

A Critique of Democracy

A Guide for Neoreactionaries

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Against Democracy

Chapter One

The world in 2015 is an impressive place. There are cities like Tokyo and Moscow that cover nearly a thousand square miles. The first kilometer-tall tower, Kingdom Tower, will be completed in 2019. There are over 50,000 commercial plane flights daily. There are over a billion smartphones in use, with more than 91% of the world's population using a cell phone. Countries are getting richer, millions are being lifted out of poverty and illiteracy, and each day we get closer to cures for diseases like cancer. On average, the world is getting less violent overall.

Despite all that is well with the world, there is one element that is a bit peculiar to some of us. It is that the political system of democracy is dominant in nearly all developed countries and is taken for granted as being the best form of government. Churchill's quote is often invoked: "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all others which have been tried." He also said, however, "The best argument against democracy is a five minute conversation with the average voter".

In this book, we argue that democracy is not, in fact, the best available form of government, but actually among the worst. We credit civilizational progress made in the last couple hundred years mostly to scientific and technological innovation, with other advances made *in spite of*, not because of democracy. Rather than standing together with liberty, in many cases democracy directly opposes it. Aristotle considered democracy the second lowest form of government, just above tyranny, with aristocracy and benevolent dictatorship above democracy. In the early 19th century, the French political writer Alexis de Tocqueville visited the United States and wrote how our democratic system stifles dissent and drives a "horizontal pressure" towards conformity. In the mid-20th century, Austrian conservative writer Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn wrote of a "Menace of the Herd" that draws everything under its control into formlessness, sameness, and mediocrity.

This book is written in a compact format, with an emphasis on academic studies and condensed arguments refuting key aspects of the case for democracy, which is so widely taken for granted that few people really think about it. Our objective here is to be as simple as possible and to serve as a reference which can be consulted without fuss. The brevity of this work also means that many important points will go unaddressed. It is only intended as a jumping-off point to further study.

What is the case against democracy? First, democracy provides a poor quality of governance. The primary purpose of government should be to provide a high quality of governance. It will be argued later on that democratic societies are functional largely to the extent that many civil servants are *not democratically elected* and that senior civil servants have their positions more or less for life. This is in contrast to the folk view that governments are successful and effective to the extent that they are democratic.

How do we define a high quality of governance? Low crime, competent officials, political stability, predictability of outcomes, educational achievement, level of personal freedom, social cohesion, and so on. Of course, everyone will define “quality of governance” slightly differently, that goes with the territory. There is no scientific metric that can be used to comprehensively capture all our intuitive notions of good governance. The subjective element is fundamental. We merely argue that too few thinkers have seriously questioned democracy, and have begun to fall into a habit of defending it without thinking. Our case against democracy can be condensed into nine main points:

1) Democracy discourages planning for the future and encourages a political free-for-all where the incentives are to loot and spend rather than invest and build. This behavior is a display of high time preference, meaning looting the present at the expense of the future, and it is structurally inherent to publicly owned government, which is the nature of democracy.

2) Democracies are politically volatile and generate a constant state of low-intensity conflict. This conflict is largely destructive rather than constructive.

3) Democracies produce demagogic leaders who cater to the lowest common denominator and make decisions not based on any greater plan but on knee-jerk reactions to opinion polls. They evolve into what we call Bonapartist leaders.

4) Democracies tend to go into debt and spend more money than they make, eventually leading to financial and social collapse. All countries, including non-democratic countries, have some tendency to do this, but the tendency in democracies is especially pronounced because decisions are driven by innate human tendencies in favor of immediate capital consumption magnified through mass enfranchisement and the absence of direct personal accountability for poor policy choices.

5) It is commonly assumed that irrational voter biases inherently cancel out, leading to the effective choice of policies that balance the interests of the many, but in reality many of these biases reinforce and magnify one another, leading to poorer outcomes than if a handful of competent officials were making the decisions that direct our government.

6) The dangers of non-democratic governance are generally overstated in democratic societies, which have a vested interest in justifying their own existence and to reject and stigmatize contrary evidence. Democracy is a self-reinforcing memplex like any other, training its adherents to reflexively dismiss legitimate challenges to its effectiveness.

7) The unquestioning advocacy of democracy among most in the West, especially among top thinkers, is closer to a religion than to a deliberately chosen policy. Modern democratic and progressive thought owes its intellectual lineage to universalist Protestant Christianity, and its emergent behavior and impact is most realistically modeled taking this into account.

8) Political history is basically cyclical, with civilizations progressing from benevolent authoritarian leadership to democracy to anarchy to tyranny and eventually back to benevolent authoritarian leadership again. This cycle repeats itself approximately every 300 years, but can occur in as few as 100 years. The benevolent authoritarian leadership phase is where society is the most stable, most culturally impressive, and where the most civilization-building gets done.

9) Democracy is ultimately anti-civilizational. It has worked well in certain places for a long time, such as Switzerland, but it isn't well suited to every country under every condition. In places like Iraq it has been an obvious disaster, and in Europe and the United States today it is the driver of a slow-motion decline.

To condense these points down into nine short sound bites:

- 1) Democracy incentivizes high time preference.
- 2) Democracy is politically volatile and encourages permanent low-level political warfare.
- 3) Democracy inevitably produces bungling or destructive demagogues who turn into Bonapartist leaders.
- 4) Democracy promotes national debt and leads to poor financial decisions by the government which eventually causes its collapse.
- 5) Voter biases intersect and magnify one another, not cancel out.
- 6) Democracy is a self-reinforcing memplex that seeks its own survival.
- 7) The unquestioning advocacy of democracy in the West is similar to a religion.
- 8) Political history is a cycle between benevolent rulers, democracy, anarchy, and tyranny.
- 9) Democracy is anti-civilizational and threatens the prosperity of Western countries.

The country focused on the most in this book will be the United States, as it is the largest and most successful democracy in the world.

The Science and History of Leadership

Chapter Two

In contrast with democracy, rule by the many, is dictatorship or oligarchy, rule by the few. In this chapter we examine the evolutionary history of leadership among primates and how it transformed over time.

Primates evolved cooperating in hierarchical groups with a pecking order, the “dominance hierarchy”. A living example of an ancestral-style *Homo sapiens* dominance hierarchy would be the “Big Man” system in Melanesia and Polynesia, where dominant men take key roles and occasionally challenge each other for position.

The presence of a dominance hierarchy does not necessarily mean that every individual is in a strict linear order. There may be various tiers of social status with dozens or hundreds of individuals more or less on the same tier. Most of the time, however, a group or community will have one leader.

What is the evolutionary purpose of leadership and followership? Broadly speaking, to solve group coordination problems. When a hunt is on, someone has to decide when to stay and when to attack, where to travel in pursuit of prey, and so on. When two warriors are engaged in a brutal fight, it is helpful for someone with the authority to break it up. De Waal (1996) studied chimpanzee behavior in a captive colony at Arnheim Zoo in the Netherlands, and observed one interesting case:

a quarrel between Mama and Spin got out of hand and ended in fighting and biting. Numerous apes rushed up to the two warring females and joined in the fray. A huge knot of fighting, screaming apes rolled around in the sand, until Luit (the alpha male) leapt in and literally beat them apart. He did not choose sides in the conflict, like others; instead anyone who continued to act received a blow from him.

These apes were in a zoo, but consider if they had been on the African savanna in an area that had not received rain for many months and where food was scarce. In such a scenario, avoiding unnecessary fights would be a matter of life and death. If a full-on internal war did occur without an alpha male to break it up, numerous apes would have torn into each other, causing infection and probably death. Stupid conflicts are paid for in Darwinian coin.

In pre-civilizational human societies, the outcome of crippling internal conflict would be even worse—being tortured to death by warriors of a hostile tribe. Archaeological study of ancestral remains gives us estimates that 15-60% of adult males met their demise from violence (Keeley 1996). Without strong leaders to keep groups effective, a group might become slightly weaker than the competition, which seizes the opportunity to take over its watering hole, leaving the original group with nothing but warm mud to drink. This must have happened millions of times over the last 200,000 years. The highly competitive demands of survival and coordination

make it easy to see how leadership and followership could have evolved as adaptive mechanisms to promote survival. In a sense, relying on a leader to make group-level decisions is “putting all the eggs in one basket,” but the alternative, arguing it out until everyone in the group agrees, is too socially and computationally expensive to be a viable adaptive solution.

Evolutionary psychologist Mark van Vugt, who works together with well-known psychologist Robert Dunbar, has used game theory to explain how leadership naturally develops. From (van Vugt 2009):

A simple two-player ‘coordination game’ illustrates that, in many situations, leadership is almost inevitable. Imagine a pair of individuals with two simple goals: one, to stick together for protection, and, two, seek resources such as food patches and waterholes. Two mutually exclusive options are available, patch A or B, and they will get the same pay-off at each one. In this situation, any trait (physical or behavioural) that increases the likelihood of one individual moving first will make them more likely to emerge as the leader, and the other player is left with no option but to follow. Furthermore, if this trait difference between players is stable — for instance, if player 1 is always hungry first — then a stable leader–follower pattern will emerge over time. This two-player game can be easily generalized to a multiple player game where one or a few individuals are able to coordinate a large group.

People stick together for protection. They move to get things. Someone must initiate the movement. That person is the leader. Thus, leadership emerges. This is a very simple model with broad explanatory power. Note how dominance psychology doesn’t even need to be a part of the picture, though in practice it is.

Van Vugt’s review of the literature on leadership in human groups comes to the conclusion that extraversion is the trait most often associated with leadership, that this trait has a substantial heritable component. In addition, he says that experiments have shown that talkativeness is predictive of leadership—a phenomenon he calls “the babble effect”.

In evolutionary theory, it is often assumed that personality deviations from group averages—greater shyness or extraversion, for instance—are statistical noise that represent suboptimal deviations from the species-average. Van Vugt speculates, however, that heritable differences in personality actually serve an adaptive purpose, fostering social coordination through leadership, followership, and similar mechanisms.

Leadership went through a distinct change at the dawn of civilization, roughly 5000 B.C. in Mesopotamia. The systematic use of agriculture, pottery, and permanent dwellings allowed accumulation of wealth for the first time. This brought about the first social differentiation and the formation of specialized warrior and priest-leader castes. All of this is in contrast to the forager lifestyle of prehistoric hunter-gatherers, where leadership was informal.

Prehistoric hunter-gatherers lived in groups about the size of what is called the Dunbar number, first proposed by anthropologist Robin Dunbar. This number is roughly 150 people, about the maximum with whom an individual can maintain stable social relationships. The dawn of civilization is unique in that it is around that time that human groupings of super-Dunbar levels were achieved for the first time. Maintaining stability and order in super-Dunbar groups is a unique coordination problem, one that we still understand poorly seven thousand years later. We can call this “the challenge of civilization”.

The first cities such as Eridu and Uruk in Mesopotamia had populations between about 4,000 and 10,000 people. Individuals could still only have about 150 stable social relationships, but now lived in societies where the total number of individuals was much greater than that. This must have been an unusual experience for the first individuals to aggregate in this manner, or perhaps it was too incremental to notice.

Beginning with Sumerian civilization, three sectors of society began to differentiate; institutional households, communal households, and private households (van die Mieroop 1997). This notion of different kinds of households, especially institutional households, was rather novel. Beyond different types of households, there was differentiation of the palace, the temple, the city, and the countryside. The palace and the temple are academically known as “great organizations,” a historically novel entity. The earliest monarchs, in city-states like Eridu, were priest-kings. Secular authority was intertwined with spiritual authority.

Contemplating the rise of civilization from hunter-gatherer tribes is rather mysterious. In a different timeline of planet Earth, could it be that hunter-gatherer tribes are still the standard, and the planet is populated by a mere several million individuals? That’s how it was for most of our history. During the Toba eruption, 70,000 BC, the human population was just between 1,000 and 10,000 breeding couples. What essential ingredients came together to make civilization possible 63,000 years later?

In Sumer, the dawn of civilization went hand-in-hand with agriculture, sophisticated hierarchies, social differentiation, and the emergence of monarchy. How about elsewhere? In Ricardo Duchesne’s *The Uniqueness of Western Civilization*, he overviews how Indo-Europeans, the progenitors of modern Europe, were organized in tribes around a warrior aristocracy:

I want to argue that heroic individuals first come to light in aristocratic societies, and that Mycenae, the society evoked in Homer's Illiad, was truly aristocratic. It is in aristocratic societies that we first discover characters zealously preoccupied with their honor and future name, with the judgment of other "masters" regarding their courage, skill in war and in the hunt—as embodied with such intensity in the figure of Homer's Achilles, a character fundamentally at odds with any form of servility. But what do we mean by “aristocratic”? Why do we find the “first” individuals in history in such societies? I will argue that the individualism of the

Homeric heroes came originally from the Indo-European chieftans who took over the Greek mainland in the second millennium, and founded Mycenaean culture. The argument of this chapter is that the primordial roots of Western uniqueness must be traced back to the aristocratic warlike culture of the Indo-European speakers who spread throughout Europe during the 4th and 3rd millennium.

According to the Kurgan hypothesis, formulated by archaeologist Marija Gimbutas in the 1950s, the history of Old Europe was dominated by outward expansions of Indo-Europeans from the Pontic steppe between 4000-1000 BC. There is not substantial agreement on whether this was a mass movement or colonization by an elite, but genetic studies of haplogroup R1a1a seems to suggest that much of Europe has a high incidence of genes that are prominent in the Pontic steppe area to the northeast of the Black Sea. So, the Kurgan hypothesis is corroborated by genetic evidence.

The Indo-Europeans had certain genetic and cultural adaptations which made them well-suited to success and expansion in the environment of late Neolithic Europe (4000-3000 BC). The primary driver appears to be what Andrew Sherratt calls the “Secondary Products Revolution,” (Sherratt 1981) referring to the secondary products of domestic animals such as butter, milk, cheese, and wool. Simultaneously, the wheel was invented in the northern Caucasus area, which may have been an independent invention or proliferated from Mesopotamia, and horses began to be domesticated and used in warfare.

The most useful genetic adaptation of Indo-Europeans was lactose tolerance, which evolved in Turkey about 6,000 BC, and had become common among Indo-Europeans by the time of the secondary products revolution. This adaptation increased their caloric intake and led to greater growth rates, making the Indo-Europeans several inches taller than the other tribesmen around them. It would have also made them more muscular and capable of expansion. J.P. Mallory, in his book *In Search of the Indo-Europeans, Language, Archeology and Myth* (1989), writes: “physical anthropology of the deceased [in the new Kurgan-style burial mounds] speaks of a population that was more robust-appearing with males averaging up to 10 centimeters taller than the native Eneolithic [Balkan] population” (Mallory: 240).

In *The Coming of the Greek, Indo-European Conquests in the Aegean and the Near East* (1988), Robert Drews makes the case that the elite caste of proto-Greeks were Indo-European chariot riders who made their warlike arrival on the Greek mainland around 1600 BC, giving rise to Mycenaean civilization. It was the combination of rugged steppe peoples, with their high-calorie diets and secondary animal products, combined with the fair weather and abundant seas of Greece which gave rise to the origins of European civilization, what we know today as Mycenaean or Homeric Greece.

In his book, Duchesne emphasizes individualistic and aristocratic qualities present in Indo-Europeans which were not evident in any other of the world’s known cultures at the time:

Indo-Europeans were also uniquely ruled by a class of free aristocrats. In very broad terms, I define as “aristocratic” a state in which the ruler, the king, or the commander-in-chief is not an autocrat who treats the upper classes as unequal servants but is a “peer” who exists in the spirit of equality as one more warrior of noble birth. This is not to say that leaders did not enjoy extra powers and advantages, or that leaders were not tempted to act in tyrannical ways. It is to say that in aristocratic cultures, for all the intense rivalries between families and individuals seeking their own renown, there was a strong ethos of aristocratic egalitarianism against despotic rule.

Let me pull together a number of traits I have found in the literature which, in their combination, point to a life of aristocratic equality, vigorous, free, and joyful activity. First, all Indo-European cultures from the “earliest” times in the 5th millennium have seen the presence of warriors who sought to demonstrate their standing and wealth, by dressing in “ostentatious” ways; for example, with long or multiple belts and necklaces of copper beads, copper rings, copper spiral bracelets, gold fittings in their spears and javelins—with variations of styles depending on place and time but all demonstrative of an “individualizing ideology” (Anthony: 160,237, 251, 259-63). Second, the Indo-European warriors “were interred as personalities showing off the equipment of life and their personal position in a final coup de theatre, rather than joining a more anonymous community of ancestors” (Sherratt 2001a: 192). Kurgan burials commemorated the deaths of special males; the stone circles and mounds, and the emphasis on “prestige weapons and insignia,” were intended to isolate and self-aggrandize the achievements of warriors (Anthony: 245). Third, they developed a distinctive tradition of feasting and drinking, in which “individual hospitality rather than great communal ceremonies” dominated the occasions. These feasts—backed by a “prestige goods economy”—were “cheerful” events of gift-giving and gift-taking, performance of poetry praising individual deeds, and animal sacrifices (2011b: 253; Anthony: 343, 391). These feasts served as a great opportunity for warriors with higher status and wealth, in this world of constant small-scale raids and persistent inter-tribal conflicts, to acquire the greatest number of clients. They were also an opportunity for the less powerful or younger warriors to attach themselves to patrons who offered opportunities for loot and glory. The more followers the patron could recruit, the greater the expectation of success to be gained by all. Fourth, as Gimbutas clearly articulated, and as Anthony (93) has further noted, this was a culture in which “all [the] most important deities lived in the sky,” While Gimbutas described these sky gods in negative terms as the gods of a belligerent people, one may see them as the gods of an energetic, life-affirming people whose gods were personified as celestial heroes and chieftans. The sky-gods of the Indo-Europeans reflected—to use the words of Dawson (2002)—their “intensely masculine and warlike ethics, their mobility.” If the gods of Egypt and Mesopotamia demanded unquestioned submission to their will, passive acceptance; and if the female deities of Old

Europe—to borrow the language of Camille Paglia (1991)—represented the “earth's bowels,” and embodied the “chthonian drama of an endless round, cycle upon cycle,” the sky-gods of Indo-Europeans furnished a vital, action-oriented, and linear picture of the world. Finally, I would highlight the purely aristocratic manner in which Indo-Europeans organized themselves into war-bands (koiros, brotherhood). The nature of this association might be better understood if we were to start by describing Indo-European society as different levels of social organization. The lowest level, and the smallest unit of society, consisted of families residing in farmsteads and small hamlets, practicing mixed farming with livestock representing the predominant form of wealth. The next tier consisted of a clan of about five families with a common ancestor. The third level consisted of several clans—or a tribe—sharing the same. The Those members of the tribe who owned livestock were considered to be free in the eyes of the tribe, with the right to bear arms and participate in the tribal assembly. Although the scale of complexity of Indo-European societies changed considerably with the passage of time, and the Celtic tribal confederations that were in close contact with Caesar's Rome during the 1st century BC, for example, were characterized by a high concentration of both economic and political power, these confederations were still ruled by a class of free aristocrats. In classic Celtic society, real power within and outside the tribal assembly was wielded by the most powerful members of the nobility, as measured by the size of their clientage and their ability to bestow patronage. Patronage could be extended to members of other tribes as well as free individuals who were lower in status and were thus tempted to surrender some of their independence in favor of protection and patronage.

In the late Bronze Age, this combination of aristocracy, warrior ethos, and free-spirited individualism was uniquely European. We often hear that Athenian Greece was the foundation of Western civilization, but this is not the case. The proto-Greeks were representative of a diaspora that began with the horse-mastering, milk-drinking aristocratic warriors of the Pontic steppes.

There are three reasons why the Greeks are often referred to as the foundation of Western civilization rather than Myceneans or Indo-Europeans. The first is that archaeological and paleogenetic studies of Indo-Europeans are more of a challenge than classical Greek studies and have only begun to bear fruit and consensus during the early 90s. The second is that focus on the Athenian Greeks is more politically amenable to educators in present-day liberal democracies. The third is the association of Indo-Europeans with the Aryan racial theories of Nazi Germany. We do not consider any of these good reasons for why study of Indo-Europeans should be neglected, as they are the true forebears of Western civilization. Their cultural impact on the West is profound.

This concludes our brief overview of the science and early history of leadership and the context of monarchy as it initially emerged—in an egalitarian aristocratic tradition that guarded against despotism. Keep this system in mind as we explore the problems of what came later, liberal democracy. The next topic we visit are the

dynamics of cultural cohesion (or lack thereof) in modern society.

Cultural Cohesion and Cultural Conflict

Chapter Three

In this chapter we examine negative trends in cultural cohesion and argue that democracy exacerbates these.

In 2000, Harvard social scientist Robert D. Putnam published his major work, *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community*, an extension of his 1995 essay “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital”. In the book, Putnam found that there has been a profound decrease in civic participation of all types, from club membership, to political parties, to fraternal groups like bowling leagues. He distinguishes between two types of social capital: bonding capital, between those of similar age, race, sex, and so on, and bridging capital, connections between dissimilar groups. His conclusion is that both types of social capital have collapsed since the 1950s and that the collapse is mutually reinforcing. This has exacerbated ethnic tensions and led to other negative consequences.

Besides a collapse in social capital, there are other worrisome trends in America. The use of antidepressants (Celexa, Effexor, Paxil, Zoloft, and many others) has been increasing at an incredible rate since 1980. Antidepressant use among Americans skyrocketed by over 400% from between 1988–1994 and 2005–2008 alone. Over one in ten Americans takes antidepressants, including more than 23% of women in their 40s and 50s, a higher percentage than any other group. Clearly, something is profoundly wrong with our mental health. Declining social contact is likely a major factor. Less exercise and poor diet may be another.

Another trend to watch out for is increasing political polarization. Since 1997, polarization in politics has increased by a factor of approximately two. A Pew study found that average inter-party differences in political values widened from 9 percentage points in 1997 to 18 percentage points in 2012. Political experts also argue that the Internet is contributing to political polarization. Between 2002 and 2010, the number of Americans who get their news primarily from the Internet has tripled from 7 percent to 24 percent. 55 percent of Americans said that the Internet is increasing the influence of people with extreme political views. 34 percent admitted that they seek out news sources that reinforce their beliefs.

One view of increasing polarization is that this is a natural process that waxes and wanes, and that it has no particular implications with the long-term stability of our country. A contrary view, based on the study of European history, is that *de facto* nation states form along ethnic and cultural lines and that the United States is in fact composed of several such states. According to this view, a geographically expansive country with a large and diverse population, such as the United States, would be especially prone to fissuring into several parts, as it almost did during the 1860s. We can also use an analogy from biology, where a cell tends to grow in size up until a certain limit, at which point it divides. We may be seeing the early stages of that division today.

A change has occurred in the last 70 years, where the concept of the nation as a distinct group has faded from importance in the American mass consciousness. The definition of a nation is “a large aggregate of people united by common descent, history, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular country or territory.” Nationalism is now seen as unsophisticated or primitive among many educated Americans. In 1929, Albert Einstein said, “Nationalism is an infantile disease. It is the measles of mankind.” When America has gone to war, it has always framed the effort in terms of standing up for moral universals, rather than just pushing national interests. Whether true or not, this has led many Americans to think of themselves as “above” nationalism. European national self-concept has moved in the same direction, if it wasn't already there.

In reality, however, the United States is composed of a variety of distinct cultural blocs or “micro-nations” that tend to think and vote as a group on issues such as abortion, religion, the role of government, international affairs, the legality of certain types of speech, support for specific political candidates, and so on. The clearest divide, yet also among the most poorly understood, is that between conservatives and liberals. According to Gallup, in 2011 there were 40% of Americans who described themselves as conservative, 35% who described themselves as moderate, and 21% who described themselves as liberal. This makes conservatives the largest ideological group in the US, with almost twice as many as self-identified liberals.

Liberals are especially likely to repudiate nationalism, but they have a nationalism in their own way. It is based on multiculturalism, diversity, social justice, and championing causes such as global warming. A more crude definition of nationalism might be a group of people who want to have a certain cultural tone for a geographic area. The partisans of that view promote a given national tone and repudiate contradictions to it. Both liberals and conservatives attempt to set a tone to define what it means to be an “American”, but of course these definitions often conflict.

Every nation will be composed of competing parts. Middle class and lower class, northerners and southerners, easterners and westerners, young and the old. The question is whether those parts can cooperate together to create a nation. In America in particular, the “Red States” and “Blue States” have been drifting apart on many issues over the last two decades. If anything, Red States are retrenching on issues such as abortion, to which opposition has newly risen. The Bush and Obama years have been characterized by bitter conflict between political parties on a scale not seen in recent memory.

Many scholars have pointed out that America was not founded as a democracy, but a republic. The states also had considerably more independence from the central government than they do today. Over time, America has become more democratic, in the sense that social and legal change driven by democratic majorities has accelerated. Today we see this with respect to issues such as marijuana legalization and gay marriage. Since the 1960s in particular, social change driven by democratic majorities has picked up in tempo.

How has American government changed since its founding as a republic? Aside from becoming more democratic, it has become larger. From an objective perspective, its increase in size as a percentage of GDP is probably its most salient change. In the year 1900, US government spending accounted for just 7 percent of the GDP. Today, it accounts for 38 percent. The upward trend has held steady for more than a hundred years. In 2013, the US government budget was \$3,454 billion. 25% of that went to Medicare and Medicaid, 23% to Social Security, 18% to Defense, 17% to Non-Defense Discretionary Spending, 11% to “Other Mandatory”, and 6% to Net Interest.

In the United States, there is nominally a conflict between conservatives, who are allegedly for small government, and liberals, who are for more government services, but in fact both sides are in favor of large government. Records of government spending over the last 50 years show that government actually expands in size more, on average, during Republican presidencies than during Democratic tenure.

The increase in the size of the government means that the outcomes of different votes matter more to the material well-being of the constituencies. Instead of there being essentially a free market, with government intervening only in matters of national interest, today we have a free market of which 38% is actually government spending. In terms of its intervention into daily life, society's widespread dependence upon it, the number of make-work jobs and welfare checks it provides, how it perturbs the incentive landscape for everyday people, and so on, government has a much larger impact now than it ever has.

As the economy cools down, as it has since 2008 in America, we see an increasing population competing for the same amount of resources. Economist Tyler Cowen argues that we are in the middle of a “Great Stagnation”, which will culminate in a “new normal” where everyone is poorer and the consumption of beans will increase relative to meat. Silicon Valley investor Peter Thiel has made similar arguments and says that if the United States does not make radical technological innovations, like those imagined in the science fiction of the 50s, we will continue to be stuck in an economic rut.

During times of economic stagnation, cultural and racial fault lines can become more apparent. That's certainly been the case with the controversy around black youths being shot by white police officers and the accompanying protests, the Ferguson movement. The Occupy Wall Street protests were triggered in part by the 2008 Financial Crisis. Meanwhile, an intense culture war is ongoing among the lower class, middle class, and the elite: you could describe it as the *Fox News* vs. *MSNBC* divide.

Consider surveys on inter-party marriage. A survey in 1960 asked if respondents would be “displeased” if their child married someone outside their political party. Just 5% said yes. In 2010, a similar survey asked if respondents would be “upset” if their child married someone outside their political party. This time, about 40% expressed displeasure, 50% of Republicans and 30% of Democrats. This is a sharp uptick since before 2008, when less than 25% expressed negativity towards inter-party marriage. David A. Graham, writer at *The Atlantic*, calls this evidence of a new “hyperpolarized”

politics.

It appears that America is evolving into two separate nations with different opinions on government, abortion, the role of the family, economics, values, and just about everything else. These beliefs may even be genetic: one twin study found that “heritability plays a significant role in partisanship, accounting for almost half of the variance in strength of partisan identification.” The authors further write that, “*This heritability is probably not an artifact of ideological orientation since strength of ideology is not significantly heritable in the same sample. Nor is it an artifact of heritability in the direction of partisanship, which also fails to be significant for this sample. Instead, variation in the decision to identify with any political party appears to be strongly influenced by genetic factors.*”

Researchers at Virginia Tech came up with a simple test can determine whether someone is likely to be a liberal or conservative. They showed test subjects disgusting images, such as maggots, animal corpses, or “unidentifiable gunk in the kitchen sink”, and measured their neural reactions using functional magnetic resonance imaging. From their reactions to the images, the researchers were able to predict whether the test subjects would score as conservative or liberal on a test with 95 to 98 percent accuracy.

In today's political environment of big government, hyperpolarized politics, and economic stagnation, democracy is ritual warfare over how the governmental pie should be apportioned. New wealth derives from being able to get the government to give you money, in some way or another, rather than from economic growth. The portion of the economy that is dominated by government spending is essentially a planned economy, and it is captured by large voting blocs voting in favor of redistribution policies that personally benefit them or officially aggrieved groups.

Ritual warfare over both economic and values issues between competing political factions only reinforces entrenchment, leading to the polarization we see today. A desire to opt out—Exit—from unwanted political entanglements has led to numerous American secession movements in 2014, including a proposal for a new state called Jefferson in northern California and southern Oregon, a northern Colorado, and a Western Maryland. Silicon Valley venture capitalist and billionaire Tim Draper proposed a plan called Six Californias, to break California up into six states with Silicon Valley as its own state, but it failed to qualify for the 2016 California elections due to insufficient signatures. Draper's reasoning behind the proposal is that California is too large to be effectively governable.

The neoreactionary argument against democracy in this context is that it burns social capital, wastes time, exacerbates social divisions, and causes chaos, by forcing the entire population into an endless political competition for resources. Not only is there constant competition, but during the next election, your opposition might be able to reverse the changes your party made when you were in control, creating an incentive to produce structures which can't be removed. We see a ratchet effect in favor of big government, where each candidate makes new promises for government