

Last Week This Week 7-24-16: Donald Trump Edition

Wrath /ræθ/ *noun*

1□: strong vengeful anger or indignation□
(chiefly used for humorous or rhetorical effect)

2□: retributory punishment for an offense or a
crime: divine chastisement□

On WBT

David James discussed [Plato's Republic](#) and how it relates to Donald Trump—namely, what kind of leader and democracy do we really want?

Adrian Bonenberger writes [live from Ukraine](#), where an expected Russian Orthodox Church "March for Peace" might turn out to be something straight out of the Russian dictator's playbook.

Editor's Recommendations

Trump and Foreign Relations

Speaking of Putin, distinguished historian and expert in Eastern Europe, Timothy Snyder, has written [a fascinating, and scary, article](#) about how Putin is an ideal model for Trump.

[Franklin Foer at Slate](#): "Vladimir Putin has a plan for destroying the West, and it looks a lot like Trump." Lots of research and detail here.

The same author earlier this year [profiled Trump's new campaign manager](#), a certain Paul Manafort. The man has apparently worked for two dozen dictators in a long career which is almost unbelievably devoid of humanity or morality of

any kind.

Trump as the Republican Party's Frankenstein's Monster

Norm Ornstein and Thomas Mann [detail in great depth](#) how the Republican Party laid the groundwork for a no-nothing populist demagogue by waging war on government itself for three decades.

Trump, The Sociopath

Trump's [ghostwriter](#) regrets his part in painting a myth shrouding a deeply troubled man.

Trump's Character

There is not enough time in the day to list all the ways Trump is a flawed candidate, but [this article](#) does a great job summarizing how much he has faked out the Republican Party for his own egotistical ends.

Matt Taibbi at Rolling Stone with a laugh-out-loud, over-the-top [annihilation](#) of everything Trump is and represents.

Trump Satire

Remember that Christmas classic cartoon, How the Grinch Stole Christmas? It taken't take much changes by [College Humor](#) to rework the orange Trump monster into something scarier than the Grinch.

The office of American President is too much power and work for a single person. Donald Trump does not want to do any work but wants to be a figure-head. [This ingenious article](#) shows how we can kill two birds with one stone by reforming the American political system. All hail, King Trump!

On Plato, Donald Trump, and the Ship of State

Plato's most famous work and the foundational text of political philosophy is the *Republic*. Written in the form of a dialogue between Socrates and other real-life Athenians, the book opens with a discussion about the nature of justice and then proceeds into Plato's ideas about what an ideal state and its leader would look like. I will argue how these ideas are still relevant nowadays, especially regarding the disturbing state of American politics in which the American people are considering electing for the first time an openly authoritarian leader who is blatantly unqualified for the job.

Plato, an aristocrat, held a deep antipathy for democracy; he had lived through the defeat of Athens at the hand of Sparta as well as the condemnation of his mentor, Socrates. He blamed democracy for these twin catastrophes. His own ideal state would actually bear strong resemblance to Sparta—a totalitarian state in which a small elite trained for success in battle, the majority were disenfranchised slaves who did all the labor, and all cultural activities were forbidden. Bertrand Russell in his *History of Western Philosophy* summarized Plato's *Republic* as follows:

“When we ask: what will Plato's Republic achieve? The answer is rather humdrum. It will achieve success in wars against roughly equal populations, and it will secure a livelihood for a certain small number of people. It will almost certainly produce no art or science, because of its rigidity; in this respect, as in others, it will be like Sparta. In spite of all the fine talk, skill in war and enough to eat is all that will be achieved. Plato had lived through famine and defeat in Athens; perhaps, subconsciously, he thought the avoidance of these evils the best that statesmanship could accomplish.”

Russell goes on in his criticism, answering the question of how and why Plato could have achieved such greatness despite having, frankly, mostly terrible ideas:

“Plato possessed the art to dress up illiberal suggestions in such a way that they deceived future ages, which admired the *Republic* without ever becoming aware of what was involved in its proposals. It has always been correct to praise Plato, but not to understand him. This is the common fate of great men. My object is the opposite. I wish to understand him, but to treat him with as little reverence as if he were a contemporary English or American advocate of totalitarianism.”

Plato's Non-Ideal Republic in Practice

Indeed, the millennia of admiration for Plato's *Republic* came to a sudden end when Russell's *History* and Karl Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* were published in the same year—1945. No coincidence that both were written during the Second World War at the height of the destruction wrought by demented dictators and dangerous ideas. Popper's was perhaps the first, and still most important work, that separates Plato from the humanistic and democratic ideas of Socrates, and shows rather that Plato's ideal state was a totalitarian one. The overriding theme of the book, which follows the thread of totalitarianism from Plato and Aristotle to Hegel and Marx, is how all these philosophers relied on historicism, a false theory in which history unfolds according the universal laws, to enable dangerous ideas to follow. He accused all of these thinkers of being partially culpable in leading Europe towards the crisis of leadership and war contemporaneous with the book's publishing. Popper argues instead for a strong defense of the open society, which protects liberal values and institutes reforms without violence. One relevant issue Popper also discusses is the [Paradox of Intolerance](#), which says that

for an Open Society to flourish, we must not be tolerant of intolerance (which include the type of hate speech, bigotry, and violent rhetoric that is becoming normalized in Donald Trump's Republican Party).

The most famous parable from the *Republic* is that of The Cave, whose premise about Plato's theory of ideas most undergraduates would be familiar. Much more useful, in my opinion, however, is the parable of the Ship of State. Imagine the state as a ship, whose captain is a skilled stargazing navigator. The citizens are sailors, who may have many various skills but are not qualified to pilot the ship, especially through rough weather. The sailors mock the captain and try to replace him, but ultimately he is the only one with the ability to lead them. In Plato's view, the captain in a state should be a philosopher-king, wise and trained at birth for his position as total ruler. One sees that democracy and Plato do not mix well—for him, the people were a mob who could not rule themselves.

Let's bring these analogies into present day America.

As far as I can tell, America is the longest running large democracy in history, though a number of smaller polities, such as Iceland or the old Iroquois Confederation, to name two, are certainly older. For a huge and diverse nation of over 300 million people that has the world's largest economy and strongest military, the fact that it has survived 240 years and a bloody civil war without ever deviating from a democratic and peaceful transition of power is quite amazing. Unprecedented actually. It was taken for granted when the Founding Fathers drew up the Constitution that Athenian-style democracy could only ever end in manipulation of the mob, or *demos*, by a demagogue or tyrant. They drew up a system of checks and balances between branches of government in which no

person could amass enough power to take over the government, and through which change would necessarily be slow and conservative. This has often frustrated the ability to pass needed reforms, but has also the greater benefit of preserving the system peacefully.

Past American Presidents

Never in American history, discounting the obvious case of the Civil War, has the original political system drawn up in the Constitution come under threat of being radically altered. Likewise, there has never been a single person in American history who has had the power, or even sought the power, to completely control government in anything even resembling a dictatorship. Out of all the 44 presidents (Grover Cleveland served non-consecutive terms and is counted twice), historians typically agree on Andrew Johnson as the worst. It was certainly Abraham Lincoln's biggest mistake to name him his Vice President for short-sighted and unnecessary electoral reasons before his reelection, and Johnson's horrible term had awful ramifications for the next century regarding the reconstruction of the South. Even so, it is hard to find any American president who was unqualified to hold the office, in the traditional sense of having the ability and experience to operate an executive organization with delegated tasks and many moving parts. This has nothing to do with ideology, or even effectiveness, but of basic qualifications for the job before taking office. Several highly successful generals had either mostly good, mixed, or awful administrations (Eisenhower, Jackson, and Grant, for example), but their qualifications were never questioned despite their success or lack thereof. Herbert Hoover is generally considered an awful president mostly due to the Great Depression beginning on his watch, but he was highly successful in his private career and as the head of the U.S. Food Administration during WWI and Secretary of Commerce under two presidents before being elected, and was thus very qualified. Even George W. Bush,

whom [historians](#) will most likely rank closer to Andrew Johnson than Franklin Roosevelt, governed the second largest state before becoming president. Most presidents have been highly educated and experienced men (obviously all men to date) with military backgrounds and terms as senators, congressmen, or governors. Men who understood something about the world and also how government works at various levels. The most successful presidents have also had temperaments suited for the rigorous stressfulness of this unique position as well as the ability to listen to advisors and learn from mistakes. To have a combination of many of these rare skills is what is wanted in a president, as well as a certain degree of other abstract qualities like intellectual curiosity, integrity, and empathy.

The Ideal Leader in a Democracy

Basically, I would argue that we want the same thing today as Plato wanted, even if we have different ways of going about it. Even if they will not be philosopher-kings, our leaders should be the best among us, and chosen by an informed electorate. They should be highly skilled at steering the large and unwieldy ship of state even in the rough waters of domestic and international politics. Plato, a member of the hereditary aristocracy and an anti-democrat, thought that these leaders should be bred from birth for the role, with the rest of the people having no say in the matter. There is another meaning of aristocracy, which is merely “rule by the best”, not involving genetics or inheritance but pure merit through earned experience, training, and natural character, and selected for by the majority of citizens. In our democracy, even with the two major political parties nominating candidates for the office of president, there has long been a de facto sorting out of the best qualified candidates. Once again, this has nothing to do with ideology but of basic minimum ability to function in a very complex role. Despite differences in ideas by the parties and the

electorate, there has always been a tacit understanding that the winner will uphold the duties of his office and continue to serve in the government for the people.

The Disqualification of Donald Trump

Thus, we have never before in American history been in the position we are currently in—namely, to have a major party candidate for president who is clearly and without any doubt unqualified and unsuited for the office that he seeks. The Republican Party, once a bastion of principled conservatism, respect for law, and personal responsibility, has become so [radical and reactionary](#) over the last three decades or so that it has nominated a person who would certainly be the most disastrous, irresponsible, and unqualified president in history, and the closest we have yet come to a dictator, however petty. Trump's open disregard for the rule of law, free press, and clear lack of basic knowledge of the world and the government he would operate is a disqualification for president. His [other temperamental flaws](#), his proudly open bigotry (the likes of which has not been seen in a major candidate since there was legal slavery), his shocking, world historical level of narcissism and mendacity (unprecedented even for a would-be politician), and other shallow but toxic policy ideas are almost beside the point—any one of these attributes should easily have disqualified Trump from coming anywhere near being an realistic candidate for president, but the ultimate fact that he has none of the necessary tools to meet the minimum standards for piloting the ship of state is the single most important fact. He is not trained or experienced in anything like running the executive branch of the richest and strongest military power on Earth. He has shown no ability to succeed in anything other than making his own name universally known, however he goes about that. He is not a stargazer who can pilot America through bad storms, nor

is he someone who should have instant control over soldiers' lives and nuclear weapons.

The Republican Party, for the first time in American history, has failed in the basic task of nominating a human who is at a basic level of qualification for the office of president. There is no need to get any more into the details of how and why this happened--[this article](#) gives a brief summary of how the Republican Party began moving rightward three decades ago and cynically cultivating deep distrust of government itself for its own electoral gain, and this is the result. The most important thing is that Trump be defeated at all costs, and that a strong warning is cried out that never again will We the American people tolerate such a denigration of our hallowed tradition for maintaining a functioning democracy, whatever differences of policy and ideology. I disagree with Plato's sentiment that democracy is a bad thing. It is not a perfect system; it is merely less bad than every other possible system. Its strength, and also its only flaw, is that it ultimately depends on an electorate that votes in the best interests of the peaceful and prosperous survival of the state, and not on a single tyrant who manipulates the mob with promises to solve all problems on his own. Let's hope that we can continue for at least another 240 years without such a threat and an affront to our great country.

Republican Reactionaries and the Road to Fascism



The Utilitarian philosopher John Stuart Mill wrote the

following lines in his great work *On Liberty*: "A party of order or stability, and a party of progress or reform, are both necessary elements of a healthy state of political life." Mill, a Member of Parliament with the Liberal Party, was a proponent of almost unlimited personal and economic freedom—a platform that is actually a traditionally conservative one, and which has some parallels with Libertarianism. The problem with the Republican Party is that has not been fulfilling its role as the party of order and stability for quite some time (let's say the Eisenhower years, which were really just eight years of very moderate Conservatism sandwiched between four decades of Liberal dominance). It has degenerated into a radical party that wants to conserve nothing except the sundry privileges accumulated to its business allies, at the expense of a majority of its own members and the population at large. Due to the unfortunate fact that America only sustains two political parties, that one of them has become a completely disordered mess is creating huge ramifications for every aspect of public policy and the general welfare. Let us discuss in greater detail the specifics of the problem and some possible solutions.

Disclaimer: I do not consider myself conservative on any issue except regarding the environment, and I am strongly against almost every aspect of the current Republican Party platform. On the other hand, I do not by any means consider myself a supporter of the Democratic Party and I think the stink of political corruption wafts from them almost as much as Republicans. It does happen that I find much more overlap with some Democratic policy positions than their rivals, but for the most part, given the limitations of the aforementioned two-party political system, I believe it imperative that Republican power and control remain as limited as possible at least until its existential crisis abates. I will state my reasons for this below.

Though I am not myself a conservative, I actually want the

Republican Party to fix itself and solve many of the problems besetting it; I am not afraid of Conservatism, but I am afraid of even more political power falling into the hands of a deeply radical and reactionary party that is fighting hard to reject the reality of the modern world and to deny truth, even in its scientific and purely objective forms. Even though it does not hold the office of the President (though within the Executive branch it is likely that a large majority of legal and law enforcement personnel are in fact Conservative), the Republican Party controls the other two-thirds of the Federal Government (both Houses of Congress and the Supreme Court) and [roughly that proportion](#) of state and local governments. My argument is not that it is inherently bad in a democracy that one party should control a majority of political power at any given time. In a true democracy this should be a common enough event and one which can be reversed at any time if said party loses favor with enough citizens. In those cases, the voters oust that party as a referendum on its actual governance. Soon enough, the tables inevitably flip and it happens in reverse.

No, my argument, rather, is two-fold: (1) The way political power is allocated is actually deeply anti-democratic (due to the corrupt process of gerrymandering districts in Congress; the Electoral College for the Presidency; and the unelected, life-serving terms of the Supreme Court); and that (2) the Republican Party is not upholding its role as the conservative party of order and stability, à la Mill, but increasingly committed to tapping into the negative emotional space that bubbles under the surface of society from whence springs fascism and authoritarianism.

Looking again briefly at my first point, both parties are equally to blame for the undemocratic nature of American politics, as are voters themselves for not demanding change (this will be the only time I will cite the common mainstream media canard that "both parties are equal;" they are not, as we will see, except for the not altogether insignificant

lengths to which they both go in corruption and cheating to win—it must be said, however, that Republicans are much more successful in the latter). It is a result of several factors, including pure luck, that the latest beneficiary of the gerrymandering lottery was the Republican Party, which happened to have a good election result in a low-turnout midterm election of 2010, which came directly after the decennial census, and thus gave more redistricting power to that party for the next decade (until the next census, which will again benefit one or the other of the two parties).

Quick note on voter turnout: Obama was elected in 2008 with an overall voter turnout of 57% of the voting-age population, and that is the highest percentage since the 1960s! In the off-year midterm elections the percentage of voting-age population has held steady at around 37% also since the 1960s. Keep in mind that the entire House of Representatives, one third of the Senate, nearly half of state governors, and similarly high numbers of state legislatures are all elected during these midterm years, which means that barely over one third of population ever cares to have a say in creating a representative government when there is not a president on the ballot. Voter apathy and ignorance is a plague on democracy, and the fact that only just over half of citizens bother to cast a vote is beyond shameful. As for the Republicans, it is well-known and readily admitted by them that they benefit from lower voter turnout. To this end, they actively conspire to reduce voter turnout by any means necessary, especially in places with higher populations of minorities, students, and other groups that generally vote for Democrats. A few of their tools in the lowering of voter turnout toolkit include: requiring only certain types of ID for voting wherever possible, limiting the places where people can obtain these IDs, limiting the time of voting to a single Tuesday in November when people are working and which is difficult, especially for poorer people, to take time off work to vote. Election Day should be a national holiday as it is in many

other democracies (here is a [petition](#), for example, calling for the President to make Election Day a national holiday), and at a minimum expanded to an election week so everyone has a convenient opportunity to exercise their constitutional right to vote.

To further illustrate the extent of undemocratic elections and gerrymandering, consider connections between the following facts: Obama was elected twice with over 51% of the national popular vote each time, yet Republicans took control of Congress in 2010 by a huge margin, despite receiving one and a half million less votes than Democrats. Then, Republicans held control of Congress in 2012 despite receiving about half a million less votes than Democrats. That half-a-million-vote deficit somehow earned Republicans 38 more seats in the House of Representatives, and the explanation is gerrymandering. In Pennsylvania, Obama won by 5 percent, but Republicans somehow still won 13 out of 18 House seats; in Ohio, Obama won by 2 percent but Republicans somehow still won 12 out of 16 House seats; in North Carolina, Democrats won 51 percent of the total votes but only 4 out of 13 House seats. It is the same story in many other states and, with a few exceptions, has benefitted mostly Republicans.

The problem is compounded if we consider the highly undemocratic nature of the Senate, in which, for example, a senator from Wyoming represents something like 200,000 people while one from California represents something like 20,000,000 people, and where even a minority of 40 percent of these already unrepresentative senators can block legislation from proceeding. This is just a brief outline of a few of the systemic problems afflicting the increasingly sickly nature of American "democracy," and it is something that highly troubles me. You see, the best guarantee of a continuing free and open society is a well- or at least moderately - functioning democratic apparatus, but some of the trends have been moving away from this, and this is by design of political

operators. When democracy breaks down, it has the potential to enter a downward spiral exploited by demagogues and to end up somewhere no one intended originally: a dictatorship, fascist or otherwise.

For my second point, the Republican Party will receive fully 100 percent of my accusation, which is the following: The Republican Party has abdicated its role as the conservative protector of order and stability in a *de facto*, if not *de jure*, binomial political party equation. The winds of political change and fortune have always blown hither and thither in modern states, with periods of reform or even revolution followed by periods of relatively ordered, if not perfect or universally free, stability and order. I am of the belief that revolution is highly counterproductive unless it happens in a society already ruled by a heavy-handed dictator or where rights are so trampled on or non-existent as to drive the people to desperation (witness the beginnings of the Syrian Civil War, for example). This is not the case in America or in any other Western country. I also believe that, so long as things remain imperfect in our society (which will be for the foreseeable future), the best course of action is incremental but constant reform in order to improve the healthy functioning of all aspects of society for the largest number of people.

Therefore, so long as things are not perfect and there exists no immediate threat of dictatorship, I see no need to fight for the preservation of order and stability that is the *raison d'être* of traditional Conservatism. On the other hand, I very much want the opposing side of the political spectrum to be represented by pragmatic and reasonable persons who clearly embody the case for Conservatism as a bulwark against violent revolution, in the tradition of Burke or some other such theorist following in the wake of *la Terreur*. I understand that there is a certain intellectual case to be made for Conservatism, though I personally find it distasteful to

follow its logical consequences, which is that the status quo will not improve and perfect our society, but rather, it will only hinder and further corrupt it. I also think the nature of Conservatism is itself arbitrary and hypocritical, in that it makes choices about what to conserve and what to do away with; such choices often spring from personal greed and short-term gain. I respectfully decline the intellectual allure of Conservatism, with the key word being "respect". I understand and sympathize with my fellow liberal-minded and progressive reformists of the following quotations: John Stuart Mill, again (I previously wrote on Mill's Utilitarian philosophy [here](#)), who said in a debate with a Conservative MP in 1866, "I did not mean that Conservatives are generally stupid; I meant, that stupid persons are generally Conservative. I believe that to be so obvious and undeniable a fact that I hardly think any honorable gentleman will question it;" Mark Twain, who said, "Conservatism is the blind and fear-filled worship of dead radicals;" Franklin Roosevelt, who said, "A conservative is a man with two perfectly good legs who, however, has never learned to walk forward;" and John Kenneth Galbraith, who said, "The modern conservative is engaged in one of man's oldest exercises in moral philosophy; that is, the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness." (Quick aside on the last quote: it cannot be denied the influence of the charlatan philosopher of greed and selfishness Ayn Rand on Republicans; the newest Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan, has repeatedly [cited his dogmatic belief](#) in her creed, and he is one of many).

In all of these quotes there is, in my opinion, more than just a grain of truth, but it is perhaps the humorist Twain who said it best (just as the comedians of today are the ones doing the most to expose political hypocrisy and idiocy): Today's Republican Party not only worships dead radicals, the foremost being Ronald Reagan, but its members have become thoroughly radical and reactionary themselves. Radical in the sense that they want to completely upend a system which has

been incrementally built up over decades, especially since the New Deal of FDR, by extreme and sweeping measures; and reactionary in the sense that they want to radically change the system to return to the status quo ante, which basically means to go back to a time when the government was weaker and indifferent to the suffering of huge numbers of citizens, and when industrial barons had a free hand to monopolize and control most of the economy. This is to say, the state of the world directly before Europe's great failed experiment with fascism. The combination of radical reaction is the most dangerous I can think of in a political party, and one which leads to state or corporate fascism (compare these quotes by Mussolini: "Fascism is reaction" and "Fascism should more appropriately be called Corporatism because it is a merger of state and corporate power.") Here is an abbreviated list of examples of the Republican platform that reveal it as the furthest thing from a conservative party of order and stability, but rather one that has become wholly hypocritical, corrupt, logically inconsistent, radical, reactionary, xenophobic, anti-science, and anti-humanistic:

One: 97 percent of scientists agree, but the Republicans stand alone even among the Conservative parties of other developed countries in rejecting the existence of climate change or completely discounting even the possibility that it has been even partially caused by human activity. A conservative position should be to protect and *conserve* the planet and its people and resources as much as possible, no matter the cause or extent of the problem. Nowhere in the preservation of order and stability is it called for to totally deny reality. This one is easy, but of the utmost importance given the lengths to which Republicans go to protect the outdated fossil fuel economy at the cost of the future inhabitability of our planet.

Two: Through the efforts of past activists and the policies of a few prescient politicians (both Roosevelts, to name two),

America built up a large, prosperous middle class that enriched the whole society and ensured relative peace and prosperity more than had previously been seen. A conservative position would be to maintain the policies that had helped build up and protect the majority of America's workers and society. The Republicans, rather, have long since become economic radicals favoring policies that take from the middle and lower classes to benefit the rich, all under the guise of the now widely-discredited but still spouted ideology of "supply-side economics." At one time, even thoroughly "establishment" Republicans like George H.W. Bush (probably also the last non-reactionary Republican) called out this hoax of a policy as ["voodoo economics"](#), but today the belief is as much an article of faith as any that you will find in the Republican platform. Any number of changes to the tax code advocated by Republicans will all make the fabulously rich even richer at the expense of the now-shrinking middle class and the growing and perpetually undiscussed lower class (which we're told is not supposed to exist in America).

Three: A truly conservative party would seek to protect the individual freedoms that are enshrined in the U.S. Bill of Rights, but on all sides these freedoms are perverted and exploited for corrupt political gains. Freedom of Speech, the most sacred of our rights, has been, in a gross twist of logic, expanded by the Supreme Court to include money itself, in the case of political [donations](#). This, in a very real sense, makes Freedom of Speech not free at all, but very expensive and weighted towards the rich and powerful whose agenda is further enrichment and preservation of an unjust system. A true conservative would want to preserve the sanctity of "one person one vote," even when it goes against her interest, but in reality the radical anti-democratic apparatchiks have enabled money to further corrupt the already (as we have seen) undemocratic system of American politics by allowing unlimited money to flow into endless campaigns by highly vested billionaires. Just as a Wyoming and California

Senator are highly unrepresentative by definition, now every politician has become exponentially more unrepresentative, seeing as they are free to completely ignore the will of most of their natural constituency in favor of a handful of wealthy donors and corporate interests. This is in no way a conservative system. It is one that is on the road to something far worse than merely corrupt democracy: a corporate plutocracy the likes of which have been unseen in this country since before WWII (the most egregious example being the reactionary billionaire Koch brothers, the wealthiest men in America taken together, buying up elections, politicians, think tanks, universities, anything they can get their hands on, in order to achieve complete corporate control over government). Incidentally, as stated earlier, Mussolini would not recognize a meaningful distinction between “corporate plutocracy” and fascism as he understood it.

Four: a conservative party would theoretically continue its protections of individual rights in the case of personal choices that do not come under the purview of the government in any case: personal issues like couples’ reproduction rights, everything involving an individual’s sexual life, and personal drug use. Counter-intuitively for the party of supposed “liberty” is that Republicans overwhelmingly concentrate their rhetorical (if not legislative) energies on the non-issues of abortion, gay marriage, and a [disastrously counter-productive](#) “Drug War”, even while saying at the same time that they do not want the government involved in their lives. It is an improbable twist of logic to say that government should be as small and weak as possible while simultaneously calling for it to mass regulate the most personal and individual choices humans can make in life. For those so-called conservatives opposed to regulating drugs on the basis of its expanding the bureaucracy, the drug war as waged now has the secondary consequence of necessitating a massive police, intelligence, and diplomatic apparatus that rivals counter-terror efforts. This sort of circular logic (we

need to fight the drug war to keep bureaucracy small and insurance costs down so we need to spend billions of dollars on a big bureaucracy to fight the drug war) is characteristic of America's hypocritical, mendacious, small-minded and ill-conceived conservatism.

Five: Republicans never stop insisting that they want "smaller government" (there is an influential power-broker and tireless advocate for tax cuts named Grover Norquist who once [disturbingly said](#) he wanted a government so small that he could "drown it in a bathtub") while at the same time not realizing that the military is one of the biggest and most expensive components of the government. True conservatism would advocate a strict imposition of order and stability, especially regarding foreign policy and the threat of war. In reality, most Republicans are [loudly](#), [stupidly](#), and thoughtlessly in favor of war whenever and wherever possible, disregarding that war itself is the biggest and oldest creator of disorder and instability. To pile on the madness, many of these people are what are known as "[chickenhawks](#)": politicians who always want to demonstrate America's martial prowess, despite never having served in the military and not caring at all for troubled veterans or any drawbacks to endless war-making.

The issue at its heart, like most of these, is not conservatism, but of who profits and benefits. The Republican Party, as much as it talks about social non-issues as mentioned above, is, in fact, wholly owned and controlled by corporate interests, one of the most significant of which is the oft-cited but still very real "military-industrial complex." Former [President Bush](#) and [Vice President Cheney](#) (two infamous chickenhawks, by the way) may have helped their [friends, families, and allies](#) to profit greatly from an illegal war (Iraq, Afghanistan, and now Iraq again), but that does not make them conservative. It just makes them corrupt and immoral.

Six: In the same vein, even if war were necessary (as it very rarely may be), a conservative would want to at least protect and reward its own combatants. Republicans, however, have without question or reservation paid untold and unknown amounts of taxpayer money into the hands of [private arms producers and contractors](#), but cannot seem to even take care of its own veterans, many of whom are deeply troubled and impoverished, using every opportunity to deny benefits for one reason or another—blaming servicemembers and veterans for creating their own problems is the usual conservative canard. The Department of Defense is by far the [biggest and most expensive](#) war machine in the world, and Republican claims of fiscal conservatism are washed away in a flood of rampant waste, fraud, and abuse that envelops the nearly \$1 Trillion-a-year Defense industry. The Department of Veterans Affairs on the other hand, like many government agencies, has been willfully underfunded by Republican budget scribes in order to create a problem where none existed before (the same fiscal strategy taken with the US Postal Service, as well). The result—for veterans or federal workers or any of the other tens of millions of Americans directly dependent on federal jobs, contracts, or support—is disastrous at an individual level of homeless, injured, unemployed, and suicidal veterans and their families.

Seven: America has long built up, concurrently with its middle class, an enviable education system, including world-class universities, that has benefitted society as a whole, both in America and around the world. Conservatives should ideally want to preserve this seemingly wonderful and unpolitical network of classrooms and laboratories for tomorrow's leaders in every field. Republicans, on the other hand, have fully and unabashedly inflamed and empowered the anti-intellectual potential that exists on the margins of every society from ISIS all the way up to Europe and America. In doing so, the Republicans long been at work behind closed doors, slashing funding for public schools and universities, doing their best

to gut political opposition to their platform while empowering the type of lazy satisfaction with stupidity and ignorance that one always sees in countries beset by dictators. All the while, they have looked the other way while tuitions skyrocketed due to lack of public funding and student debt skyrocketed due to increased tuition, locking whole generations of young people to lifetimes of debt servitude to private lenders. Moreover, they have made education itself into a political battlefield and actively vilified teachers who protested the short-sighted change of focus and funding for schools. This is in keeping with the modern-day know-nothingism of the Republican Party, whose politicians decry science, public education, and academic "elites" at every opportunity even while most of them have themselves attended [Harvard](#) or [Yale](#).

There are numerous other examples to be made (private prisons, unions, roads, trains, infrastructure, oil subsidies, renewable energy, gun violence, systemic racism, minimum wage, unequal pay between the sexes, immigration, agricultural subsidies, free trade, health care, the lobbyist/politician revolving door, post offices, national parks, capital punishment), but I think I have made my point clear for the time being. As I said, I am deeply troubled by the series of events that has led to the current iteration of the Republican Party as it is reported on a daily basis in the (corporate, for-profit) mainstream news. The level of [fear-mongering](#), especially after the Paris attacks, and open racism and calls for violence is so rampant to enable the rise of unquestionably [fascist Republican candidate Donald Trump](#). I will restate that I do not by definition support the Democratic Party for its own sake, or hold them to be innocent of all the charges leveled against the Republicans above, but their moderate level of corruption pales in comparison to the cyclopean walls of corruption and reaction built by the recent Republicans.

The Republican Party has not only shown its [inability to properly govern](#) the country during the Bush administration, but it is currently showing its inability in the many states where it controls the levers of government to enact its deeply reactionary policies. It is only an undemocratic system which has allowed this in the first place, but it also goes against the desires and economic interests of a huge majority of citizens themselves, both conservative and otherwise. The danger is that further control by this irresponsible and radical group of power-brokers will entrench and further worsen the situation to the point that we will cease to live in even an ostensible democracy, but rather, we will wake up one day in something like a dystopian vision of a technologically, culturally, or politically fascist state. The solution, as always: more interest, engagement, and activism by citizens and voters, and not just once every four years but on a daily and local basis. We get the government we allow.