

## **Fascist Tendencies in Contemporary America: The Democratic Struggle and the Imperative for Resistance**

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### **Abstract**

*This article examines the growing threat of fascism in the United States and its impact on democracy, human rights, and social justice. This study explores the warning signs, such as the proliferation of far-right groups and the erosion of civil liberties, and investigates the factors that contributed to the rise of fascism, including public unawareness and the role of political leaders. The research also discusses the Biden-Harris administration's efforts to resist fascism and attempts to restore trust in democratic principles. This study aims to inform the public about the current state of affairs.*

**Keywords: Democracy – Fascism – Trumpism – Factors – Resistance.**

## Introduction

The United States has been facing multiple challenges that threaten its very democratic principles. The democratic nation is at risk of succumbing to the deceptive forces of fascism, a form of centralized government cloaked in far-right political movements that have been gaining momentum in recent years in the US. These movements promote right-wing nationalism, authoritarianism, and chauvinistic practices manifested through racist policies, xenophobic rhetoric, and the proliferation of white supremacists and nationalist groups. This drift is particularly disturbing given the historical patterns of fascism. It may lead to chain reactions such as the upsurge in hate crimes, the erosion of civil liberties, and the spread of social inequalities. This would eventually result in extensive and calamitous repercussions on American society. Ergo, the rise of fascism in America has become an actual threat and therefore a pressing concern as the decline in public trust in American institutions, along with the erosion of civil liberties and political rights, represent the symptoms of a decaying democracy.

When democracy flounders and fails and paves the way for the rise of far-right extremism, the dominant ideologies lose their authority and efficiency, hastening the disintegration of democratic standards and institutional structures. Hence, an interregnum is carried through, and a new ideology has to supplant the older (no longer efficient) one, and new perceptions of reality thrive. "The crisis," as Gramsci explains, "consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum, a great variety of morbid symptoms appear."<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, the very underlying structures of a viable democracy are depreciated, political mutations take place, and new fangled interests and belief systems emerge. And hence the rise of fascism. The attrition of democratic ideals, further exacerbated by the rise of populist leaders, like Donald Trump, not only perpetuates a climate of insecurity and distrust but also steers the nation towards a world dominated by fascist tendencies disguised in inflated rhetoric grounded on degeneration and regeneration lexicon.

This phenomenon has been exemplified by the rise of Trumpism. By perpetuating divisive rhetoric, attacking institutions, and undermining trust in democracy, Trumpism has cultivated an environment where authoritarian tendencies are more likely to thrive and flourish. Donald Trump's populism, rhetoric, and policies have often been analyzed through the lens of the fascist playbook as his political strategies bear elements reminiscent of historical authoritarian regimes.

As a result, the US, which used to be referred to as the apostle of democracy and a fervent advocate of international democracy, back-slid into an America reeking of fascism.

Amidst these challenges, the Biden-Harris Administration has instated several reforms in its endeavor to restore and reinforce democracy. Will the Biden-Harris administration fulfill its commitment and allow the American society to break free from the fluctuating pattern of cyclical progress and cyclical regress it has been following?

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<sup>1</sup>Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 276

### **Thesis Statement**

Exploring the nexus between Trumpism and fascism, this research delves into the factors that contributed to the recent surge of fascist-like tendencies within the United States. By unraveling the underlying features between the two that acted as catalysts for the erosion of democratic standards in the United States, this study seeks to uncover how the erosion of democratic standards facilitated the rise of a political landscape reminiscent of fascist tendencies, leading to a backsliding of the United States towards a state that reeks of fascist influence.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the defining characteristics and historical roots of fascism and Trumpism?
2. What are the main similarities and differences between fascism and Trumpism?
3. What are the telltale signs and warning signals of fascism?
4. What factors have contributed to the rise of far-right extremism and fascist tendencies in the United States?
5. In what ways has the Biden administration been attempting to resist the threat of fascism in order to prevent its further spread in American society?

### **Outline**

I will start the article with an investigation of the complex dynamics of both ideologies: fascism and Trumpism through a rundown of their main features and key principles, along with a comparative study of their ideological groundwork and historical context.

Then, I will delve into the warning signs of fascism and how they have unraveled in contemporary America. The warning signs include the proliferation of right-wing radical groups, the ejection of underrepresented communities to the fringes of society, the militarization of law enforcement, and the disregard for the rule of law.

I will then proceed with an examination of the major factors that have contributed to the upsurge of fascism in modern America such as the public's lack of awareness of the implications of fascism and its imminent threat, social media's role in the erosion of trust and democratic principles, and the role of political leaders in curbing civil liberties and providing a platform for far-right radical groups to thrive.

Lastly, I will study the budding role of the Biden administration in resisting the expanding threat of fascism in the US. While the new administration has pledged to address the concerns surrounding the rising menace, the challenge lies in the fact that the Biden Administration's relentless efforts to thwart the ingrained forces of fascism and far-right extremism in the country are stretched upon a circuitous and tricky path.

### **Importance for Academic Research**

The growing threat of authoritarianism in the US has become an imperative concern for academic investigation considering its expected implications for democracy, human rights, and social justice.

The role of scientific research is to expound the significance and complex dynamics of this unraveling political ideology, its similarities and differences with Trumpism, and to propound strategic gambits to resist its upsurge.

As a researcher, I seek to shed light on the ideological bedrocks and manifestations of fascism, along with its contemporary offshoot, Trumpism. This involves an exploration of how modern and traditional political trends intertwine. Through thorough analysis and critical inquiry, I intend to contribute to a better understanding of this complex and multilayered issue and hence inform the public about the status quo.

## **I. Context Matters: Exploring the Main Features of Fascism and Trumpism**

### **1. The Fascist Playbook: Authority, Propaganda, and Repression**

The fundamental principles of fascism have their historical roots in early 20th-century political ideologies that influenced Central, Southern, and Eastern Europe. Fascism prioritizes the nation over the individual (subordination of the individual) and gives prominence to hierarchy, compliance, and order. Even though fascism, a far-right ideology, is often associated with racism and supremacism, these are not intrinsic to the core tenets of fascism. Fascism is, in fact, characterized by the cult of personality, the oppression of minority groups, the censorship of dissent, and the obliteration of individual autonomy. It is also marked by a resort to violence and coercion to sustain power.

Fascism is an authoritarian and patriarchal ideology that infringes on the very foundations of democracy. It seeks to establish a class-based society ruled by a single, power-hungry, authoritarian leader. Fascism is not just about the actions of some extremist groups or individuals, it is a political ideology that strives to concentrate power in the hands of a specific political leader or political party, usually to the detriment of individual rights and liberties.

Fascist leaders are authoritarian nationalists who believe that the marrow of a strong and prosperous nation resides in its ability to promote nationalism, militarism, superintendence over the media, and authority over the different aspects of civil society. Fascists advocate pugnacious foreign policies and harbor belligerent attitudes towards immigrants and minority groups.

### **2. The Trumpism Paradigm: Populism, Nationalism, and Polarization**

Trumpism refers to the political ideology, beliefs, and strategies associated with the former President of the United States, Donald J. Trump (2017-2021). It consists of a set of principles, policies, and tactics that he established during his tenure in office and during his political campaigns.

Populist, nationalist, and anti-establishment standpoints make up Trumpism. It is marked by unpolished discourse and propagandist rhetoric, relentless confrontation with the media, multiple hijinks and rodomontades, harsh immigration policies, and transactional foreign relations.

Donald Trump positioned himself as the spokesperson for the embittered and anxious population needing a hero who could relieve them from responsibility. However, his presidency grew more polarizing as his blustering tone and attempts to divide people were based on 'us-against-them' rhetoric. This dissenting rhetoric not only incited racial division but also functioned as a deliberate contrivance to promote class oppression while challenging traditional political norms.

Both passionate support and strong opposition have been garnered by Trumpism. Its supporters commend its commitment to national sovereignty, economic development, and defiance of the mainstream political system. On the other hand, detractors contend that Trumpism subverts democratic standards, endorses exclusionary practices, and fosters division.

While some consider it an unprecedented and forward-looking political movement, others view it as a continuation of conservative and populist ideologies. Much political debate and analysis still surround Trumpism and its legacy.

## II. From Fascism to Trumpism: Exploring Key Differences and Similarities

### 1. Leadership, Nationalism, and Power: Tracing Overlapping Traits in Trumpism and Fascism

It is important to recognize that the concept of fascism bears historical significance and ideological foundations that should be approached with tact. Drawing parallels between Trumpism and fascism can involve intricate and multifaceted considerations because both concepts are complex and rooted in different historical, political, and ideological contexts.

#### a. Populist Rhetoric

Both fascism and Trumpism resort to populist rhetoric to appeal to the frustrations and jitters of a disaffected population. Their rhetoric is based on degeneration (decay) and regeneration (revival) lexis as they promise to restore a perceived sense of greatness or national identity.

#### b. Strong Leader Persona

Both centralized leaderships, built around a charismatic figure, rely on the unwavering support of their followers. The leaders of such movements present themselves as the long-awaited saviors who empathetically advocate and represent the public's pleas. This leader-centered strategy eventually leads to a concentration of power and a cult of personality.

#### c. Nationalism and Identity

Both Fascism and Trumpism promote nationalist populism based on exclusionary and divisive rhetoric. Trump, like past fascist leaders, personifies the avatar of identitarian, nationalistic, and racist atavism. Their priority is to advance the interests of their nation over others.

#### d. Authoritarian Tendencies and Disregard for Institutions

They both seek to dismantle democratic systems and replace them with authoritarian rule rooted in centralized leadership. This prompts the disintegration of the checks and balances system, paving the way for authoritarian backlash and Constitutional decadence.

#### e. Use of Propaganda

Both ideologies rely on propaganda and the power of persuasion in order to satisfy the socio-economic interests of the nation and to align with its political agenda. They use propaganda to mold public perception and maintain control over the narrative. The public is misled, conditioned, and disinformed while the media is manipulated. This exploits the population's frailty and disenchantment, redirecting their popular affection into fear and aversion.

**f. Us vs. Them Mentality**

Both ideologies emphasize the superiority of the nation and its people while targeting certain minority groups as threats to the nation. This could only give rise to social division and resentment toward minority groups.

Their political discourse is laden with asseverations and utterances that widen the gap between the elite and the minority groups.

**2. Trumpism vs. Fascism: Navigating the Nuances**

While certain parallels can be identified between Trumpism and Fascism in terms of leadership style, nationalism, and anti-establishment sentiment, it is also imperative to recognize the significant differences between the historical manifestations of fascism and the contemporary political movement linked with Donald Trump. In fact, their dissimilarities are rooted in their distinct historical contexts, underlying belief systems, socio-cultural dynamics, and broader political frameworks.

**a. Historical Context**

The fascist ideology emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as an authoritarian ideology with radical implications. Post-World War I turmoil and economic instability influenced its rise, which led to Mussolini and Hitler becoming key figures in the establishment of authoritarian regimes in Italy and Germany.

Trumpism reared its ugly head in the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century American politics when Donald Trump, a reality TV star and businessman, won the 2016 presidential election. Trumpism refers to the rhetoric, policies, and political style associated with Donald Trump during his time in office.

**b. Ideological Foundations**

While Fascism stands as a clearly defined political ideology, supported by fundamental philosophical underpinnings (Totalitarianism, Corporatism, expansionist imperialism, belief in superior race, etc.), Trumpism, on the other hand, doesn't espouse a consistent ideological foundation comparable to Fascism. Trumpism is a political movement revolving around the temperament and leadership of Donald Trump.

Besides, Fascism is established on radical patriotism and totalitarianism whereas Trumpism is more centered around populism, anti-establishment orientations, and xenophobia.

**c. Racism and Xenophobia**

Fascism, principally exemplified by Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler, was known for its severe discrimination and extreme aversion to what was considered the inferior race, always advocating for racial or ethnic purity. This led to widespread carnage and extensive human rights abuse. The Holocaust, in which six million Jews were exterminated, is the most appalling illustration of the brutalities committed under fascism.

While Trump's overtly racist rhetoric and immigration policies were certainly divisive and discriminatory, he did not promote state-sponsored racism and xenophobia that were distinctive features of historical fascist regimes. Even though Trump campaigned for nationalism and resorted to divisive rhetoric, his policies did not consistently match established fascist tendencies.



#### **d. Political Structure**

**One-Party State:** Most fascist regimes establish a single-party system where only the ruling party is allowed to exist. Opposition parties are suppressed and elections are often controlled or manipulated to maintain the ruling party's grip on power.

**Multi-Party Democracy:** In the United States, there is a long-established history of a multi-party democratic system where various political parties are allowed to exist and compete. While Trumpism highlighted specific policy stances and a distinctive political approach, Trump did not express any intentions to ban opposition parties.

In addition, Fascist regimes contrived to dismantle democratic institutions in order to reinforce their superintendence, curb resistance, and consolidate their control over the population. On the other hand, Trumpism operated within the framework of the existing American democratic system which includes a constitution, checks and balances, and regular elections.

### **III. Recognizing the Threat: Warning Signs of Rising Fascism in the United States**

Fascism, a spreading political ideology established on right-wing nationalism and authoritarianism that emphasizes the state's superiority over the individual, has recently witnessed a resurgence in the US. To better understand the phenomenon of the rise of fascist trends, it is imperative to examine the common signs often associated with such movements.

#### **1. Rise of Extremism; Far-Right Groups and White Supremacy**

One of the most alarming harbingers of the rise of fascism is the proliferation of far-right extremist groups, such as the Proud Boys and the Oath Keepers, who staunchly believe in white supremacist principles and adhere to an anti-Semitic philosophy. They not only promote a nationalistic ideology but also disregard societal norms. White supremacist groups, whose discourse often reflects that of former President Donald Trump, have become more active and visible since Trump's spiraling journey to the political apex and his meteoric rise to the pinnacle of power. These groups have been responsible for multiple berserk outbreaks such as the Capitol incursion in January 2021. The growing prevalence of such groups and their terroristic activities epitomize the drift of the American nation toward fascist tendencies.

#### **2. Fueling Division: Minority Disparagement and Xenophobic Rhetoric**

The disparagement of minority groups, a biased tendency that has become more prevalent in recent years, has played an important role in paving the way for the rise of fascist propensities. Some reactionary factions condemn immigrants, people of color, and other marginalized minority groups for the country's social issues and economic distress. By the same token, the increase in xenophobic rhetoric and hate speech, fostered by social media and other online platforms, could only exacerbate polarization and division in American society. This, in turn, might deepen the cultural schism among different groups and contribute to the formation of opposing factions within the population.

#### **3. Militarization of Law Enforcement**

The militarization of law enforcement is a noteworthy warning sign of the escalation of fascist trends in America that should not be overlooked. Law enforcement agencies are

gradually being supplied with military-grade weapons and gear. This course of action is alarming and raises a red flag as it could lead to the erosion of civil liberties and hence the instatement of a police state.

In fascist regimes, the police force is in service of the ruling party, not the people. Fascist leaders hold control over the mob through the use of excessive force and the suppression of the resistance. Therefore, the militarization of police forces and the use of violence against peaceful protesters are tell-tale signs of this shift toward authoritarianism. These actions can ultimately result in brutal conflicts and even bloodshed.

#### **4. Disregard for the Rule of Law**

The disregard for the rule of law is a concerning trend that has permeated American society and politics, serving as a warning sign of the rise of fascism. This trend can be illustrated through multiple examples of occurrences that took place during the past few years.

##### **a. Silencing the Truth: Denigration of the Free Press**

The Trump administration's recurrent and persistent denigration of the free press serves as one example as his attacks on the media were a hallmark of both his presidential campaign and his style of governance. President Trump frequently branded the media as the 'enemy of the people'<sup>2</sup> and held them responsible for disseminating false information. Additionally, the Trump administration took further steps by banning certain news outlets from attending press conferences and revoking press credentials from journalists who criticized Trump's policies and actions. As a result, freedom of the press and public access to reliable information were jeopardized. Such behavioral patterns are commonly perceived as the insignia of fascist regimes which strive to hold sway over the narrative and curb the dissidents in order to reinforce their authority.

##### **b. Undermining Democracy: Executive Orders and the Capitol Insurrection**

Another example is the Trump administration's enactment of executive orders to circumvent Congress and implement new policies, which have been ruled unconstitutional by several courts. One such example is the polemical travel ban that targeted refugees and travelers from predominantly Muslim countries.

Additionally, the invasion of the Capitol on January 6, 2021, serves as a striking illustration of the deliberate disregard for the principles and foundations of the rule of law. Former President Trump's supporters started a riot and stormed the Capitol building. The mob was resolved to overturn the election results, thereby keeping Donald Trump in power and preventing Joe Biden, a legitimate president-elect, from assuming office. Such an onslaught on the democratic process epitomizes a significant violation of the rule of law and shows readiness to resort to authoritarian measures to accomplish political ambitions.

#### **IV. The Rise of Fascism in America: Understanding the Factors**

The erosion of democratic principles and institutions creates a fertile ground for the emergence of authoritarian ideologies like Fascism. The concentration of power in the hands

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<sup>2</sup> Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), "The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!" Twitter post, February 17, 2017, 9:15 AM, <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/832708293516632065>.



of a single leader and the disregard for individual liberties pose threats to the democratic values and foundations within a society.

As a result, fascist trends have been on the rise in contemporary America. This phenomenon is the outcome of a confluence of multiple contributing factors, including the public's lack of awareness regarding the simmering threat of fascism, the unfurling of social media as a communication tool, and the pernicious role of political leaders.

### **1. The Anatomy of Ignorance: A Roadmap to America's Fascist Crisis**

The rise of fascism in the US can be attributed to various factors. One significant factor is the inadequate discernment of many Americans regarding the essence of fascism and its inherent threats, along with a lack of awareness of its convergence with past authoritarian regimes. This dynamic creates an environment where fascist ideologues can easily promote their beliefs and gather supporters. The lack of comprehensive knowledge about past authoritarian regimes in general, and fascism in particular, makes the public more easily impressionable and vulnerable to their appeal as the remedy for the ills of society, especially during times of social and economic upheaval.

Besides, the public's unawareness of the striking similarities between the current rise of authoritarianism and past oppressive systems like Nazism, such as the erosion of civil liberties, the spread of social inequalities, and the degradation of human rights and social justice, prevent the citizens from recognizing and acknowledging the inherent threat of fascism and its imminent dangers. For instance, some individuals may be inclined to advocate policies that further nationalist ideals unaware of the fact that it could lead to the marginalization and the oppression of minority groups.

Along these lines, the lack of public awareness and understanding of fascism in the United States provides a fertile ground for its rise. The perpetuation of hateful crimes by extremist groups in the United States is a stark reminder of the dangers that can arise from a lack of insight into the past and present. For example, in 2017, during a protest in Charlottesville against the proposed removal of the statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, orchestrated by white nationalists, white supremacists, and neo-Nazis, clashes erupted with counter-protesters, resulting in one protester's death and 35 injuries.

Also, on October 27, 2018, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a gunman shot and killed 11 people and injured several others who were attending Shabbat morning services at the Tree of Life synagogue. The shooter relentlessly expressed his anti-Semitic beliefs during the deadly attack.

These distressing events serve as concrete examples of the dangers associated with extremist ideologies fueled by hate. Being fully aware of the potential pitfalls and risks associated with right-wing beliefs can endow individuals with the ability to resist, think critically, and ultimately take proactive steps to withstand its spread.

### **2. The Infodemic: How Disinformation on Social Media Shapes Public Opinion and Undermines Democratic Values**

The rapid expansion of information and communication technologies bolstered by the human impulse to communicate has led to the emergence of social media platforms as the most effective means of communication for fascist ideologues. With the advent of Facebook,

Twitter, and YouTube, fascist ideologues have been able to become more organized, spread their ideas, and gather more followers.

Nonetheless, the propagation of fake news and disinformation on social media and news platforms has further undermined trust in the media and the democratic process. This has created an environment where people are more predisposed to believe in conspiracy theories and alternative truths, paving the way for a growing wariness towards established institutions.

The following examples serve as stark reminders of how easily false information can infiltrate public discourse and erode trust in established institutions.

**a. Election Disruption**

During the 2020 presidential election, some politicians (Republicans) and media representatives (Trump supporters) openly called for the interruption of the elections (the cornerstone of the democratic process) and the establishment of an authoritarian rule. Former President Donald Trump, his supporters, and some right-wing media outlets circulated false allegations of voter fraud and rigged elections, precipitating the incursion of the Capitol on January 6, 2021.

**b. The QAnon Phenomenon**

QAnon, a far-right conspiracy theory that gained prominence on online platforms in 2017, alleges that a secret society of pedophiles and Satan-worshipping elites governs the world and that former President Donald Trump is concocting a plan to bring down the organization. The propagation of fake news and disinformation on social media platforms fomented the rise of QAnon which, eventually, sparked acts of violence, hatred crimes, and domestic terrorism.

**c. COVID-19 Misinformation**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, social media platforms were saturated with false information and conspiracy theories about the origin of the virus (a lab-created biological weapon) and its potential cures. The propagation of such misinformation on a large scale not only resulted in public turmoil but also eroded trust in public health authorities, ultimately hampering efforts to contain the pandemic.

**3. The Role of Political Leaders in the Rise of Fascism**

Political leaders, such as Donald Trump, played a significant role in the escalating threat of fascism in contemporary America. While certain politicians<sup>3</sup>, including Trump, have

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<sup>3</sup>Donald Trump:

"When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. ... They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people." (*Trump's presidential campaign announcement*, June 16, 2015)

Steve Bannon:

"I'm a Leninist. Lenin wanted to destroy the state, and that's my goal, too. I want to bring everything crashing down, and destroy all of today's establishment." (*Interview with The Daily Beast*, August 22, 2016)

Stephen Miller:

"We're going to build that wall, and we're going to build it out of love." (*Quoted in The New York Times*, December 14, 2019)

Marjorie Taylor Greene:

"Q is a patriot. We know that for sure. But we do not know who Q is." (*Facebook post*, August 23, 2020)

Matt Gaetz:

"The best way to secure the border is to build a wall, have adequate border patrol agents, and ensure that the laws on the books are enforced." (*Statement on his official website*)

exerted themselves to subvert the rule of law and circumscribe civil liberties, others like Steve Bannon (the Chief Strategist in the Trump administration), Stephen Miller (Donald Trump's senior adviser), Marjorie Taylor Greene (a Republican congresswoman), and Matt Gaetz (a Republican congressman) resorted to schismatic rhetoric to stoke racial tensions and foment rampage.

Donald Trump's controversial campaign was established on the principles of jingoism and authoritarianism. It was fueled by a disruptive discourse brimming with biased and eliminationist nomenclature. His rhetoric only served to embolden the far-right and white supremacist factions and instill nativism and racist sentiments into their fragile psyche.

Donald Trump banked on the public's smoldering feelings of fear and distress by vowing to rid the country of what he deemed as impending threats (his campaign was concomitant with the upsurge of immigration issues). He tapped into the public's angst and jitters regarding economic instability, social restructuring proceedings, and the overwhelming fear of the incursion of the Other. Those feelings of acerbity and hostility were already simmering in the public's psyche, and Trump brought them to a boil. He played on harboring and nurturing their anxiety to sway them. He aimed at comforting and taming the masses and eventually winning their trust and vote.

Donald Trump's alarmist rhetoric drove a wedge between different communities as he openly favored certain cultural groups over others. This resulted in an escalation in hate crime rates and violence. The xenophobic tendencies that have surfaced since the rise of Donald Trump in the political arena and have pervaded the American socio-political scenery ever since have been sustained by his overtly racist rhetoric and policies. These policies constitute a key part of his communication strategy to spread confusion and fear to his advantage, ultimately aiming to splinter American democracy in order to make America lily-white again. For instance, the 2021 Capitol insurrection constitutes a blunt reminder of the fragility of American democracy and that fascism can rear its ugly head even in the most consistent democracies.

As a result of Donald Trump's contentious election and the ensuing consolidation of power, the threat to American democracy became more conspicuous. The staunch belief by advocates of authoritarian systems of governance that centralized government control is a prerequisite to preserve order and stability gained traction. This increasing authoritarianism, manifested in the concentration of power in the executive branch, prompted the absence of checks and balances, further exacerbating the threat to democracy. Donald Trump strived to extend his power over the other branches of government by taking new measures such as dismissing his chief advisors from responsibility three times, firing the secretary of state, the FBI director, the Acting Attorney General, his chief of staff, his chief strategist, his communications director, etc., and then hiring new ones and appointing loyalists to key positions. Besides, Trump's power grab has gone to his head, and he boldly displayed his disregard for the rule of law: he endeavored to restrict immigration, pardoned his political allies, exculpated his family members, and attempted to circumvent Congress by issuing executive orders which can be disputed in court but are difficult to overturn. The Congress, held mostly under Republican control, allowed this seizure of power by never contesting the President, paving the way for the crumbling of the system of checks and balances.

In light of these developments, the increasing involvement of Donald Trump and the MAGA movement supporters in politics and life triggered the rise of fascist tendencies and

allowed fascism to come out of the woodwork. Donald Trump's actions, which encompassed restricting civil liberties, emboldening white supremacist groups, openly expressing his intentions to bring the rule of law to a halt, undermining the independence of the judiciary system, limiting the rights of minority groups, and crippling his opponents, along with his authoritarian policies and xenophobic rhetoric, had considerable ramifications. These actions have ultimately led to the erosion of democratic standards.

In conclusion, the rise of populist leaders perpetuates a climate of insecurity and hastens the decay of American democracy. As a result, the United States, which is established on the principles of freedom and democracy, is confronted with a steady deterioration of these core values, exacerbated by the factors mentioned above. Donald Trump's actions, policies, and rhetoric not only run counter to the principles of democracy and eventually impinge on the already fragile democracy but also have bestowed a fertile ground for the rise of fascist impulses.

## V. American Democracy at a Crossroads: Biden's Uphill Battle to Restore Trust

Throughout history, the American nation has been engaged in an oscillating pattern of cyclical progress and regress. But when it comes to judging the US as the embodiment of democratic values, the nation still faces an array of challenges.

Trump's thrust into the White House epitomized the resurgence of a nationalistic spasm that contributed to the resurgence of the issue of racism and Othering that had been simmering and which Trump brought to a boil. Trump's rise to power provided a reality check on the fallibility of American democracy as Trump didn't believe in equal opportunities and rights for all citizens.

Hence, Biden's victory has been acknowledged by some commentators, officeholders, and statesmen<sup>4</sup> as a sort of compensation for the 2016 election and its hijacking swerve of the political, economic, and social status quo as Biden pledged to unite the country and heal the soul of the American nation. In fact, during their presidential campaign, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris vowed to defend the civil rights of all Americans, provide equal opportunities for every American, and champion democracy and human rights worldwide. That's why, when Joe Biden was projected the winner of the presidential election over President Donald Trump, sighs of relief rippled through the capitals of longtime U.S. allies. International messages of congratulation<sup>5</sup> started rolling as a stream of world leaders swiftly congratulated American President-elect Joe Biden on his victory, with many of them striking a jubilant tone

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<sup>4</sup> On November 7, 2020, Andrew Cuomo tweeted: "A historic day. After the darkness, division and hate of the past four years, America has spoken and rejected more of the same. Congratulations to my good friend President-Elect @JoeBiden. Today we go forward in hope & progress."

<sup>5</sup> Hillary Clinton tweeted: "The voters have spoken, and they have chosen @JoeBiden and @Kamala Harris to be our next president and vice president. It's a history-making ticket, a repudiation of Trump, and a new page for America. Thank you to everyone who helped make this happen. Onward, together."

Nancy Pelosi tweeted: "We kept the republic! Congratulations to Joe Biden on his victory for the soul of our country. Congratulations to Kamala Harris for making history. It's a time to heal and a time to grow together. E Pluribus Unum."

Richard Leonard tweeted: "As leader of @ScottishLabour, I congratulate @JoeBiden and @Kamala Harris on their victory. Biden's victory will allow America to move on from the hatred and division of the Trump presidency and build a better future."

Sadiq Khan tweeted: "Congratulations @JoeBiden and @Kamala Harris on your well-deserved win. London looks forward to working with you to get back to building bridges, not walls. it's time."

on social media. They expressed their hope and relief, cheering it as an opportunity to strengthen global democracy.

When Joe Biden was elected the 46th president of the USA in November 2020, it marked a return to political norms in America following four years of boisterous populism and administrative turmoil under Donald Trump. The American people ushered in a new day for America and Biden's win marked the end of Trump's war on democracy and truth. Biden inherited a nation in crisis, a struggling nation, facing contingent challenges that had been a blight on American democracy and the judiciary system. As Biden put it, the Americans voted for his vision: to heal America, to restore the soul of America, to rebuild the backbone of the nation, to reinstate and defend democracy, and to unify rather than divide as he pledged to achieve racial justice and root out systemic racism. The American people voted so that the unconstrained partisanship removes itself from the White House, the disseverance of the American entrenched principles and values grinds to a halt, and the social and economic restlessness comes to a standstill. The American people voted for Biden as the new guardian of the American dismally lost values.

Hence, Biden faces an uphill battle to restore trust in US democracy. So, can Biden measure up to the task? Will his actions match his campaign words and enable the American society to break free from the fluctuating pattern of cyclical progress and cyclical regress it has been following?

## **VI. Resisting Fascism: The Biden-Harris Administration's Path to Restoring Democracy**

Since assuming office, the Biden-Harris Administration has taken reformative measures aimed at restoring and reinforcing democracy. Recognizing the importance of an inclusive government that serves all Americans, regardless of their appearance or location, the administration has embarked on a range of restitutive proceedings. The Biden-Harris administration initiated various measures to regenerate democracy, including protecting voting rights, countering misinformation and disinformation, fighting corruption, advancing human rights, and ensuring government accountability and transparency.

### **1. Securing the Ballot Box: The Right to Vote as a Pillar of Democracy**

The right to vote is deemed the linchpin of democracy. The Biden-Harris Administration has been actively pressing for legislation that safeguards this fundamental right. The Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act have been passed to protect voting rights and to make sure every American citizen has equal access to the ballot box. The Biden-Harris Administration acknowledges that the preservation of the right to vote is fundamental to the democratization process. In fact, the right to vote serves as a shield for all other rights: it enables people to contribute to the reconstruction of democracy and articulate their viewpoints on matters, policies, and legislations that affect their lives.

### **2. Ensuring Information Integrity: Technology and Democratic Values in the Biden-Harris Administration**

In order to protect and perpetuate democracy, it is important to prioritize the free flow of ideas, informed public discourse, and trust in institutions. Considering the significant role



played by technology in broadcasting information, the Biden-Harris Administration is committed to bolstering information integrity and maintaining democratic values in the information age. Addressing misinformation and disinformation works toward granting the public the right and ability to make informed decisions, ensuring that fake news, rumors, and deceptive information do not cripple the democratic process.

### **3. Preserving Freedom of the Press: The Biden-Harris Administration's Commitment to Independent Media**

An effective democracy relies on independent media. Hence, the Biden-Harris Administration upholds the rights of journalists and supports local journalism to ensure the reliable and accurate dissemination of information to the public. The role of independent media in the development of a functioning democracy lies in its ability to scrutinize government actions and provide the public with reliable information, ensuring transparency and accountability.

To that end, the administration intends to foster an environment that preserves freedom of the press and promotes media pluralism. This commitment allows the public to access diverse sources of information, which is a significant step toward the democratization process.

### **4. Ensuring Government Accountability: The Biden-Harris Administration's Fight Against Corruption**

The Biden-Harris Administration has been actively committed to addressing the issue of corruption and ensuring government accountability since it is incontestable that corruption undermines public trust and compromises the substratum of democratic structures. The government undertook numerous steps to address the issue:

#### **a. Transparency**

The government advocates transparency by making government activities and information available to the public. This includes revealing government contracts, expenditures, and service data.

In line with this commitment, the government launched the 'COVID-19 Money Tracker' website, which provides real-time information on how federal funds are being allocated and spent on the pandemic. This initiative promotes transparency and accountability in government spending.

#### **b. Accountability**

The administration sustains accountability by authorizing law enforcement agencies, like the Department of Justice and the FBI, to investigate and initiate legal actions against corruption cases. As part of its pledge to hold wrongdoers accountable, the Department of Justice set up a specialized anti-corruption unit that was instructed to investigate and prosecute cases of fraud and corruption related to COVID-19.

#### **c. Ethical Conduct**

The administration implemented strict ethics policies that impel government officials to reveal their financial interests, assets, and probable conflicts of interest.

On his first day in office, President Biden signed an executive order that imposed restrictive regulations on lobbying and prohibited officials from accepting gifts from



registered lobbyists. These measures aim to restore and strengthen ethical obligations for executive branch employees.

### **5. Equality and Justice for All: Advancing Human Rights in the Biden-Harris Administration**

The Biden-Harris Administration has recognized that reinforcing democracy hinges on advancing human rights. The Biden-Harris Administration actively advocates for racial justice and recognizes the urgency to tackle systemic inequalities that have prevailed throughout history. In pursuit of these goals, the administration has signed executive orders promoting impartiality and inclusion such as the Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities, the Executive Order on Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation, and the Executive Order on Rebuilding and Enhancing Programs to Resettle Refugees and Planning for the Impact of Climate Change on Migration. The administration has also endorsed legislation aimed at reforming the criminal justice system, including The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act and The Equality Act.

Besides, the administration has committed to promoting gender equality by supporting initiatives such as the Paycheck Fairness Act, enforcing Title IX, and upholding and expanding the Affordable Care Act (ACA). This commitment aims to ensure equal access to opportunities in employment, healthcare, and education.

Therefore, the government gives precedence to these issues in furtherance of its mission to reconstruct a more inclusive democracy that sustains the values of integrity, equity, and justice for all. By dint of multiple policies and initiatives to foster racial justice and ensure gender equality, the administration aspires to abrogate discriminatory practices and create opportunities for marginalized communities to thrive and prosper. It also aims to create a more inclusive democracy where individuals of all genders can fully participate and contribute.

### **6. Promoting Equality and Tolerance: The Biden-Harris Administration's Stand Against Hate Crimes**

The Biden-Harris administration is deeply committed to fighting hate crimes, combating prejudice and violence, and promoting equality. To achieve these objectives, the government has initiated various actions, including reinforcing existing laws, implementing awareness programs, supporting victims and communities, and compiling and evaluating data on hate crimes. These endeavors aim to hold criminals accountable, reduce hate crime rates, provide support to victims, and develop targeted strategies based on data analysis. As a result, the government strives to foster a tolerant society that safeguards individuals and communities against discrimination, bigotry, and violence based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and sexual orientation.

## **VII. Findings**

Several factors have contributed to the erosion of democratic values, creating an environment propitious for the emergence of elements reminiscent of fascism, including the proliferation of extremist groups, the dissemination of xenophobic discourse, and the

disregard for the rule of law. The examination of these factors along with an exploration of the warning signs of fascism provide valuable perspectives on the alarming shift in political dynamics that Trumpism has ushered in.

Even though certain aspects of Trumpism remain similar to historical patterns observed during the emergence of fascist movements, it is important to critically assess the key features of Trumpism while also acknowledging that political ideologies and movements are multifaceted and can steer toward different trajectories in unpredictable ways.

While there are striking similarities between specific elements of Trumpism and certain aspects associated with fascism (leadership style, nationalism, and anti-establishment sentiment), it's imperative to recognize their distinct historical contexts, ideological foundations, and overall political structure. Delving into these ideologies requires a careful approach because drawing direct analogies can be misleading given that the contexts in which these ideologies emerged and their respective historical implications are distinct and complex.

Despite their shared characteristics and the overlapping themes and rhetoric between fascism and Trumpism, Trumpism has not fully evolved into fascism. Whether these similarities will precipitate the mutation of the American political landscape depends on several factors such as the reaction of the general population, the political leaders' strategies, and the resilience of democratic institutions because, despite Donald Trump's electoral defeat, Trumpism will likely outlast Trump as an individual.

In response to these challenges, the Biden-Harris Administration has pledged to restore and reinforce democracy. Their commitment is manifested through concerted efforts to counteract the very factors that paved the way for the emergence of fascist tendencies. By safeguarding voting rights, prioritizing information integrity, advocating for government accountability, advancing human rights, and combating hate crimes, the administration is actively working towards reinforcing democratic values, curtailing fascist tendencies, and creating a more inclusive and fair society.

The United States has a history of experiencing cycles of progress and regress, yet it continues to grapple with challenges in preserving its democratic values. The presidency of Donald Trump brought issues such as nationalism, racism, and inequality to the forefront, posing important challenges to the resilience of American democracy. The election of Joe Biden as the 46th President of the United States of America has been widely seen as a much-anticipated opportunity to restore the nation's soul and reunite the country.

## **Conclusion**

The rising threat of fascism in America is a cause for concern. While the US has long been recognized as the epitome of democracy that operates under the rule of law, there has been an increased concern about the emergence of fascist ideologies and movements over the last few years. Fascist tendencies persist and even thrive in modern times. The Founding Fathers' rallying cries against tyranny and the concentration of power within the federal government have proven to be insufficient throughout history.

In fact, Donald Trump's rise to the top of the American political system raised questions about the trajectory of a democratic government that had pledged to uphold democratic principles such as justice, fairness, equality, and individual freedom. Trump's actions and policies, which run counter to the Founding Fathers' established principles, provided critiques with a reality check on the frailty of American democracy.

Under the circumstances, there has been extensive debate over Trumpism's correlation with fascism due to its populist rhetoric, anti-establishment stance, and nationalist tendencies. Many scholars and political analysts<sup>6</sup> have raised concerns about the changing political profile of democratic America where elements of fascism seemed to reverberate in Trump's politics - perceptible both in his rhetoric and agenda. The evolution from Trumpism to fascism is a concerning trajectory that these scholars have pointed out, underscoring the potential shift towards more authoritarian and exclusionary governance. The extent to which Trumpism might be considered as laying the groundwork for the rise of fascism is a complex and intricate issue that entails careful investigation.

It follows that the American democratic standards and institutions have been disintegrating, paving the way for authoritarian backlash and Constitutional decadence. The crisis triggered a domino effect across the world, and many countries raised the alarm about an intensifying escalation into a global demise of democracy. The US is going downhill, drifting into a world dominated by false populism, hate, violence, and discriminatory policies, disguised in embellished rhetoric wrapped in a warped perception of the population's needs and interests.

The dangers of the rising trend of fascism in America cannot be overstated. If left unchecked, they have the potential to undermine the very foundations and fabric of democracy and lead to widespread human suffering. Therefore, it is critical to recognize this alarming trend and take action to prevent it from taking hold.

Resisting fascism is not just about defeating extremist groups or individuals. It is about upholding the values that make America great: democracy, freedom, and justice for all. It is up to all Americans to work together to ensure that these values are not lost to the darkness of extremism and hate. Therefore, it is important for all Americans to remain alert against fascist ideas and to rally to preserve democratic values and institutions.

In the face of these challenges, many Americans stood up for what was right and refused to give in to fear and hatred. Movements like Black Lives Matter have been a powerful force for change and have helped shed light on the ingrained injustices that persist in American society. The growing awareness about the need for collective action shows that many Americans are still committed to working towards a better future to ensure that the American nation remains a beacon of freedom and democracy for future generations.

Besides, the Biden-Harris Administration prioritizes restoring and reinforcing democracy through reformative measures. They aim to establish an inclusive government that serves all Americans, regardless of their appearance or geographic location. However, given

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<sup>6</sup>In *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (2017), Timothy Snyder, an American historian, examines modern threats to democracy from a historical perspective.

In *Behold, America: The Entangled History of America First and the American Dream* (2018), Sarah Churchwell, a British-American cultural historian, delves into the origins and implications of the slogan "America First"

In *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them* (2018), Jason Stanley, an American philosopher, explores how fascism works and how it affects democracy.

In his article "This Is How Fascism Comes to America" (2016), Robert Kagan, a historian and political commentator, compares Trumpism to authoritarian regimes

In *The Anatomy of Fascism* (2005), Robert O. Paxton, an American historian, reviews fascism throughout history and analyzes its core elements.

In *Fascism: A Warning* (2018), Madeleine Albright, a former U.S. Secretary of State, warns against fascism and the need to safeguard democracy.

In *How Democracies Die* (2018), Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt discuss threats to democratic systems, including populism and authoritarianism.

the complex political landscape and the deep divisions and polarization in the country, rebuilding trust in US democracy will be a laborious battle for President Biden.

In conclusion, while American democracy has undeniably made significant progress, it is now at a critical juncture, facing new challenges and uncertainties. As the nation struggles to face the rising threat of fascism, it continues on its path toward a more inclusive, fair, and resilient democracy.

While American democracy has come a long way, it has become increasingly clear that the path to a better and more equitable future for all depends on resolute commitment and relentless progress.

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