prints began to circulate. It became a hugely popular image of resistance in the 1970s and 1980s; that it was reproduced on posters, postcards, stickers and t-shirts shows "the extent to which the painting has entered the popular vernacular and the collective imagination." [5] Mansour himself was surprised that he had created an "icon" when he intended only to "express the relationship of the Palestinian to Jerusalem." [6] In his

ethnography of Palestinian resistance, Nasser Abufarha points to the ways in which viewers have attached significance to the artwork that far exceed the artist's intent; the reproduction of the painting in these varied forms is "a cultural performance that has taken on a life of its own." [7] Indeed prints were hung in both homes and public spaces, and traveled far beyond the borders of the Occupied Territories, gaining in both audience and meaning. [8]

Camel of Burdens III, the 2005 version that sold in Dubai, is larger and more colorful than its forebears. In the updated piece, Mansour made a few alterations. First, after porters from Jerusalem brought it to his attention that the braided ropes were not suitable for lugging such a heavy load, he replaced them with flat ropes that would cause less slippage. Second, Mansour developed the cityscape of Jerusalem so as to include Christian landmarks, such as the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which he had previously ignored.

The fact that several versions of *Camel of Burdens* exist, one rediscovered only in 2015, and that the artist revised his work, demonstrates its fluidity as an image. For Mansour the painting's originality or "aura" is not threatened by its reproduction, and may even be enhanced. *Camel of Burdens* is a living, evolving artwork, much like the struggle it represents: The struggle of 1973 was very different from the struggle of today, shaped as it is by the first *intifada*, the 1993 Oslo accords, the formation of the Palestinian Authority, the 2000 uprising and all that ensued. During this period, Mansour's relationship to the cityscape of Jerusalem has changed, as the situation of Palestinians living in East Jerusalem has become increasingly precarious. His additions, aimed at accentuating the city's neglected Christian history, demonstrate a more complex understanding of Jerusalem that extends beyond its symbolic political significance as capital of an envisioned independent Palestine.

Equally important is that as Mansour's painting itself travels, in its multiple versions, it becomes part of regional developments. It is a victim of the US airstrike on Libya and a beneficiary of the booming art market initiated in the United Arab Emirates. At each point Arab audiences experience the artwork through both their local context as well as the worsening occupation of Palestine. The more it travels, the heavier and more fraught the porter's burden becomes. He does not merely carry a changing Jerusalem, but is weighed down as well by all that the Palestinian struggle has come to represent in the region, the weight of an increasingly symbolic solidarity, often intended to fend off local dissent.

The Camel-General

But it seems there is a straw that can break the camel's back. The posters imitating *Camel of Burdens* and plastering the Egyptian public sphere in the months leading up to the 2014 election were part of the wave of "Sisi-mania" in which the field marshal's face was put on everything from birthday cakes to lingerie. [9] These items often were not official campaign products but gestures of support by individuals, sometimes unidentified, and they were largely minimal in terms of original design, involving little more than the superimposition of Sisi's face upon existing images. Placing the presidential candidate in unlikely or even fictitious situations, many of these paraphernalia emphasized what they imagined to be his sheer physical strength, often that of a lion.

By contrast, the rendition of *Camel of Burdens* is a rather humble portrayal of Sisi. Here he is the everyman, the simple small farmer or fallah who does what he needs to do, with unassuming endurance. The poster brings to mind Sisi's own words, in an interview with the *Washington Post* shortly after the coup, during which he insisted: "I am not a hero. I'm just a person who loves his people and country and felt hurt that Egyptians were treated in such a way." [10]

The provenance of the poster is uncertain but it appears to exist in at least two versions. One is titled "Memorabilia" and carries the endorsement of an individual, "Hajj Amin's son."

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Veterans For Peace Condemns Marco Rubio's Threats Against Cuba and Against US Peace and Solidarity Activists

by Gerry Condon | Aug 9, 2026 | News | 2 Comments

Veterans For Peace has issued a strong condemnation of Marco Rubio's McCarthyite report, *Cuba, the Capital of 21st Century Communism*, which was released by the State Department on July 20. The 100-page document charges Cuba with interfering in the internal affairs of the United States, while accusing U.S. peace and solidarity activists of being foreign agents of Cuba.

"Talk about turning things on their head," responded Veterans For Peace. **"It is the U.S. that has waged an economic war against Cuba for 64 years with a blockade that prevents it from normal trade relations with the U.S. and other countries, stunts its economic development, and denies it access to medicines and other essentials.**

"It is the U.S. CIA that organized a failed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961, setting the stage for the 1962 Cuban missile crisis that almost led to a nuclear war. It is the U.S. that is currently enforcing a deadly oil embargo on Cuba, and it is the U.S. president and secretary of state who are openly threatening a U.S. military invasion of Cuba. What has Cuba ever done to the U.S.? Cuba is being punished for declaring its independence from U.S. imperialism and for attempting to develop a socialist economic model that is not based on exploitation and profiteering.

"We reject the Trump administration's sudden return to "anti-communism" as a means of undermining the credibility of its political opponents — whether from the Democratic Party or actual left-wing organizations. If this is an attempt to intimidate those who are organizing for a just and peaceful world, it will not work. We will not be intimidated. If Trump's and Rubio's sudden obsession with "communists" and "political terrorists" is telegraphing their intention for a clampdown on dissent in the U.S., we take this very seriously.

"As veterans and active duty military, we swore an oath to "defend the U.S. Constitution from all enemies, foreign and domestic." We take this oath very seriously — more so than ever as the domestic enemies of our democracy ominously rear their ugly heads. We will resist.

"Veterans For Peace will not be intimidated. We stand in solidarity with Cuba and with all those who struggle for human rights and democracy in the U.S. We will support active-duty military members who refuse to participate in an illegal invasion of Cuba. We also encourage service members to refuse illegal orders to support racist ICE raids or to suppress our First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and assembly in the U.S."

Veterans For Peace calls for an end to the 64-year-old US blockade of Cuba, and end to threats against dissent in the U.S., for the abolition of ICE and the release of all who are being held in ICE prisons.

Read the full Veterans For Peace Statement here.

GERRY CONDON was a GI resister to the US war on Vietnam, and he serves on the Board of Directors of Veterans For Peace.

9/11's Aftereffect: The Constitutional Accountability Abyss

by Patrick Eddington | Sep 11, 2026 | 0 Comments

Over the last several weeks in the lead up to the 25th anniversary of al Qaeda's attack on the U.S., I've had American and foreign journalists ask me the same question: how did 9/11 change America?

My answer has generally been some version of this: 9/11 didn't change us, we *allowed* it to change us, and in doing so critically damaged our very own political way of life.

We allowed our Arab American and Muslim American fellow citizens to become targets of federal surveillance and to be placed on secret government "watch lists" in the absence of any evidence they'd committed a crime.

We allowed the creation of the most sweeping and invasive surveillance dragnet in American history – first in secret via the National Security Agency's (NSA) STELLAR WIND program and then openly through the passage of the PATRIOT Act just six weeks after the attacks.

We allowed a previous American president to lead our nation into a war against a country – Iraq – that had nothing to do with al Qaeda's terrorist atrocities. The drama came complete with a televised presentation of "evidence" to the United Nations Security Council of the continuing threat Saddam Hussein allegedly posed to the region – evidence that turned out to be false.

We allowed those who opposed George W. Bush's war of choice against Iraq to be targeted by the FBI with surveillance and informant penetration operations that mirrored some of the worst Cold War era tactics employed by J. Edgar Hoover and the organization he led.

We allowed our government to set up secret torture chambers around the world for captured Arab and Muslim men – the CIA's "rendition, detention, and interrogation" (RDI) program (a.k.a., the torture program). Some, like Khalid Shaik Mohammad (KSM), were directly responsible for the attacks. Others not only had nothing to do with the attacks but no involvement with terrorism at all. And through it all, the U.S. abandoned the very principles of justice under law and due process that it had proclaimed to the world since the trials of German and Japanese war criminals after World War II. That torture program has already damaged the legal case against KSM.

And we allowed the president who authorized these things to get away with all of them and leave office legally unmolested.

I've used the phrase "we allowed" because we who are citizens of the Republic cannot escape our responsibility for what George W. Bush did, even if we voted for his opponents in 2000 and 2004.

Yes, there were those who went into the streets to protest the Iraq War and the creation of the Guantanamo prison and its dysfunctional, sham trial system. Those who risked police batons, tasers, and tear gas to raise their voices against unjust wars and the torture of those we captured deserve remembrance and praise. But they were too few in

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number to alter the course of events because too many of their fellow Americans did not join them when it mattered most.

I witnessed these events from a different angle, that of a senior House staffer working for then-New Jersey Democrat Rush Holt during the final four years of Bush's presidency. Holt's repeated efforts to stop runaway surveillance programs from his position on the House Intelligence Committee frequently came to naught because of the refusal of many of his colleagues to join his efforts.

Bush's authorization of the secret STELLAR WIND mass electronic surveillance program after the 9/11 attacks was a direct violation of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) of 1978. It literally represented an impeachable offense, as was his authorization of the CIA's torture program. And even though multiple impeachment resolutions against Bush or then-Vice President Dick Cheney were introduced, they went nowhere – even though Democrats controlled the House during Bush's last two years in office.

The fact that not a single House GOP member signed onto any of those resolutions no doubt contributed to the failure to hold Bush accountable for his misconduct in office. It was a posture that stood in stark contrast to the seven House Judiciary Committee Republicans who joined their Democrat colleagues in voting to impeach Richard Nixon for his crimes in office over 30 years earlier.

The degradation of the Congressional ethos of institutionalism and constitutional protection began before 9/11, but the attacks and how we responded to them accelerated the process of political and constitutional decline and the intensification partisan loyalty to the president. Donald Trump did not create this phenomenon, but he and his closest aides have exploited it and pushed it to new depths.

The brutalization of immigrants (legal or otherwise), the legal and political attacks on individuals or entities that oppose Trump's policies, the expansion of mass surveillance programs, the initiation of multiple illegal military actions – all of this and more has come to pass because of a failure to hold accountable a prior president who engaged in almost identical misconduct in the years after 9/11. Whether that dynamic can be broken and reversed is up to each of us.

Cato senior fellow Patrick G. Eddington is the author of The Triumph of Fear.

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A dictator may deem the conduct of the consumers rather foolish. Why should they be so crazy about individually fashioned clothes? He may be right from the point of view of his own value judgments. But the trouble is that valuation is personal, individual, and arbitrary. The democracy of the market consists in the fact that people themselves make their choices and that no dictator has the power to force them to submit to his value judgments.

— Ludwig von Mises
Human Action, Chapter XVI [1949]