

# A Philosophical Assault on Trumpism

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Establishment Republicans have tried five ways to defeat or control Donald Trump, and they have all failed. Jeb Bush tried to outlast Trump, and let him destroy himself. That failed. Marco Rubio and others tried to denounce Trump by attacking his character. That failed. Reince Priebus tried to co-opt Trump to make him a more normal Republican. That failed.

Paul Ryan tried to use Trump; Congress would pass Republican legislation and Trump would just sign it. That failed. Mitch McConnell tried to outmaneuver Trump and Trumpism by containing his power and reach. In the Senate race in Alabama last week and everywhere else, that has failed.

Trumpist populist nationalism is still a rising force within the G.O.P., not a falling one. The Bob Corkers of the party are leaving while the Roy Moores are ascending. Trump himself is unhindered while everyone else is frozen and scared.

As a result, the Republican Party is becoming a party permanently associated with bigotry. It is becoming the party that can't govern. And as a bonus, Trumpish recklessness could slide us into a war with North Korea that could leave millions dead.

The only way to beat Trump is to beat him philosophically. Right now the populists have a story to tell the country about what's gone wrong. It's a coherent story, which they tell with great conviction. The regular Republicans have no story, no conviction and no argument. They just hem and haw and get run over.

The Trump story is that good honest Americans are being screwed by aliens. Regular Americans are being oppressed by a snobbish elite that rigs the game in its favor. White Americans are being invaded by immigrants who take their wealth and divide their culture. Normal Americans are threatened by an Islamic radicalism that murders their children.

This is a tribal story. The tribe needs a strong warrior in a hostile world. We need to build walls to keep out illegals, erect barriers to hold off foreign threats, wage endless war on the globalist elites.

Somebody is going to have to arise to point out that this is a deeply wrong and un-American story. The whole point of America is that we are not a tribe. We are a universal nation, founded on universal principles, attracting talented people from across the globe, active across the world on behalf of all people who seek democracy and dignity.

The core American idea is not the fortress, it's the frontier. First, we thrived by exploring a physical frontier during the migration west, and now we explore technological, scientific, social and human frontiers. The core American attitude has been looking hopefully to the future, not looking resentfully toward some receding greatness.

The hardship of the frontier calls forth energy, youthfulness and labor, and these have always been the nation's defining traits. The frontier demands a certain sort of individual, a venturesome, hard-working, disciplined individual who goes off in search of personal transformation. From Jonathan Edwards to Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln to Frederick Douglass, Americans have always admired those who made themselves anew. They have generally welcomed immigrants who live this script and fortify this dynamism.

The Republican Party was founded as a free labor party. It believed in economic diversity, cultural cohesion and national greatness. The entrepreneurial economic philosophy was highly individualistic, but strong local communities built a web of nurturing relationships and shared biblical morality helped define common standards of character.

This American vision champions social mobility. The original Republicans were not for or against government, they were for government that sparked mobility; they were against government that enervated ambition. These Americans heavily invested in schools at a time when other nations were investing heavily in welfare states. These Americans built railroads and roads to increase mobility. They tore down social, racial and legal barriers to give poor boys and girls an open field and a fair chance.

Today, the main enemy is not aliens; it's division -- between rich and poor, white and black, educated and less educated, right and left. Where there is division there are fences. Mobility is retarded and the frontier is destroyed. Trumpist populists want to widen the divisions and rearrange the fences. They want to turn us into an old, settled and fearful nation.

The Republican Party is supposed to be the party that stokes dynamism by giving everybody the chance to venture out into the frontier of their own choosing -- with education reform that encourages lifelong learning, with entitlement reform that spends less on the affluent elderly and more on the enterprising young families, with regulatory reform that breaks monopolies and rules that hamper start-ups, with tax reform that creates a fair playing field, with immigration reform that welcomes the skilled and the hungry.

It may be dormant, but this striving American dream is still lurking in every heart. It's waiting for somebody who has the guts to say no to tribe, yes to universal nation, no to fences, yes to the frontier, no to closed, and yes to the open future, no to the fear-driven homogeneity of the old continent and yes to the diverse hopefulness of the new one.

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