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A Journal of Political Thought and Statesmanship

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Queen

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Samuelson:
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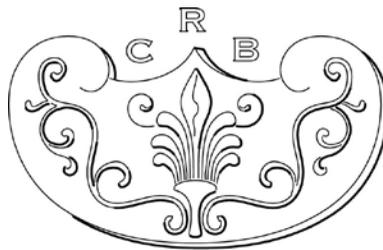
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Essay by William Voegeli

Trump and His Enemies

Sometimes, worthy causes have unworthy champions. Henry David Thoreau spoke for many abolitionists in calling John Brown a “crucified hero,” but he was better described by a more judicious contemporary, Abraham Lincoln. Even though Brown “agreed with us in thinking slavery wrong,” Lincoln said, there was no excuse for the “violence, bloodshed, and treason” perpetrated at Harpers Ferry.

Millions of Americans still living remember Joseph McCarthy, Republican senator from Wisconsin and, in the early 1950s, the nation’s most prominent anti-Communist. William F. Buckley’s second book, after *God and Man at Yale* (1951) but a year before the 1955 launch of *National Review* magazine, was *McCarthy and His Enemies: The Record and Its Meaning*, co-authored with L. Brent Bozell, Buckley’s brother-in-law. The book’s famous conclusion was that, yes, if and when McCarthyism involves false accusations against people who are neither Communists, nor disloyal, nor threats to national security, it deserves to be criticized and opposed. “But as long as McCarthyism fixes its goals with its present precision, it is a movement around which men of good will and stern morality can close ranks.”

Precision, however, was the quality McCarthyism most conspicuously lacked. *McCarthy and His Enemies* was published just weeks before the live television coverage of the Army-McCarthy hearings, the senator’s Waterloo. By the end of 1954, McCarthy had been censured by his Senate colleagues, was being disdainfully ignored by journalists and politicians, and

was fully engaged in drinking himself to death, a mission he accomplished three years later at the age of 48.

That McCarthy’s tactics were often dubious, even deplorable, should have been clear before the hearings, however. After exposing Alger Hiss in 1948 as a Soviet agent employed at the highest levels of American government, Whittaker Chambers became a hero to all who considered Communism both hateful and dreadful. Shortly after the McCarthy book was published, Chambers wrote Buckley, declining to endorse it. “McCarthy will one day make some irreparable blunder which will play directly into the hands of our common enemy and discredit the whole anti-Communist effort for a long while to come,” Chambers warned. “His flair for the sensational, his inaccuracies and distortions, his tendency to sacrifice the greater objectivity for the momentary effect, will lead him and us into trouble.”

Buckley ultimately came to share that assessment, though he waited decades to say so publicly. He voiced many second thoughts in a lightly fictionalized account of the era’s controversies, *The Redhunter: A Novel Based on the Life of Senator Joe McCarthy* (1999). “But if it was not venal, then a very stupid thing for McCarthy to do,” says one character of the senator’s conduct in the Army-McCarthy hearings. “Incredibly stupid!” his friend insists. Buckley was even more explicit after *Redhunter* was published. “I have thought for a long time that McCarthy did more damage to his cause than benefit,” he told one inter-

viewer, adding that the senator was “disorderly, reckless, [and] impulsive.”

Style and Substance

Chambers and Buckley’s criticisms of McCarthy track closely with modern conservatives’ attacks on Donald Trump’s aversion to accuracy, complexity, consistency, and propriety. The similar political styles are not coincidental. While still in his twenties, Roy Cohn became chief counsel to the Senate’s Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations and, in that capacity, McCarthy’s principal strategist. (Cohn “gives bad, bad advice,” says one character in *Redhunter*.) Two decades later Cohn—by this time a fixture on New York’s social scene as well as a powerful, feared, disreputable attorney—took on Donald Trump, then in his twenties, as a client. Their professional relationship became a friendship as Cohn guided Trump’s ascent from mere wealth to power and fame. Even 30 years after Cohn’s death, the *New York Times* was struck by his “unmistakable” influence on Trump’s “wrecking ball of a presidential bid—the gleeful smearing of his opponents, the embracing of bluster as brand.”

To see the stylistic similarities between McCarthy and Trump is easy, then, but formulating substantive comparisons is not. “McCarthyism,” because of McCarthy’s grave, repeated blunders, has come to be understood as his antagonists viewed it: vicious character assassination predicated on guilt by association. The full measure of the senator’s histori-



cal defeat is revealed in the received wisdom about his fundamental transgression: not falsely accusing many non-Communists, but presuming to attack Communists at all. McCarthyism, in other words, has come to be understood as much worse than recklessness. It was, rather, the adamant refusal to accept that Communism was a manageable global problem and, at home, harmless, essentially benign, and perhaps even idealistic and kind of noble.

For the senator's supporters, however, a very different meaning was equally clear. McCarthyism's central precept was that the new, fraught Cold War rendered vigorous, unapologetic anti-Communism imperative—as a matter of geopolitics, yes, but especially for the sake of moral clarity. Patriots must eschew the language of moral equivalence and repudiate all remnants of the 1930s Popular Front sentiment that Communists were merely “liberals in a hurry.” In 1952 Irving Kristol wrote that “there is one thing that the American people know about Senator McCarthy: he, like them, is unequivocally anti-Communist. About the spokesmen for American liberalism, they feel they know no such thing.”

By contrast, a year after Trump began his astoundingly successful presidential campaign, Trumpism's meaning remains hazy and contested. As a result, it is difficult to say what cause, if any, Trump's personal shortcomings might undermine. What does Trump favor, oppose, or intend? He doesn't act as his own theoretician, the way Thomas Jefferson, Lincoln, and Woodrow Wilson did. Nor does he depend on one, as John F. Kennedy relied on Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Ted Sorensen, or Richard Nixon on Henry Kissinger and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. It is hard to dispel the suspicion that any comprehensive exegesis of his books, speeches, interviews, and tweets requires taking Trump's words more seriously than he ever has. There is, as a result, a seemingly insoluble problem: to interpret Trump—to inquire into his most basic goals and principles—may well be tantamount to misinterpreting him.

Viewing Trumpism from the bottom up—what do his voters favor, oppose, or intend?—does not dispose of the problem. Many explanations for the Trump phenomenon have emerged. His supporters, it is said, are lashing out against globalization and deindustrialization, railing against modern capitalism's creative destruction, which has been creative for many but destructive for those whose livelihoods and communities depend on the labor market for highly fungible work. Or they're giving vent to a barely disguised or denied racial tribalism. Perhaps, instead, they mean to express contempt for the entire

political class by elevating a candidate who meets none of the club's admissions standards and outs all of its rules.

The Central Component

There is some measure of truth in all such assessments, but McCarthyism helps explain Trumpism in another way, by highlighting its central component. The interviewer who elicited Buckley's strong criticism of Joseph McCarthy went on to ask: if he behaved so badly, why was he so popular? (And McCarthy was popular, not solely among Republicans. Joseph Kennedy, Sr., was an early, avid supporter. Anti-McCarthy Democrats complained that Jack Kennedy, as Massachusetts's junior senator, showed too much prole and too little courage regarding McCarthy. After managing his brother's 1952 Senate campaign, Robert Kennedy worked as an assistant counsel to McCarthy's Senate subcommittee. Though his tenure there lasted less than a year, he remained fond of McCarthy, who became godfather to Kennedy's oldest child. RFK attended the Wisconsin funeral when McCarthy died in disgrace.)

According to Buckley, McCarthy's popularity has to be understood in context:

He appeared on the horizon as the man in Washington who said: We are screwing things up and we should get rid of the people who have been running things, from the President (Truman) on down. A month before McCarthy's [1950] Wheeling speech [denouncing State Department internal security practices and making McCarthy famous], Alger Hiss was convicted as a spy. He had been vociferously defended in the academy, in the press, and by President Truman. Six months before, the Soviet Union exploded an atomic bomb, using methods and tools made available by American and British espionage agents. Two months before, free China fell to Communism, to Mao Tse-tung. Six months later, the North Koreans attacked the south, precipitating a war in which forty thousand Americans were killed. All of that was less than five years since we had fought a world war, at the end of which Stalin enslaved the whole of Eastern Europe.

“We are screwing things up.” This is the subtext of the entire Trump campaign. Or, as the *Atlantic's* David Frum describes its core message, “We are governed by idiots.” More-

over, the Trump movement is propelled by the fear that the idiots aren't just screwing up the usual things, such as solvency, but the people's security and the nation's sovereignty.

The test of whether a government merits the people's support, according to the Declaration of Independence, is whether it is “likely to effect their safety and happiness.” People are increasingly skeptical about government's increasingly expansive promises to help make us happier, however, as shown by the consistently low approval ratings for Obamacare. Nor is there much to show for all the politicians' talk about bringing back good jobs at good wages. Rendering our increasingly divided society a gorgeous mosaic hasn't been a raging success, either.

But at least, people have a right to feel, government could do its most basic job and enhance our safety. Surely, in exchange for all the taxes we pay and forms we fill out, government can make life decidedly more peaceful than the state of nature. Elections analyst Henry Olsen reports that Trump's support “skyrocketed” to “a position of dominance” against his Republican rivals after he responded to last year's terrorist attacks in France and California by calling for, as his campaign put it, “a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on.” Olsen writes:

Trump voters believe they are threatened by Islamic terrorism. If Muslims come to America, they think, Americans will be more likely to die. Trump's proposed ban seems to them to be common sense: the first duty of a national government is to protect its citizens from foreign threats. One must not underestimate how important the proposed ban is to Trump's voters and to his appeal.

It's not hard to construct a 21st-century counterpart to Buckley's recitation of the defeats, betrayals, and humiliations that made McCarthyism possible. In the 15 years since 9/11, the United States government has done many things intended to thwart terrorism. Yet whether the security enhancements, if any, are commensurate with the high price the nation has paid is doubtful. In Afghanistan, America embarked on what has proven to be its longest war. No one can state with confidence how or when it will end, or explain the basis on which we could say we have accomplished our objectives. The war and subsequent occupation in Iraq—badly conceived, justified, managed, and terminated—poisoned American politics and destabilized rather than democratized

the Middle East. The Arab Spring, likewise, raised hopes for a turn to liberal democracy, but resulted only in compounding the region's tragic dilemma: only through authoritarianism can it stave off fanaticism. Al-Qaeda gave rise to ISIS, a group even more lunatic and lethal, which has engaged in pornographic brutality in the Middle East while directing or inspiring mass murder in Paris, Brussels, San Bernardino, Orlando, and Nice.

America First

Joseph McCarthy campaigned as a Republican against Democratic failures, though he eventually took the position that the Eisenhower Administration was also dangerously complacent about Communism. Donald Trump, by contrast, has campaigned from the outset against the job both parties have done in protecting Americans from terrorists. He secured the Republican nomination against a field of 16 candidates described last summer by George F. Will as "the most impressive since 1980, and perhaps the most talent-rich since the party first had a presidential nominee, in 1856."

How did Trump achieve this? One crucial difference from all those competitors is that he could deplore the Middle East policies of both Presidents Bush and Obama as "a tremendous disservice" and a "disaster." No other GOP candidate possessed so much leeway to denounce the war in Iraq, the most recent Republican president's "signature idea," as the *New York Times's* Ross Douthat termed it. At the other end of the spectrum of 17 candidates, Jeb Bush's campaign never recovered from making a terrible first impression: the 12 years since the launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom had, apparently, been too little time for him to form an opinion as to whether, knowing what we do now, his brother's decision to invade that country had been a good idea.

Trump has described his axial foreign policy precept as "America First." Detractors fastened on the formulation as either obtuse about the term's provenance, or a signal that he, like Charles Lindbergh 80 years ago, would fuse isolationism with nonchalance towards dictators who abused populations other than ours. But take away its historical echoes, which are probably inaudible to both Trump and his voters, and putting America first strikes many people as an entirely sensible commitment to expect from an American president.

It's a principle far easier to comprehend and endorse than George W. Bush's contention that America's "vital interests" now required "supporting democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the

ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world." He went on, in his Second Inaugural Address, to concede that supporting democratic movements in "every" culture is likely to result in institutions that "reflect customs and traditions very different from our own." Americans called to plant the seeds of democracy everywhere should expect some exotic hybrids as we "help others find their own voice, attain their own freedom, and make their own way."

By January 2005, however, the hope that liberal democracy could adapt to, and then flourish in, any cultural environment had already been rendered doubtful by our experience in Iraq. A democracy that completely repudiated the separation of church and state, for example, would reflect customs and traditions so different from our own as to call into question whether the resulting institutions were in any meaningful sense democratic. It requires heroic optimism to believe that the Middle East as we know it is amenable to the separation of mosque and state. Iran's steps in this direction, under the shah, were violently

Putting America first strikes many people as an entirely sensible commitment to expect from an American president.

overthrown in 1979, and Turkey's commitment to secular governance, less than a century old, is being steadily undermined by those who believe it betrays Islam. It is less that the separation of mosque and state is a principle that has been considered and rejected in Muslim countries, than that the concept is so at variance with "customs and traditions very different from our own" as to be too incomprehensible to receive a hearing.

Furthermore, democracy requires grasping and embracing the idea of a loyal opposition, for which the Middle East offers little precedent or prospect. In the *Federalist's* extended republic, a multiplicity of interests operates to prevent democracy from becoming illiberal. Majorities composed of constantly changing coalitions of small interests would be reluctant to tyrannize minorities: the self-interest of each, apprehensive about the high likelihood of being *in* the minority at other times concerning other questions, would make restraint and comity a matter of prudent self-interest. In this way, ambition counteracts ambition, moderat-

ing political life throughout the extended republic, not just inside the halls of government.

is republican remedy for the diseases incident to republican government is, however, wholly inapplicable to a polity where one division, such as between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, dwarfs the importance of all other groupings. In such circumstances, majorities have no need to fear ever finding themselves in the minority. They'll be even less reluctant to abuse those minorities they regard as vile blasphemers and infidels.

Trump voters, apparently, believed a foreign policy devoted to protecting America's citizens and advancing America's interests was clearly superior to George W. Bush's 21st-century Wilsonianism. One of Trump's most strenuous conservative critics, Peter Wehner, faults him for rejecting what Wehner offers as a central conservative tenet, the "belief that America, contently and carefully engaged in international affairs, can be a force for good in the world." But the Bush Administration, in which Wehner served, was much more content and much less careful than it should have been about going into Iraq and then staying to democratize it. Trump appeals to people who believe that policy ill-judged, who want our government to be a force protecting and advancing what's good for *Americans*, as opposed to conducting an open-ended mission of global social reform.

The P.C. Shuffle

These voters' post-iraq skepticism did not, however, render the comparatively dovish Democratic Party of Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and Bernie Sanders attractive. (One Democrat who, based on his foreign and domestic policies, might have drawn their votes was Jim Webb, previously senator from Virginia and Secretary of the Navy under President Reagan. He exited the 2016 Democratic presidential contest before most voters realized he was in it, then stated that he would not vote for Clinton in November, but might vote for Trump.)

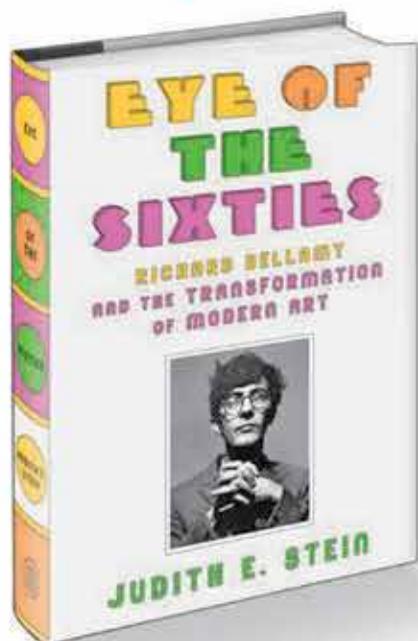
Several writers, including this journal's editor, have explained Trump's ascent as a reaction to political correctness. The idea is that Trump's apparent incapacity to say anything other than what's on his mind at any given moment appeals to voters fed up with proliferating rules about how to avoid giving offense.

But it is important to consider the question in relation to the dangers posed by terrorism.

The salient feature of political correctness is hostility to free speech and, more generally, the idea of inalienable rights. Its most prominent manifestations include campus speech

SUMMER PLEASURES

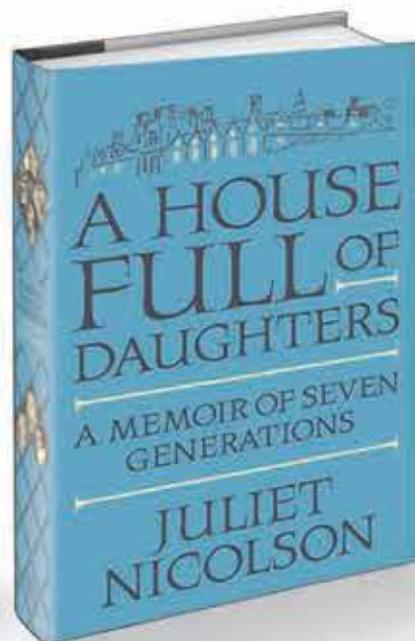
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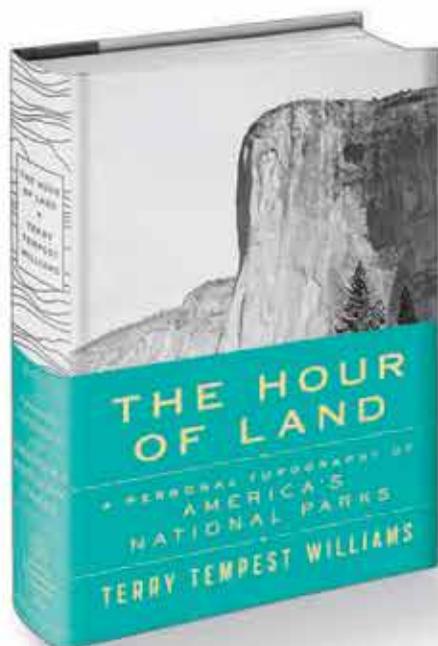
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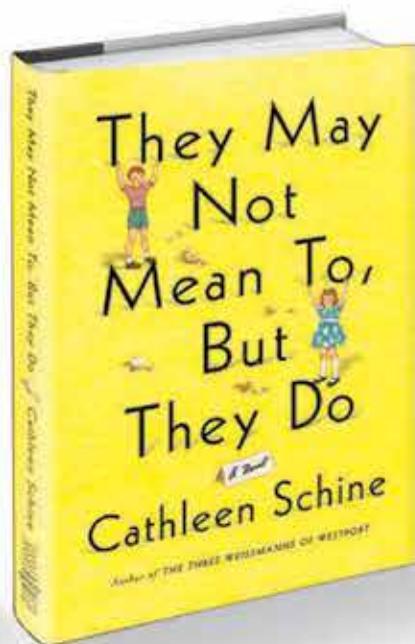
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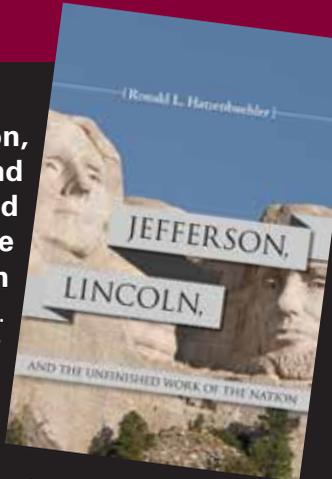


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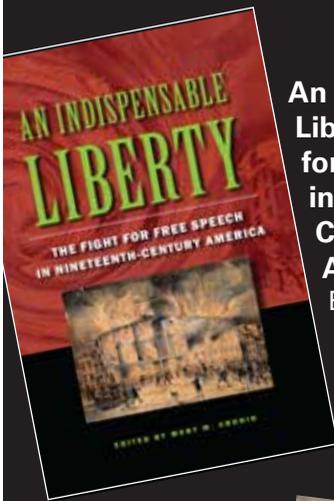


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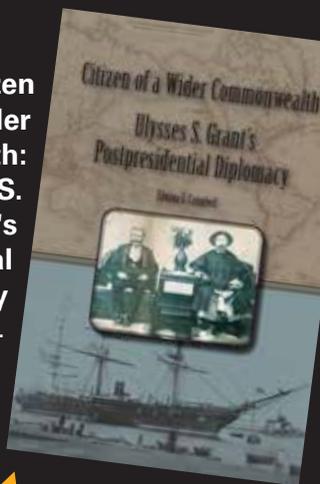
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codes, hypersensitive reactions to “microaggressions,” and the vindictive denial of due process to faculty and students accused of sexual harassment or assault.

is zeal to restrict civil liberties is not free-floating, however, but serves the political goal of repudiating appalling injustices of the past by securing a very different future, one immeasurably more equitable and admirable.

is project is, in the main, defined by identity politics, the belief that groups that have been abused and humiliated must assert themselves and be accorded abundant compensatory respect. The companion belief is that those sharing the demographic profile of the perpetrators of abuse and humiliation—above all, straight white males—must atone and defer. Merely refraining from abusing and humiliating members of groups previously victimized isn’t enough: they still enjoy privileges derived from “the system of murder and exploitation that benefits some of us at the expense of others,” in the words of one penitent, Emily Pothast, a Seattle-based writer and musician.

“The current politically correct response cripples our ability to talk and to think and act clearly,” Trump said after the Pulse nightclub massacre in Orlando. “If we don’t get tough, and if we don’t get smart and fast, we’re not going to have our country anymore. There will be nothing, absolutely nothing, left.”

Legions of commentators and political opponents dismissed that speech as still more hyperbole from the Donald. But Trump’s startling success in the GOP race has much to do with the feeling that identity politics has indeed left Americans less safe from terrorism than we need and deserve to be. Consider the term “Islamophobia,” defined by the Council on American-Islamic Relations as the “closed-minded prejudice against or hatred of Islam and Muslims.” The Center for Race and Gender at the University of California, Berkeley, gives this account, more expansive, tendentious, and explicitly P.C.:

Islamophobia is a contrived fear or prejudice fomented by the existing Eurocentric and Orientalist global power structure. It is directed at a perceived or real Muslim threat through the maintenance and extension of existing disparities in economic, political, social and cultural relations, while rationalizing the necessity to deploy violence as a tool to achieve “civilizational rehab” of the target communities (Muslim or otherwise). Islamophobia reintroduces and reaffirms a global racial structure through which resource distribution disparities are maintained and extended.

Note that Islamophobia is contrived regardless of whether the Muslim threat is real or merely perceived, which mean that a vigorous response to any such threat is, by definition, prejudiced and irrational. “This is why,” the late Christopher Hitchens wrote, “the fake term *Islamophobia* is so dangerous: It insinuates that any reservations about Islam must *ipso facto* be ‘phobic.’” The reality, he insisted, is that in the purported “gorgeous mosaic of religious pluralism, it’s easy enough to find mosque Web sites and DVDs that peddle the most disgusting attacks on Jews, Hindus, Christians, unbelievers, and other Muslims—to say nothing of insane diatribes about women and homosexuals.” (Hitchens did not, it turns out, coin the zinger often attributed to him, that “Islamophobia” is a term invented by fascists, to be used by cowards, for the manipulation of morons. He did, however, write something just as good in the weeks after 9/11: leftists whose primary concern was that we avoid overreacting to terrorist attacks were “of the sort who, discovering a viper in the bed of their child, would place the first call to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.”)

Taking Sides

When trump says political correctness cripples our ability to think, talk, and act against terrorism, he’s signaling that our response to terrorism is severely compromised by Islamophobia-phobia—the closed-minded, contrived, overwrought, unwarranted, misdirected, counterproductive fear that accurate threat assessments and adequate self-defense might hurt a Muslim’s feelings. “Public sentiment is everything,” said Lincoln of a republic’s political life, which means that those who mold public sentiment are more powerful than legislators and judges, because they make “statutes and decisions possible or impossible to be executed.” Our molders of public sentiment have made citizens more worried about accusations of bigotry than they are determined to report possible terrorism. A man working near the San Bernardino shooter’s home, according to one news account, “said he noticed a half-dozen Middle Eastern men in the area” before the attack, “but decided not to report anything since he did not wish to racially profile those people.”

By word and example, a different government encourages a different citizenry. Days after the San Bernardino killings, U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch told a meeting of the group Muslim Advocates that her “greatest fear as a prosecutor” is that terrorist attacks will inflame anti-Muslim sentiment, leading to

rhetoric that “will be accompanied by acts of violence.” Strange that a law-enforcement official’s greatest fear would correspond to something other than the greatest threat. Fifteen years after 9/11, the violent anti-Muslim backlash is an outrage permanently on the verge of taking place, while bombings and shootings by Islamic zealots remain mere realities.

Equally strange is the Department of Homeland Security’s policy that prohibited immigration officials from reviewing visa applicants’ social media postings. The possibility of finding information that indicates terrorist intentions was, apparently, outweighed by fear of “a civil liberties backlash and ‘bad public relations’ for the Obama administration,” according to ABC News. In the absence of such reviews, the government took three weeks to approve a canceled visa application for Tashfeen Malik, who became one of the San Bernardino shooters, “despite what the FBI said were extensive social media messages about jihad and martyrdom.”

The molders of public sentiment weaken our resolve against the next terrorist attack by aggressively misinterpreting the most recent one. In the assessment of “Doonesbury” comic strip creator Garry Trudeau, the *Charlie Hebdo* cartoonists did not deserve to be murdered in their Paris editorial office. Exactly. But they did cross a “red line” by entering “into the realm of hate speech” with “crude, vulgar drawings” that were guilty of “punching downward, by attacking a powerless, disenfranchised minority.”

Powerless, disenfranchised French Muslims were wrong to slaughter the *Charlie Hebdo* staff. Sort of. But Muslims were “allowed to feel pain,” Trudeau said, and retained the “right to be outraged” by cartoons that offended them. The magazine’s “free speech absolutists” had “succeeded in provoking many Muslims throughout France to make common cause with its most violent outliers.” Trudeau applauded the Obama Administration for declining to send a high-level representative to the march held after the Paris murders.

Interpreting these comments, David Frum argued that Trudeau had made clear that identity-politics liberalism has, by its own lights, solved the political and ethical dilemmas that have confronted humans for millennia. When considering any conflict, the morally hygienic liberal can always determine easily which side to favor. First, identify which antagonist is more privileged. Second, hold the more privileged responsible for any and all discord between themselves and the less privileged. As a consequence, the objections of the more privileged to any scheme of rectification are always presumptively meritless,

the demands of the less privileged are always presumptively valid, and any actions taken by the less privileged in connection with their grievances always deserve respectful, non-judgmental consideration.

There are good reasons to reject this all-purpose dispute-assessment tool. Outrageous crimes are outrageous crimes, so our moral energies should be concentrated on deploring, preventing, and punishing them. Those who, instead, dissipate such energies by calibrating how much the perpetrators’ victimhood mitigates their responsibility are blowing out the moral lights around us.

And even if one does accept the simple identity-politics framework, it quickly proves to be incoherent and unusable. “There are many dogs in any fight,” says Frum, “and the task of identifying which one is the underdog is not so easy.” Privilege is hard to measure, cannot be reduced to a single common quality, and does not flow in just one direction. “The terrorist’s veto on portrayals of Islam is itself a very real form of power,” Ross Douthat observes, “and as long as journalists who challenge it end up dead, the idea that they are ‘up’ and their targets are ‘down’ reflects a denial of life-and-death reality.”

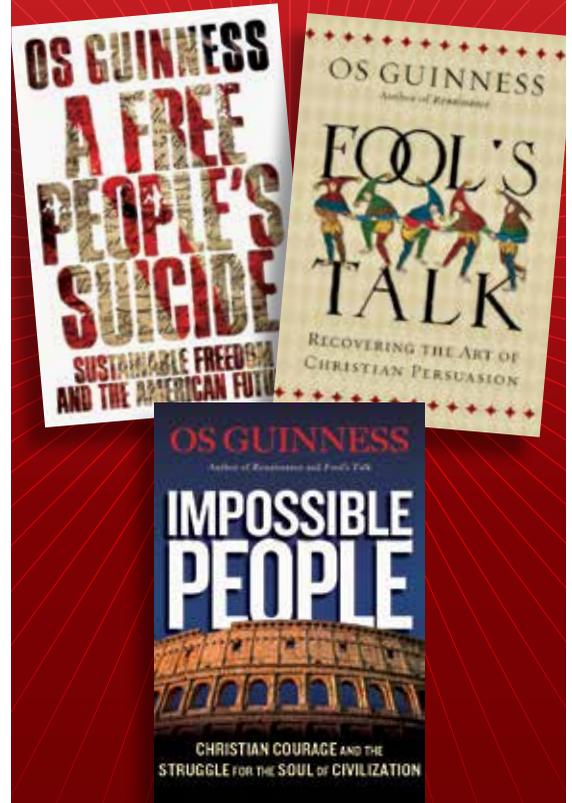
The situation gets messier still when some of the less privileged turn on others, instead of following the script and directing their animus at the more privileged. A *New York Times* editorial deconstructed Omar Mateen’s murder of 49 people in a gay nightclub, in the course of which he called the police to declare his devotion to ISIS:

While the precise motivation for the rampage remains unclear, it is evident that Mr. Mateen was driven by hatred toward gays and lesbians. Hate crimes don’t happen in a vacuum. They occur where bigotry is allowed to fester, where minorities are vilified and where people are scapegoated for political gain. Tragically, this is the state of American politics, driven too often by Republican politicians who see prejudice as something to exploit, not extinguish.

Evidently, an Eighth Avenue blamestorming session was convened to alleviate liberal cognitive dissonance. The result was this postulate: if a) Islamophobia is evil, and b) homophobia is evil, but c) Islam is homophobic, then d) it’s all the Republicans’ fault. The news must be made to do its duty. When a story undermines, complicates, or merely fails to support the master narrative about the more and less privileged, facts in evidence are ignored, and ones not in evidence are as-

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sumed. The epistemological humility that led the *Times* to express uncertainty about Ma-
 teen's precise motivations waxes and wanes at
 the paper. Columnist Paul Krugman, for ex-
 ample, needed mere hours after a lunatic shot
 an Arizona congresswoman to conclude that
 the crime was no "isolated event," but the re-
 sult of a "national climate" rendered "toxic" by
 conservatives' "eliminationist rhetoric."

Good Americans?

The America described in *mccarthy
 and His Enemies* resembles the divided
 politics of 2016, which helps explain
 the ascent of a political figure whose appeal
 and defects resemble the Redhunter's. Then,
 as now, many liberals were more exercised
 about the hypothetical dangers of defending
 the nation excessively than the real dangers
 of defending it insufficiently. The imagined
 1950s Reign of Terror, Buckley and Bozell
 argued, was replete with books, articles, edi-
 torials, speeches, rallies, and radio and tele-
 vision programs denouncing McCarthy...for
 making people too frightened to speak their
 minds. ("You American intellectuals," Tom
 Wolfe wrote 40 years ago, "you want so des-
 perately to feel besieged and persecuted!")
 Similarly, Loretta Lynch's greatest fear, a
 backlash against Muslims, is always immi-
 nent, but never occurring.

Then as now, liberals were outraged at
 those who questioned whether they were
 good Americans—but not outraged in a
 way that required forswearing such attacks
 on others. Six years before Joseph McCar-
 thy began throwing around wild accusations
 of disloyalty, Franklin Roosevelt said in his
 1944 State of the Union address that the re-
 fusal to enact the government guarantees of
 economic security spelled out in his Second
 Bill of Rights would mean that "even though
 we shall have conquered our enemies on the
 battle fields abroad, we shall have yielded to
 the spirit of Fascism here at home." A "small
 group of rich manufacturers, bankers, and
 landowners...decided that Germany had to
 have a tough, ruthless dictator who would
 play their game and crush the strong German
 labor unions," Harry Truman explained dur-
 ing the 1948 presidential campaign. That's
 how the Nazis prevailed. And things were
 just as precarious in America, where, Tru-
 man continued, there's "a growing—and dan-
 gerous—concentration of immense economic
 power in the hands of just a few men," who
 constitute "the powerful reactionary forces
 which are silently undermining our demo-
 cratic institutions" by "working through the
 Republican Party."

More subtly but as insistently, President
 Obama brandishes one of his two favorite
 phrases—"that's not who we are"—at any
 aspect of American life that displeases him.
 (The "right side of history" is his other favor-
 ite.) The November 2015 ISIS attacks in Paris
 that killed 130 people intensified opposition
 to Obama's plan to bring 10,000 Syrian war
 refugees to the U.S. "Slamming the door in the
 face of refugees would betray our deepest val-
 ues," the president declared five days after the
 Paris massacre. "That's not who we are." (The
 president's accompanying promise that the re-
 fugees would be admitted only "after they pass
 the highest security checks" was delivered two
 weeks before the barely vetted Tashfeen Malik
 helped murder 14 people in San Bernardino.)

The "who we are" verbal tic, though annoy-
 ing, reminds us that when republics defend
 themselves, they define themselves. In the
 middle of the 20th century, liberals took the
 position that it was un-American to accuse
 leftists of being un-American...but also very,
 very American to accuse red-baiting witch-

**If a) Islamophobia is evil,
 and b) homophobia is evil,
 but c) Islam is homophobic,
 then d) it's all the
 Republicans' fault.**

hunters and malefactors of great wealth of be-
 ing un-American. At the beginning of the 21st
 century, liberals take the position that the de-
 fining quality of who we are is that we're open
 rather than closed-minded about who we are.
 The highest virtue is to be non-judgmental
 and inclusive, which means the greatest vice
 is to be among the mean-spirited bigots who
 censure, shame, punch down, and exclude.
 Where political correctness is most power-
 ful, such as at Berkeley's Center for Race and
 Gender, Islamic radicals are regarded as allies
 in the great struggle against privilege—multi-
 culturalists in a hurry.

Us and Them

The oldest, most fundamental po-
 litical question is Us and Them. Many
 people want to write a new chapter
 in human history, where nationality figures
 trivially in that distinction. On the right, eco-
 nomics—trade, specialization, growth, pros-
 perity—should render Us and Them obso-

lete and irrelevant. "America should be a des-
 tination for hard-working immigrants from
 all over the world," according to a 2015 press
 release from "top national Republican do-
 nors." Libertarian economist Bryan Caplan
 contends that we discard cant in favor of wis-
 dom when we come to understand that our
 "so-called 'fellow Americans' are mere stran-
 gers with no special claim on [our] time or af-
 fection." On the left, social justice—tolerance,
 empathy, diversity, inclusion, renouncing and
 dismantling the Eurocentric structures of
 power and privilege—will promote comity,
 respect, and fairness among the earth's 7 bil-
 lion inhabitants, erasing tensions and distinc-
 tions among people of different colors, creeds,
 regions, and lifestyles.

The older sensibility about Us and Them,
 however, refuses to admit its own obsoles-
 cence. America is a nation dedicated to the
 proposition that all men are created equal.
 We must honor the proposition, since the re-
 public rests on the conviction that no one is
 good enough to govern another without that
 other's consent. But it is equally important to
 defend and cherish the nation, the vessel that
 bears and sustains the experiment in self-gov-
 ernment. The Declaration of Independence
 begins with the assertion that it has become
 necessary for one people to dissolve the politi-
 cal bands that have connected them with an-
 other. Americans are a people, not just people,
 and not just any or all people who embrace
 the idea of human equality and its political
 implications. The preamble of the Constitu-
 tion offers six reasons for establishing the
 new frame of government, the concluding
 one being "to secure the blessings of liberty
 for ourselves and our posterity." This aspira-
 tion does not require indifference or antipa-
 thy to any or all others, nor to their poster-
 ity. But it does make clear, again, that We are
 not Them, and we may justifiably prefer our
 safety and happiness to theirs when con-
 flicts between the two arise.

Consigning patriotic attachment to the
 dustbin of history ignores stubborn moral
 and anthropological realities, as recently de-
 scribed by columnist Megan McArdle:

Somehow, over the last half-century,
 Western elites managed to convince
 themselves that nationalism was not real.
 Perhaps it had been real in the past, like
 cholera and telegraph machines, but now
 that we were smarter and more modern,
 it would be forgotten in the due course
 of time as better ideas supplanted it.

That now seems hopelessly naïve.
 People do care more about people who
 are like them—who speak their lan-

gauge, eat their food, share their customs and values. And when elites try to ignore those sentiments—or banish them by declaring that they are simply racist—this doesn't make the sentiments go away. It makes the non-elites suspect the elites of disloyalty. For though elites may find something vaguely horrifying about saying that you care more about people who are like you than you do about people who are culturally or geographically further away, the rest of the population is outraged by the never-stated corollary: that the elites running things feel no greater moral obligation to their fellow countrymen than they do to some random stranger in another country.

If we don't get tough and smart about Islamic terrorism, Donald Trump says, we're not going to have our country anymore. There will be nothing left. Reasonable people may disagree about whether this terrorism amounts to what we have come to call an existential threat. Perhaps it is a tough and often tragic but decidedly manageable challenge, the position taken 60 years ago by pre-Vietnam Cold War liberals, who prided themselves on their unsentimental realism.

The *American Interest's* Walter Russell Mead has described our century's counterpart to the containment doctrine. Given "the reality that jihadi ideology is alive and well," he wrote, to "survive and to thrive, the West will have to become more like Israel: guarding ourselves constantly against a threat that can't be eliminated." Our "peace and security" will "all depend on the vigilance of our security forces and the competence of their leaders."

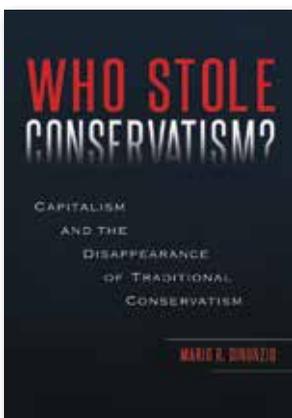
Our political leaders' vigilance and competence must encompass not just their organizational skills, but their capacity to grasp the malevolence of those who want to kill our citizens and shatter our way of life. Officials who, instead, traffic in sentimental blather about how we're all brothers under the skin, awaiting the call of freedom that comes to every human mind and soul, are busy rejecting the understanding it is most important for them to possess. Our dangers will increase by an order of magnitude if Islamic terrorists succeed in their long quest to acquire weapons of mass destruction. The murder of tens of thousands of civilians in a single attack will make admonitions like Loretta Lynch's after the Paris massacres—"we cannot be ruled by fear"—seem even more blithe, obtuse, and stupid.

Given his manifest, widely discussed defects as a prospective president and as a human, the rise of Donald Trump cannot be read as anything other than a vote of no confidence in the political class that has guided our anti-terrorism policies over the past 15 years. Those who believe that problem to be America's most pressing are right to fear that Trump's flair for the sensational, his inaccuracies and distortions, will do more harm than good to the cause of anti-terrorism, just as Joseph McCarthy did to the cause of anti-Communism. This danger makes it all the more important to satisfy the people's urgent demand: leaders and policies that don't squander, for the sake of secondary considerations, the moral and practical resources we need to thwart terrorists. In opposing Islamic terrorism, as in any other critical endeavor, the main thing is to make sure the main thing is always the main thing. Trump's voters feel that he, like them, is unequivocally committed to this imperative. About his political opponents, they feel no such confidence.

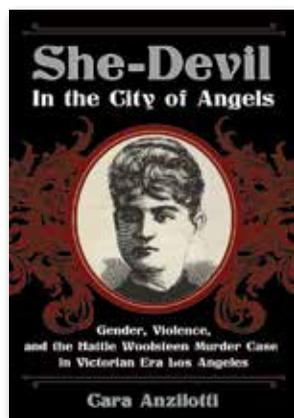
William Voegeli is a senior editor of the Claremont Review of Books, and the author, most recently, of The Pity Party: A Mean-Spirited Diatribe Against Liberal Compassion (Broadside Books).

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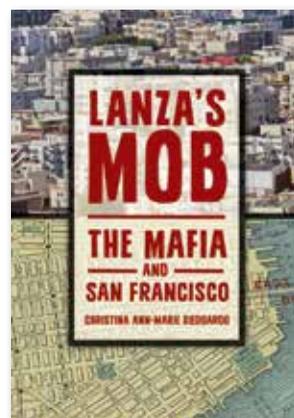
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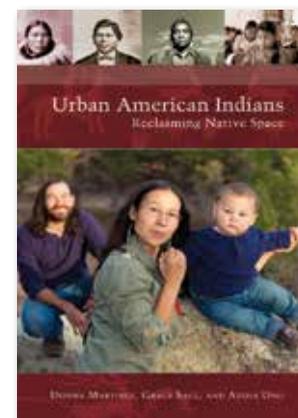
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