

# The Progressive Establishment and America's Second Civil War

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## INTRODUCTION:

One of the riskiest endeavors in 21<sup>st</sup> century America is challenging establishment views, speaking truth to power. For instance, in the wake of tragic mass shootings that took place in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio in early August 2019, Tucker Carlson responded to boilerplate shrieks from the outrage industry, which blamed President Trump for the tragedies, by charging his accusers of duplicity and double standards.<sup>1</sup> After debunking white supremacist allegations and defending America's dignity, Carlson asserted that political opportunism, not moral principles, propelled the left's ceaseless attacks against the president.

Naturally, his efforts generated familiar denunciations from the usual suspects: he was accused of being a white supremacist whose "comments put our lives in danger and have already led to murders," and he should be fired immediately.<sup>2</sup> In other words, failure to agree with establishment narratives generates character assassination and demands to shut up. Nothing new, here; just another skirmish in America's second civil war, involving a smattering of "deplorables" pitted against an agglomeration of cultural magnates on the political left who dominate mass media, academia, entertainment, politics, foundations, corporate life, and much of society. In other words, the establishment.

This conflict has been going for at least 60 years, about the same time that elapsed between President Thomas Jefferson's lofty statement, "We are all Republicans, we are all

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<sup>1</sup> Victor Davis Hanson, "Why Target Tucker Carlson? It's Part of the Left's War on the Right," *The Hill*, October 9, 2019, <https://thehill.com/opinion/civil-rights/456803-why-target-tucker-carlson-its-part-of-the-lefts-war-on-the-right> (accessed August 16, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Scott Morefield, "White Supremacy Report The Left is Using To Attack Tucker Carlson Actually Reinforces His Point," *The Federalist*, August 8, 2019, <https://thefederalist.com/2019/08/08/white-supremacy-report-left-using-attack-tucker-carlson-actually-reinforces-point/> (accessed August 16, 2019).

Federalists,” and the bombardment of Fort Sumter, which began America’s first civil war. The principal difference is that in 1861, the moral and material forces marshalled against slavery and secession had most of the advantages. Today, however, the opposite is true: America’s modern Confederates largely control the commanding heights of the country, while their opponents try to preserve our constitutional republic with fewer resources under ceaseless rhetorical bombardment.

Characterizing today’s progressive establishment as “modern Confederates, of course,” is a provocative charge for those on the political left, though some scholars, like Harry Jaffa, have unabashedly argued this position, much to the fury of his colleagues.<sup>3</sup> This is the topic we shall pursue, about how progressives may in fact constitute heirs of the side that lost on the battlefields of America’s first civil war. Further, we shall explore how progressive policies are creating a social order that resembles a bygone era; that is, an era when gray clad soldiers fought their brethren whose leaders insisted that secession was unconstitutional. In fact, modern progressivism can be likened to a new Confederacy, one bolstered by yearnings and practices from totalitarian regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with less brutality so far, but an equal amount of fanaticism.

### **“A DISEASE IN THE PUBLIC MIND”**

In 1859, President James Buchanan reacted to John Brown’s assault on Harpers Ferry by rendering an agonized appraisal of the national mood: “An incurable disease in the public mind” had propelled Brown’s fantasies, which was only “cured” by a bloodletting that no one foresaw, even in the following year when southern states seceded in reaction to Abraham Lincoln’s

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<sup>3</sup> Ken Masugi, “Harry Jaffa—An Inconvenient Thinker,” *Law & Liberty*, January 15, 2015, <https://www.lawliberty.org/2015/01/15/harry-v-jaffa-an-inconvenient-thinker/> (accessed August 10, 2019).

election. The historian Thomas Fleming, who titled his revisionist account of America's greatest conflict with a version of Buchanan's medical analogy, emphasized that the disease has seized "control of thousands and even millions of minds" in America's past.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the best known example is Nathaniel Hawthorne's horrified reaction to witch hunts in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century:

That terrible delusion . . . should teach us, among its other morals, that the influential classes . . . are fully liable to all the passionate error that has ever characterized the maddest mob. Clergymen, judges, statesmen—the wisest, calmest, holiest persons of their day, stood in the inner circle roundabout the gallows, loudest to acclaim the work of blood, latest to confess themselves miserably deceived.<sup>5</sup>

A similar coterie of "clergymen, judges, and statesmen" held the reins of power in the South, exercising its supremacy over this vast region by infecting countrymen with a "disease in the public mind," which fomented secession and revolt to maintain the South's peculiar institution. The result, of course, was the most horrible event in the country's history. According to Fleming, the death toll for both sides likely was closer to 1,000,000 than it was to a range usually cited— 625,000 to 750,000—which is appalling enough. The stakes were high then, and they may be higher now, though not in terms of lives lost (we may hope), but rather in terms of the nation's survival as a constitutional republic.

This brings us to reviewing characteristics shared by modern progressivism and the Southern Confederacy, which are troubling to the extreme, especially when augmented by tendencies spawned by 20<sup>th</sup> century totalitarianism. Some prominent comparisons are presented in the following table.

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Fleming, *A Disease in the Public Mind: A New Understanding of Why We Fought The Civil War* (Philadelphia: Da Capo, 2013), Preface, Kindle.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Fleming, *A Disease*, Preface.

PRINCIPLES/EVENTS	SOUTHERN CONFEDERACY	PROGRESSIVE ESTABLISHMENT
1. Triggering Events and Reactions	Lincoln’s Election—States’ Secession Votes, Fort Sumter Attack	Trump’s Election—Relentless Vilification, Russian Collusion Hoax
2. Inequality—Social and Political	Inferiority of Slaves	Evil of “Whiteness”
3. Constitutional Status	Constitution is a Compact of States	Constitution is a Hindrance to Progressive Goals

### 1. Triggering Events

Abraham Lincoln’s election was the trigger that fired the South’s constitutional weapon of seceding from the Union. Three days after South Carolina received news of Lincoln’s election, its state legislature voted unanimously to authorize a convention to consider the state’s relationship with the Union. Another unanimous vote followed when the convention adopted an “ordinance” that severed its relationships with the other states.

Over the course of the following months, the remainder of states in the South followed South Carolina’s lead, and by late Spring of 1861, the Confederacy was well on its way in attempts to forming an independent nation. It is instructive to tap the intensity of hatred felt by the vanguard players in this developing catastrophe—South Carolina’s fire eaters, especially—when the vote to secede from the Union took place. James M. McPherson’s summary, which includes selections from blistering newspaper accounts describing the event, captures the mood well:

“There is nothing in all the dark caves of human passion so cruel and deadly as the hatred the South Carolinians profess for the Yankees,” wrote the correspondent of the London *Times* from Charleston. The enmity of Greek for Turk was child’s play “compared to the animosity evinced by the ‘gentry’ of South Carolina for the ‘rabble of the North.’”... ‘The State of South Carolina was,’ I am told, ‘founded by gentlemen... Nothing on earth

shall ever induce us to submit to any union with the brutal, bigoted blackguards of the New England States!”<sup>6</sup>

This vitriol was accompanied by pomp and pageantry: “marching bands, fireworks displays, militia calling themselves minutemen, and huge rallies of citizens waving palmetto flags and shouting slogans of southern rights,” McPherson goes on to say.<sup>7</sup> In short, over two generations of pent-up fury was ignited by southerners who spared no excess to express their animosity toward the North.

The bombardment of Fort Sumter to prevent federal reinforcement of supplies constituted the Confederacy’s point of no return; after that, a lengthy conflict was on the horizon. And after the First Battle of Bull Run, initially greeted by picnic-toting tourists in carriages, a continued and unparalleled carnage in North America seemed inevitable. Federal forces were humiliated, and the fabled career of General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson was launched. Scores of slaughters would follow, along with the catapulting of other sanguinary reputations.

The trigger for the Progressive establishment to vent its hatred for much of America was the election of Donald Trump in 2016. America’s political establishment, which includes most Democrats, many Republicans, almost the entire media and academic complex, along with a profane and raucous chorus of entertainers, reacted to Donald Trump’s election with a level of shock that dwarfed the terror of fleeing Unionists at Bull Run. In fact, an analogy from America’s entry into WWII seems even more apposite—the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, which nearly everyone thought was not only unlikely, but impossible.

But like Bull Run and Pearl Harbor, it happened. Question was—what could be done about it? Secession was out of the question and at all events, the election was not a political

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted in James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), Ch. 8, “The Counterrevolution of 1861,” Kindle.

<sup>7</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, “The Counterrevolution.”

event that could be resolved strictly in geographical terms. The answer that developed made many Trump opponents giddy with excitement: remove Trump from office via impeachment, relying on opposition candidate material laundered by the FBI and CIA to conjure the greatest hoax in American history: Trump didn't win the election legitimately; he was put into office by the Russians!

The background and unfolding of the Russian collusion fantasy, well documented by Andrew C. McCarthy<sup>8</sup> and others, continues to spill out; likely it will take years to assemble and comprehend its full dimensions. How any reasonably astute individual could believe such hare-brained accusations stretches credulity to the limits; for instance, Conrad Black huffed "as the Trump-Kremlin conspiracy vanishes in a flash and puff of smoke, the colossal absurdity of it suddenly becomes clearer."<sup>9</sup> How clear? "Let's call the Russian collusion 'hoax' what it really is," Roger Kimball insisted.<sup>10</sup> The word "hoax" doesn't begin to capture the enormity of the conspiracy, the depravity and arrogance of its perpetrators. It was a *coup* attempt; that is, a deliberate effort to overthrow a legitimately elected chief executive of the United States.

In the meantime, progressive hatred for President Trump has arguably exceeded the loathing that Southerners felt for the North; indeed, diatribes against the president have reached *Mein Kampf* levels of hysteria when Adolf Hitler talked about Jews. Across the entire range of

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<sup>8</sup> Andrew C. McCarthy, *The Ball of Collusion: The Plot to Rig an Election and Destroy a Presidency* (New York: Encounter, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Conrad Black, "The Absurd Collusion Delusion Goes Up In Smoke At Last," *National Post*, March 29, 2019, <https://nationalpost.com/opinion/conrad-black-the-absurd-collusion-delusion-goes-up-in-smoke-at-last> (accessed March 29, 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Roger Kimball, "Let's call the Russian collusion 'hoax' what it really is," *Spectator USA*, May 27, 2019, <https://spectator.us/lets-call-the-russian-collusion-hoax-what-it-really-is/> (accessed June 6, 2019).

so-called “mainstream media,” President Trump has received 90-95% negative coverage.<sup>11</sup> Few modern presidents have faced such unrelenting hostility.<sup>12</sup>

But percentages fail to capture the depth of hatred. The president has been ritually beheaded and threatened by baseball bat wielding radicals as well as bomb-toting nut cases (in terms of how his enemies would like to kill him). He has been called a racist, white supremacist, and Nazi; he is demented, has Alzheimer’s, or is a criminal psychopath who enjoys heaving children into cages and contemplating how to murder people in his spare time. He is a traitor, Putin stooge, and terrorist sympathizer who is turning America into the Third Reich. He is a bottomless pit of wickedness, the moral effluent of an execrable political base.

And that’s just for starters. Consider one of the milder outbursts of opprobrium spattered by Michael Eric Dyson:

We got a guy [Donald Trump] who gets up every morning and excretes the feces of his moral depravity into a nation he has turned into a psychic commode... And he’s a bigot-in-chief and a racist in residence... Look at this mendacious, relentlessly lying, bigoted, ill-informed person that we have. He has the fleshly thesaurus of white supremacy reduced to one body.<sup>13</sup>

In short, this “fleshy thesaurus” has been vilified with more profanity-filled outbursts than any other president, partly due to the regrettable acceptability of using filthy language in public forums to smear political opponents. President Trump is no stranger to bilious denunciations, of course; he has used social media to excoriate his detractors, though not to the

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<sup>11</sup> Editorial, “Media Trump Hatred Shows In 92% Negative Coverage Of His Presidency: Study,” *Investor’s Business Daily*, October 10, 2018, <https://www.investors.com/politics/editorials/media-trump-hatred-coverage/> (accessed August 21, 2019).

<sup>12</sup> President Franklin D. Roosevelt claimed that 85% of the press was against him, but most observers believe that was an exaggeration. In fact, FDR cultivated the press very skillfully. President Truman received blistering criticisms and calls for his impeachment when he fired the popular (and pompous) General Douglas MacArthur and he ended his presidency with only 22% approval rating. President Nixon matched that figure when he resigned.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Geoffrey Dickens, “NB Year in Review: Journalists Exhibiting Trump Derangement Syndrome,” *MRC NewsBusters*, December 26, 2018, <https://www.newsbusters.org/blogs/nb/geoffrey-dickens/2018/12/26/year-review-medias-trump-derangement-syndrome> (accessed August 20, 2019).

sewer-language levels of entertainment figures or the candidates who have been running for the presidency against him. Unfortunately, calls for more civility so far have fallen on deaf ears.

## **2. Inequality—Social and Political**

Leaders of the Southern Confederacy were willing to wage war to perpetuate a social order based on the permanent subjugation of African slaves, a gamble so huge that many Northerners, Lincoln included, didn't think would take place. More than that, Southern political leaders forbade criticism of slavery and with the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, demanded Northern complicity to perpetuate their atavistic culture. And when the Taney Court declared that Africans “had No Rights Which the White Man Is Bound to Respect,” the Southern ruling establishment gleefully concluded the debate was over. If only that upstart “Black Republican” hadn't been elected!<sup>14</sup>

Throughout their fulminations against Northern critics, Southern orators and their countrymen knew they had the power of state governments to back them up. In fact, as Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen pointed out, slavery likely would have died a “natural death” absent the coercive power of state governments to keep it alive, and then mostly to benefit those at the commanding heights of the slave economy, the larger plantation owners:

Ultimately slavery could exist only through the power of the state.... Laws forcing free whites to join posses for runaway slaves, censoring mails, and forbidding slaves to own property all emanated from government, not the market. Slaveholders passed statutes prohibiting the manumission of slaves throughout the South, banned the practice of slaves' purchasing their own freedom, and used the criminal justice system to put teeth in the slave codes. States enforced laws against educating slaves and prohibiting slaves from testifying in court.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen, *A Patriot's History of the United States: From Columbus's Great Discovery to the Age of Entitlement* (New York: Penguin, 2014), Ch. 8, “A House Dividing, 1848-1860: Dred Scott's Judicial Earthquake,” Kindle.

<sup>15</sup> Schweikart and Allen, *A Patriot's History*,” 274.



The role of the power players in the Southern social order also illustrates how a well placed minority can impose its will on a vast majority, which is expected to confirm arrangements contrary to its interests by succumbing to legal threats and penalties. Thus, when Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy, boasted that secession was the result of a “peaceful appeal to the ballot box,” he was spouting a malicious fiction. The actual decision was made by 854 men who were selected by their state legislatures, which were not widely representative, as well as being one step removed from actual voters. Of this number, 157 voted against leaving the Union, which, as Paul Johnson points out, meant that, “697 men, mostly wealthy, decided the destiny of 9 million people, mostly poor.”<sup>16</sup> From the standpoint of the economic-political elite, the “War Between the States” was waged to preserve their quasi-Medieval structure.

Further, when President Lincoln declared in his “House Divided” speech that “the government cannot endure, permanently, half slave and half free,”<sup>17</sup> he touched on the evil propensities of slavery for future generations. As James L. Huston stated about the logic of justifying human servitude, if individuals could be denied their liberty on the basis of racial discrimination, they also could be subject to opprobrium and discrimination for their religious or political beliefs, as well.<sup>18</sup> In short, on the basis of Confederate leaders’ rationale for ruling a country, whole categories of people may be singled out for unequal or horrible treatment.

The principle difference between Southern Confederates and modern progressives is in their designation of the suspect race, which for the latter comprises all whites, who frequently

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<sup>16</sup> Paul Johnson, *A History of the American People* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), Part Four: “‘The Almost Chosen People’: Civil War America, 1850-1870,” Kindle.

<sup>17</sup> Abraham Lincoln, The “House Divided” Speech,” *The History Place*, <http://www.historyplace.com/lincoln/divided.htm> (accessed August 20, 2019).

<sup>18</sup> James L. Huston, “Property Rights in Slavery and the Coming of the Civil War,” *Journal of Southern History*, 65, May 1999, 279.

have been labeled as predators and as “inherently racist.” “Whiteness Studies” proliferate in universities and businesses, with legions of “Diversity Trainers” inculcating captive audiences with propaganda about the primacy of pigment and the evils of white, racist, patriarchal, and imperialistic Western Civilization.

The “Whiteness Forum” at Cal State San Marcos that met shortly after President Trump’s 2016 election victory took a “critical look at whiteness” and provides a typical example. For instance, it was important to single out and boycott companies and organizations that showed support for the President-elect. These included NASCAR, the UFC, Jenny Craig, Macy’s, Hobby Lobby, Amazon, along with several others. The syllabus for one class stated that the course was devoted to examining whiteness “as a system of power based on racist ideology maintained discursively, institutionally, and materially.”<sup>19</sup> Studying whiteness means fully to grasp how dominant groups work “to maintain their privileged position over subordinate groups.”<sup>20</sup> Later renditions of this point expressed this thought in terms of the “wokefulness,” or susceptibility of groups and individuals involved to cries for “social justice” from hordes of campus radicals.

Further, governments’ support of programs that vilify whites and celebrate minorities is as important to maintaining progressive sway over America’s major institutions as Confederate State governments’ police state tactics were to maintain a social order based on slavery. A full accounting of progressive dominance in American culture has been covered by many treatments and is beyond our purview here.<sup>21</sup> However, a brief reference to common academic practices, all

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<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Jennifer Kabbany, “University’s ‘Whiteness Forum’ takes ‘critical look at ‘whiteness’,” *The College Fix*, December 5, 2016, <http://www.thecollegefix.com/post/30248/> (accessed August 21, 2019).

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Jennifer Kabbany, “University’s ‘Whiteness Form’.”

<sup>21</sup> See for example, Judge Jeanine Pirro, *Liars, Leakers, and Liberals: The Case Against the Anti-Trump Conspiracy* (New York: Hatchette, 2018); Kimberly Strassel, *The Intimidation Game: How The Left Is Silencing Free Speech* (New York: Hatchette, 2016); and Sharyl Attkisson, *The Smear: How Shady Political Operatives and Fake News Control What You See, What You Think, and How You Vote* (New York: HarperCollins, 2017).

of which directly or indirectly are supported by federal and state governments, serves as an unpleasant reminder.

In many campuses across the country, students commence their college careers only after being divided by race, gender, and ethnicity, national origins and whatnot, and those who choose may attend graduation ceremonies on that basis, as well. Academia is suffused with indoctrination programs that stress ethnic, racial, and gender categories along with a plethora of new-fangled pronouns. Thus, whites must be sure to “check their privilege,” watch their language, and be respectful of those who “identify” as something other than they are and demand to be addressed by their “preferred pronouns,” even though such choices leave unsuspecting witnesses speechless or incredulous.<sup>22</sup>

All this familiar falderol has infected the political sphere in the noisiest, most obnoxious way, especially during the presidential election season, 2019-2020. For instance, as John Gage reported, Senator Kirsten “Gillibrand... fought back tears as she explained various situations in which she said young men's whiteness would protect them and touched on how she herself has experienced white privilege.”<sup>23</sup> No academic safe space for her; she and other candidates enjoy loudspeaker influence over at least half the country, in attempts to seize “control of thousands and even millions of minds,” to return to Thomas Fleming’s characterization in his reference to Nathaniel Hawthorne and Puritan witch hunts. Indeed, few times in American history have race and accusations of racism played such a large role in public discourse. All befitting, in the most tragic sense, the ideological battlefield of our country’s second civil war.

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<sup>22</sup> Katrina Trinko, “Preferred Pronouns and More: What a Mom Saw at Her Son’s College Orientation,” *Daily Signal*, August 8, 2019, <https://www.dailysignal.com/2019/08/20/preferred-pronouns-and-more-what-a-mom-saw-at-her-sons-college-> (accessed August 8, 2019).

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in John Gage, “Gillibrand tearfully explains her white privilege,” *Washington Examiner*, Friday, July 13, 2019, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/watch-gillibrand-tearfully-explains-her-white-privilege> (accessed August 4, 2019).

### 3. Constitutional Status

For Southern Confederates, the Constitution was a compact among states, which retained their rights as principals to the agreement to alter its terms at will; that is, to secede from the Union if they so desired. Civil liberties were the province of elite determination, and political participation was limited to regime supporters, which in practice meant denying the franchise to slaves and discouraging much of the white population to vote as well.

Regardless of how the Constitution was ratified, Progressives regard it as a hindrance to the achievement of their goals and is viewed with derision. For instance, at the Brett Kavanaugh hearings, Senator Kamala Harris shot a question about “unenumerated rights,” which “means rights that are protected by the Constitution even though they’re not specifically mentioned by the Constitution.” Then to Judge Kavanaugh, she added contemptuously, “So they’re not in that book that you carry.”<sup>24</sup> Further, Progressives have argued that governments possess the authority to rescind or to criminalize constitutionally protected liberties, such as the right to bear arms or engage in free speech.

Grasping the role of democratic elections is a no-brainer for progressives; these ritualized formalities in citizens’ choices are considered legitimate only if progressives win. Hence, as noted above, the ceaseless caterwauling about Trump’s victory in 2016, which by definition must have been the result of foreign intrigue that perpetrated a massive swindle. And the insufferable Stacey Abrams continues to pepper news cycles about her loss in the Georgia gubernatorial election, which she insists is explained by “racism and voter suppression.” In her words, “We don’t have to concede elections anymore, because when we concede, we are condoning systems

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<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Amber Athey, “Kamala Harris Dismisses Kavanaugh’s Pocket Constitution: ‘That Book You Carry,’” *Daily Caller*, September 7, 2018, <https://dailycaller.com/2018/09/07/kamala-harris-dismisses-kavanaughs-pocket-constitution/> (accessed September 21, 2019).

that are used to oppress us.”<sup>25</sup> Being a Progressive means never having to admit you’ve lost or that you were wrong.

In summary, America’s second civil war bears great resemblance to the first one, replete with all the hatreds, lies, and vilification of opponents that characterized Confederates’ loathing of their subject class, fear of and disdain for their enemies, and hysterical efforts to defend their system. Like the Confederates, the modern establishment has contempt for the constitution and seeks to undermine it by interpretations that suit its interests. Finally, modern Confederates labor sedulously to expunge or neutralize opponents and eliminate their influence in national affairs. Then only the progressive establishment will remain, and it will take charge of the most formidable and sophisticated governing system in world history to transform America and the world as it sees fit. In short, to create a totalitarian order from the wreckage that was once the United States of America.

## **THE PROGRESSIVE ESTABLISHMENT’S TOTALITARIAN SURGE**

### **Totalitarianism Up Close and Personal**

When Ryszard Legutko was invited to speak at Middlebury College, the famous Polish intellectual assumed that this campus would be the perfect place for him to discuss his new book, *The Demon in Democracy*.<sup>26</sup> As it turned out, his naïve expectation constituted a victory of hope over reality, and reality won. More than that, the facts on the ground at this notorious college crushed his innocent expectations, ground them into tiny bits, and spate them back into his face.

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<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Matt Vespa, “Tucker Carlson Takes 2020 Democrat To The Woodshed Over Shoddy Election Truther Nonsense,” *Townhall*, June 6, 2019, <https://townhall.com/tipsheet/mattvespa/2019/06/06/seth-moulton-if-us-wasnt-racist-stacey-abrams-would-be-governor-n2547287> (accessed June 10, 2019).

<sup>26</sup> Ryszard Legutko, *The Demon in Democracy: Totalitarian Temptations in Free Societies*, trans. Teresa Adelson (New York: Encounter Books, 2016).

Legutko believed that after Middlebury had trashed the distinguished Charles Murray, threatened his life, and injured his faculty sponsor, that things would be different for him.<sup>27</sup> After all, he reasoned, surely radicals at Middlebury could recognize how their own actions resembled murderous communist practices from earlier decades, wouldn't they?

Not even close, as it turned out. Legutko plunged into an academic hot zone, the ideological equivalent of a viral hemorrhagic fever region, described in Richard Preston's frightening account of Ebola, the Marburg virus, and other filoviruses, which are usually fatal and have no known treatments.<sup>28</sup> Of course, Legutko assumed that knowledge is the known treatment for ignorance and barbarism, that the "parallelism" between Middlebury students and their communist student forebears "could have been... a good starting point for debate and for examining the thesis of my book."<sup>29</sup> Thus, the optimistic EU Parliamentarian and college professor arrived at Middlebury, fully intending to discuss his "startling thesis."

But like Murray, he guessed wrong. With no regard for protocol or ordinary decency, the college canceled his lecture after he arrived on campus, leaving a handful of supporters to hustle him into a room where, in an "underground" format, he could give his lecture without fear of being assaulted. The provost, Jeff Cason, and a vice president, Baishakhi Taylor, issued a statement indicating their regrets along with their renewed commitment to "Middlebury values." In Legutko's view, these equated civilized discourse with profanity-laced shrieks of ignoramuses spouting all the fashionable tripe that emblazoned their petitions: the Polish intellectual was "a

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<sup>27</sup> Michael R. Strain, "Charles Murray's Account of Middlebury," *National Review*, March 5, 2017, <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/charles-murrays-account-middlebury/> (accessed March 10, 2019). Eugene Volokh, "Protesters at Middlebury College shout down speaker, attack him and a professor," *The Washington Post*, March 4, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2017/03/04/protesters-at-middlebury-college-shout-down-speaker-attack-him-and-a-professor/?noredirect=on> (accessed August 20, 2019).

<sup>28</sup> Richard Preston, *The Hot Zone: A Terrifying True Story* (New York: Anchor, 1995).

<sup>29</sup> Ryszard Legutko, "The Demon in Middlebury," *First Things*, August, 2019, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2019/08/the-demon-in-middlebury> (accessed August 11, 2019).

homophobe (“f\*cking homophobe” on Facebook), a racist, a misogynist, a sexist, a bigot.”

Legutko concluded from all this that liberal democracy produces more ideological vacuities than even the communists managed to create.

In fact, the entire incident illustrated his thesis beyond all reasonable doubt. Legutko’s response to the protestors’ self-righteous statement after the incident, which he dismissed as “gibberish,” speaks a great deal about the condition of public discourse throughout America today: “By comparing the clichés with the realities they supposedly describe, we find that the aim of this language is to reverse the meanings of words... In Orwell’s world, war was peace, freedom slavery, and ignorance strength. At Middlebury, diversity is monopoly, equity bias, and inclusion censorship.”<sup>30</sup>

What, then, is Legutko’s thesis? Simply this: the commonalities between communism and liberal democracy are so stunning and widespread, that those who are truly committed to liberal values—freedom, tolerance, pluralism, constitutional government—must be alerted to the dangers of liberal democracies descending into the sort of totalitarianism that ravaged the planet in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both ideologies, he points out, are based on “modernization projects” that compel devotees to reject all that is old, embrace everything that is new (to them), and to force everyone in society into conformity with their beliefs and goals. And those who disagree may be justifiably deprived of their freedom. In his words:

Not only should the state and the economy be liberal, democratic, or liberal-democratic, but the entire society as well, including ethics and mores, family, churches, schools, universities, community organizations, culture, and even human sentiments and aspirations. The people, structures, thoughts that exist outside the liberal-democratic pattern are deemed outdated, backward-looking, useless, but at the same time extremely dangerous as preserving the remnants of old authoritarianisms. Some may still be tolerated for some time, but as anyone with a minimum of intelligence is believed to know, sooner or later they will end up in the dustbin of history. Their continued existence

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<sup>30</sup> Legutko, “The Demon in Middlebury.”

will most likely threaten the liberal-democratic progress and therefore they should be treated with the harshness they deserve.<sup>31</sup>

Interestingly, considering the Marxist-Liberal Democracy preferences of his detractors, one might ask what they objected to in his description.

### **America's Burgeoning Totalitarianism**

The question remains, is Legutko right? In fact, just a brief snapshot of recent developments indicates that, if anything, he is understating the problem. For instance, Dennis Prager in his testimony before Congress about Google's censorship policies, quipped that the firm's explanation for preventing PragerU videos on its YouTube affiliate "is 'so absurd as to be hilarious.'"<sup>32</sup> Hilarious or not, the search engine giant refused to budge, apparently convinced that videos about the Ten Commandments and the history of Israel should remain "restricted content." Prager is not alone, of course; President Trump has been excoriated by Google on the basis of the algorithm Google News uses in its searches, which begin with page after page of left-wing sources that loathe the president—as anyone who has used Google can testify.<sup>33</sup> Even after a "whistleblower" incident, Google remains adamant, as Jeffrey Lord pointed out in a Project Veritas report. Jen Gennai, who heads "Responsible Innovation" for Google, stated that "Google has been working diligently to 'prevent' the results of the 2016 election from repeating in 2020."<sup>34</sup> This unabashed political agenda is enough to put the old Soviet publications to shame.

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<sup>31</sup> Legutko, *The Demon in Democracy*, 20-21, Kindle.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Yuichiro Kakutani, "Dennis Prager Testifies at Congress Google's Censorship Explanation Is 'So Absurd As To Be Hilarious,'" *Townhall Tipsheet*, July 17, 2019, <https://townhall.com/tipsheet/yuichirokakutani/2019/07/17/dennis-prager-tesifies-youtube-censors-prageru-because-it-is-conservative-n2550210> (accessed July 21, 2019).

<sup>33</sup> Tyler O'Neil, "Google Engineer Google News Search Results Are Intentionally Biased Against Trump," *PJMedia*, July 24, 2019, <https://pjmedia.com/trending/google-engineer-google-news-search-results-are-intentionally-biased-against-trump/> (accessed July 24, 2019).

<sup>34</sup> Jeffrey Lord, "The Google Fascists," *The American Spectator*, June 29, 2019, [https://spectator.org/the-google-fascists/?utm\\_source=American%20Spectator%20Emails&utm\\_campaign=134c4ea617-](https://spectator.org/the-google-fascists/?utm_source=American%20Spectator%20Emails&utm_campaign=134c4ea617-)



Nor does it end with search engines. One of the most extraordinary success stories Legutko reviewed involves LGBTQ’s push to “mainstream” members’ lifestyles and vilify its opponents in the process. Thus, the San Antonio City Council rejected Chick-fil-A from its new airport concession agreement because, “San Antonio is a city full of compassion, and we do not have room in our public facilities for a business with a legacy of anti-LGBTQ behavior.”<sup>35</sup> Criticism of this restaurant is largely cut from the same cloth, the only difference involving the fanaticism of its detractors. Thus, the Sexuality & Gender Diversity Faculty and Staff Council at Kansas University demanded that Chick fil-A be removed from a prime spot on the campus because its “culture” “fosters hate and discrimination on multiple levels,” and university leaders were “more concerned about money and corporate sponsorship than the physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing of marginalized and LGBTQ people.”<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, the “marginalized” designation is often used in these cases, to such an extent that even school districts are being required to add LGBTQ instruction to their curricula.<sup>37</sup> As Legutko and others have pointed out, however, such groups are hardly “marginalized”; on the contrary, they’re running the show in nearly every institution in the country.

The basis of this impressive performance has much to do with the progressive establishment’s view of itself in relationship to ordinary citizens, which as we have seen, are considered too benighted to make intelligent decisions by themselves. Consider a few

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[EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_06\\_25\\_12\\_35&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_797a38d487-134c4ea617-104614065](mailto:EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_06_25_12_35&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_797a38d487-134c4ea617-104614065) (accessed July 4, 2019).

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Janine Puhak, “Chick-fil-A banned from San Antonio airport over alleged 'legacy of anti-LGBTQ behavior,’” *Foxnews*, March 22, 2019, <https://www.foxnews.com/food-drink/chick-fil-a-banned-san-antonio-airport-legacy-lgbtq-behavior-report> (accessed April 19, 2019).

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Caleb Park, “Kansas University faculty wants Chick-fil-A banned,” *Foxnews*, September 2, 2019, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/chick-fil-a-kansas-university-campus> (accessed April 19, 2019).

<sup>37</sup> Ryan Todd Huston, “Illinois Passes Law Requiring LGBTQ Classes in Middle School,” *Breitbart*, August 28, 2019, <https://www.breitbart.com/education/2019/08/28/illinois-passes-new-law-requiring-lgbtq-classes-in-middle-school/> (accessed August 28, 2019).

representative comments by prominent leaders in the progressive establishment, beginning with one of its founders. Although now in some disrepute because of his blatant scorn for African Americans, Woodrow Wilson's evaluation of people has been fully embraced by his successors, if not expressed in exactly the same words: "The many, the people, who are sovereign have no single ear which one can approach," Wilson declared, "and are selfish, ignorant, timid, stubborn, or foolish with the selfishnesses, the ignorances, the stubbornnesses, the timidities, or the follies of several thousand persons..."<sup>38</sup> Or many millions, as the population grew.

One of the best contemporary expressions of establishment views was made by Hillary Clinton in a speech that has acquired legendary status in the annals of progressive statements about citizens in a democracy (Americans, in this case), at least those who don't vote their way. The presidential candidate stated before a women's convention that "deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed."<sup>39</sup>

Few political positions have more totalitarian implications than this. The relationship between ruler and ruled is completely reversed in the world of the progressive establishment: leaders dictate, and ordinary citizens are expected to obey. Recalcitrant hicks in the rungs beneath them, especially those who cling to their guns and religion, must be transformed or reeducated to understand their places in society and the beliefs they must adopt. President Woodrow Wilson no doubt would smile in agreement; Confederate President Jefferson Davis likely would react with fiery approbation. And nearly any communist leader in this century or the last could be thrown into the mix as agreeing with these two.

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<sup>38</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "The Study of Administration," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Jun., 1887), 208, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2139277> (accessed August 14, 2019).

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Mark A. Thiessen, "Hillary Clinton is a threat to religious liberty," *The Washington Post*, October 13, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/hillary-clinton-is-a-threat-to-religious-liberty/2016/10/13/878cdc36-9150-11e6-a6a3-d50061aa9fae\\_story.html?noredirect=on](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/hillary-clinton-is-a-threat-to-religious-liberty/2016/10/13/878cdc36-9150-11e6-a6a3-d50061aa9fae_story.html?noredirect=on) (accessed August 15, 2019).

And others, as well. For instance, *Washington Post* columnist Jennifer Rubin insisted that Americans “collectively, in essence, burn down the Republican Party.” Which is another way of recommending that progressive establishment opponents be expunged from society, permanently, all of them, no exceptions and no survivors. As she proclaimed, “It’s not only that Trump has to lose, but that all his enablers have to lose... We have to level them because if there are survivors, if there are people who weather this storm, they will do it again. They will take this as confirmation that, ‘Hey, it just pays to ride the waves — look at me, I’ve made it through.’”<sup>40</sup> If her meaning had any ambiguity, she cleared it up with the declaration that is practically identical to Nazi attitudes toward and treatment of Jews. With former Trump Administration officials in mind, she stated, “I think it’s absolutely abhorrent that any institution of higher learning, any news organization, or any entertainment organization that has a news outlet would hire these people.” Adolf Hitler could not have said it better.

Even worse, statements about burning down the Republican Party and consigning anyone who worked in the Trump Administration to permanent unemployment crept into a killing zone with Universal Pictures’ parody of murdering “deplorables” in “The Hunt,” a film that was retracted quickly amidst outbursts of indignation. As Miranda Devine pointed out, “the fact it even was made shows we’ve reached a dangerous new point in our political culture. You have to wonder what twisted minds would dream up this liberal fantasy of jet-setting elites hunting down conservatives like vermin.”<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, the decision to remove the film was made on prudential considerations, not on the basis that anyone had overstepped any sensitive boundaries.

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<sup>40</sup> Quoted in GOPUSA, *Washington Times*, August 17, 2019, <http://www.gopusa.com/wapo-writer-says-u-s-must-burn-down-the-republican-party-leave-no-survivors/?omhide=true> (accessed August 19, 2019).

<sup>41</sup> Miranda Devine, “Democrats have demonized every Trump voter as a ‘deplorable.’” *New York Post*, August 11, 2019, <https://nypost.com/2019/08/11/democrats-have-demonized-every-trump-voter-as-a-deplorable/> (accessed August 20, 2019).

According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, a statement from the studio offered no apologies: “We stand by our filmmakers and will continue to distribute films in partnership with bold and visionary creators, like those associated with this satirical social thriller, but we understand that now is not the right time to release this film.”<sup>42</sup> So, it wasn’t the time. Pray tell, when *is* the time?

Apparently, the time will come, very shortly, it seems. In fact, these developments are occurring when “the time” for the progressive establishment’s ultimate victory in every cultural battlefield seemed imminent, which is undoubtedly one of the reasons Donald Trump was elected, so to speak, “just in time,” as far as his political base is concerned. Since the 2016 election, many observers have pointed out that Trump’s supporters believed their country’s ruling establishment represented a hostile alien power more than it did the desires and values of ordinary citizens. As we have seen, statements of the kind made by Hillary Clinton would seem to validate this view.

Research into the values and beliefs of government leaders compared to those held by the American people bears this out. In one of the very few investigations into elite attitudes about American citizens, the former defined in terms of government bureaucrats and members of the permanent Washington ruling establishment, one of the authors of *What Washington Gets Wrong* relates a story about their work to an executive in Health and Human Services (HHS). “My dinner companion expressed some bewilderment and asked why we needed a survey to learn the obvious. According to this experienced public servant, ‘everyone knew’ that Washington

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<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Pamela McClintock and Trilby Beresford, “Universal Scraps ‘The Hunt’ Release Following Gun Violence Uproar,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, 8/10/2019, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/universal-scraps-hunt-release-gun-violence-uproar-1230716> (accessed August 30, 2019).

officialdom did not think much of the American people. After a pause she added, ‘Many of the people are quite stupid, aren't they?’”<sup>43</sup>

That’s one way of putting it, of course. The bulk of the findings unfortunately confirms the initial impression authors Jennifer Bachner and Benjamin Ginsberg received from a veteran Washington executive. Indeed, in the chapter appropriately entitled, “The Chasm Between Them and Us,” the authors review their statistical findings with the conclusion that “the two groups [bureaucratic elites and citizens] actually live in rather distinct cognitive universes, viewing issues, policies, and events through disparate lenses.”<sup>44</sup> Worse than that, Bachner’s and Ginsberg’s initial impressions confirmed exactly the information they had gained through informal means, such as chatting with officials at conferences and dinner parties. In fact, officials in the bureaucracy rarely take into consideration views of those affected by their actions, have little to fear from Congress, and believe the biggest problem in the country is citizen compliance to administrative dictates. No wonder ordinary people believe they’re being commanded by officials who might as well be working for a foreign power; for all practical purposes, they are: it’s called the progressive establishment, government division, the members of which overwhelmingly support politicians who expand their powers.

Perhaps the most frightening development over the past two generations centers on the lack of accountability of those who make the rules to those who must abide by them, especially considering Congressional irresponsibility in not passing legislation with clear instructions to officials in charge of implementation. Probably the best example of this situation is also one of the most recent: the 2500-page Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as Obama Care, which

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<sup>43</sup> Jennifer Bachner and Benjamin Ginsberg, *What Washington Gets Wrong: The Unelected Officials Who Actually Run the Government and Their Misconceptions about the American People* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus, 2016), Introduction, Kindle.

<sup>44</sup> Bachner and Ginsberg, *What Washington Gets Wrong*, Introduction and Ch. 2.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi insisted had to be passed to see what was in it. In words that quiver with the exasperation of their author, Charles Kesler laments, “The whole point is to empower government officials, usually unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats, to bless or curse your petitions as they see fit, guided, of course, by their expertness in a law so vast, so intricate, and so capricious that it could justify a hundred different outcomes in the same case.”<sup>45</sup>

We may ask, how fair is this for the rest of us? Consider the following exchange from one of the wisest books ever written, Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass and what Alice Found There*.

*“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.”*

*“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.”*

*“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master — that’s all.”*<sup>46</sup>

Which is to be master? — that’s all, indeed. Which is cute in a fairy tale. But deadly in a system of government.

## **Conclusion**

America’s Civil War occurred after Southern leaders concluded that they had the situation well in hand, considering their recent legislative victories and the favorable Supreme Court decision *Dred Scot v. Sandford*. In fact, expanding their empire beyond the borders of

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<sup>45</sup> Quoted in John Marini, *Unmasking the Administrative State: The Crisis in America Politics in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Ken Masugi (New York: Encounter, 2019), Part I, “Our Abandoned Constitution: Controlling the Administrative State,” Kindle.

<sup>46</sup> Alice-in-Wonderland.net, *Through the Looking Glass, Chapter 6*, <http://www.alice-in-wonderland.net/resources/chapters-script/through-the-looking-glass/chapter-6/> (accessed August 31, 2019).

slave states now seemed possible, and additional encroachments overseas into central America struck many adventurers as downright enticing. Everything seemed to be going their way. Until, that is, Lincoln was elected, and to everyone's astonishment, he decided to fight to save the union. No matter; southern men were tough, sturdy, and fearless; they could whip the Yankees and keep them out of Southern affairs permanently, regardless of the Rhett Butlers in their midst who insolently brought up disturbing facts about the North's overwhelming superiority in population and industrial production ("All we got is cotton, slaves, and ARROGANCE!" Butler warned in *Gone With The Wind*).<sup>47</sup> Only a "disease in the public mind" convinced Butler's foes that they were right.

Our argument here has been that a Confederacy born from cotton, slaves, and arrogance has greatly informed their counterparts in the progressive establishment, which possesses neither cotton nor slaves but has plenty of arrogance. It's not hard to see why. Throughout the country, progressive mouthpieces continue a scorched-earth policy of vilifying their opponents, excoriating whites and western civilization, and laboring tirelessly for constitutional rulings and bureaucratic edicts that reflect their values and goals, usually with impunity. Many concluded they were well on their way to ultimate victory in the cultural cleansing of the country, which would culminate in a "democratic" totalitarian order ruled by seers and enforcers of this modern confederacy, the progressive establishment. Its goal has been straightforward: a single way of thinking must prevail over the entire population, a dominant political party must rule permanently, and citizens should be encouraged to report dissension and infractions of order. No freedom of thought, no freedom of action, no opposition permitted. Then Donald Trump got elected.

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<sup>47</sup> Excerpt from *Gone With The Wind*, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S72nI4Ex\\_E0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S72nI4Ex_E0) (accessed August 31, 2019).

How much difference Trump's presidency will make remains to be seen and will be argued for decades after he leaves the political scene. Will there be a "Trump effect" that permanently alters the trajectory of progressivism's march through American history? Is it conceivable that the country's second civil war will devolve into armed conflict? And if this becomes the case, will cultural dominance matter if the shooting begins? Recoiling from this scenario does not alter its possibility, especially because of the stark choice involved: progressive totalitarianism versus a constitutional republic. Thus, we end our survey with the question, will the United States survive to the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?