

Michael Edward Luckovich is an editorial cartoonist who has worked for The Atlanta Journal Constitution since 1989. He won the 2005 Reuben, the National Cartoonists Society's top annual award and is the recipient of two Pulitzer Prizes. ([Wikipedia](#))



Dear friends of democracy,  
It is not hyperbole to contend, that this coming Nov 5<sup>th</sup> may be the last chance we get to take active part in the political process of our dear ole DSA (Divided States of America).

Even if you have not been happy with aspects of the Biden admin, at least you still have the right to voice that opinion freely to your congressman and senators. You can involve yourselves in activist groups for special causes. You can create a non-profit to pursue particular interests. You can write editorials and/or just plain complain in a myriad of platforms. That's democracy – a messy complicated meandering process that requires vigilance and active involvement. The very least that is required, is that you vote. And this time, it is not just about a change of wallpaper in the White House and who might be best for the economy. It is literally **a vote for or against tyranny**.

If that sounds drastic, watch this latest provocative video-spot by the Lincoln Project on the probable "[Aftermath](#)" of Trump becoming president. This may seem shocking and drastic, but it is hardly farfetched.



The consequences depicted here have precedent. Not just 1933 and the rise of Nazi Germany, or Tiananmen Square in 1989, or Alexei Navalny's repeated politically motivated imprisonments and hindrance from running in opposition to Putin for the fateful 2018 presidential election. As of 2020, according to the [World Population Review](#), there were "52 nations with a dictator or authoritarian regime ruling the country: Three in Latin America and South America, 27 in Asia and the Middle East, and 22 in Africa."

In spite of a declining trend following WW-II, **Authoritarianism has been on the rise for over 20 years**, and the trend is accelerating dramatically. In fact, "If the decline of democracy continues at the present pace, less than 5% of the world's population will live in a full democracy by 2026" ([University of Birmingham, Jun 13, 2023](#)). Are these dictatorships and autocracies thriving? No. Economically the two strongest powers in the world are the US and the European Union – by volume and per capita GDP. Russia ranked 60<sup>th</sup> in GDP per capita in 2023, China 72<sup>nd</sup>.

I moved to Europe in 1983 and was astonishing to see how Germany and its European neighbors managed to lift themselves from the rubble of 1945. Two major factors were the \$17 billion **Marshall Plan** under President Truman, and a combined commitment among participating partners to a **market economy** with strong **social democratic principles**. Today the European Union is the world's second largest economy. The US leads with a GDP per capita of 85T\$, the EU with 54T\$, followed by China at 13T\$.

To its credit, and like no other country before it, Germany has done a lot to power the growth and guard the principles of the EU. It has also done a lot of soul searching over what happened between 1920 and 1933. How could such an apocalyptic dynamic devour a country and go on to threaten the world order?

Much has already been written about that – in German and in English. But to sum it up succinctly: Authoritarianism progresses very slowly, until suddenly, it happens all at once.

**This all-at-once could be November 5<sup>th</sup>.**



International Symposium on Solving Complex Problems.

Left: Analysis, Interpretation, Decisions  
Speaker: Prof. Dr. Jochen Klodmüller

Right: Blaming the Government  
Speaker: Joe Normal

# Friends of Democracy – July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024

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I would like to close by recommending five significant recent Substacks, two significant books on the topic of tyranny, and a short

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**July 9, 2024. Heather Cox Richardson** on the horse race nature of political journalism and how important it is to get back to substance: ([Link](#))

**July 9, 2024. Robert Reich** on how to prevent America and the world from falling into fascism. Eleven suggestions for the next 118 days: ([Link](#))

**July 10, 2024. Joyce Vance** on the Republican platform: ([Link](#))

**July 10, 2024. Heather Cox Richardson** on the importance of NATO: ([Link](#))

**July 11, 2024. Joyce Vance** on the most important things about Project 2025: ([Link](#))

**Rick Wilson** American political strategist, media consultant, and author based in Florida. A former member of the Republican Party, and presidential advisor to Bush, he has produced televised political commercials for governors, U.S. Senate candidates, Super PACs, and corporations. As co-founder of the Lincoln Project he has become an avid critic of Trump and the MAGA movement. ([Link](#)) to his Substack.

**How Democracies Die** by Steven Levitsky & Daniel Ziblatt, published Jan 2018

**Twilight of Democracy** by Anne Applebaum, published July 2020

Anne Applebaum is an American journalist and historian who has written extensively about the history of Communism, Authoritarianism and the development of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe.

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## Thanks for being interested!

Getting some feedback would help me know, whether this letter is helpful, or if there are other things you would prefer me to concentrate on, exclude, provide, and so-on. Let me hear from you.

Sincerely,  
Paul Kustermann

“Nixon was a president who became a criminal.  
Trump is a criminal who became a president.”  
Thanks for that quote, TJO.

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If you don't want to receive these letters  
simply respond with a short “[No, thanks.](#)”

If it is helpful – please forward  
to others who want to be informed.

With best wishes from Berlin  
Paul Kustermann

p.s. this and former letters are available on my website  
<http://www.paulkustermann.de/files/Share/Democracy>