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Hi Friends,
sorry to be coming at you so soon again, but the news cycle is moving so fast, waiting 3 days to comment on anything runs the risk of being already irrelevant in light of newly transpiring events.

RNC, J.D. Vance, indications that Joe Biden might well be pressured out of the candidacy. And oh yeah, there was an assassination attempt in there too. And now Biden has Covid. That's the stuff we all are seeing and literally everyone is commenting on. In the background, however, is an even more compelling story which, for its complexity and obscurity, is harder to get attention for, away from the other train wrecks happening around us.

I am speaking of a masterful strategy for remaking of the GOP into an extremist right-wing, anti-democratic, libertarian, populist, authoritarian movement. It goes like this **1)** Break the rules! Be so audacious that no known norms can define or defy you; **2)** Do that with a speed and insistence that forces the opponents to sound hysterical when they call you out; **3)** Add a healthy portion of time-proven cynicism, hypocrisy, bigotry, projection, corruption and the almighty power of hate; **4)** Keep your financiers happy and the crowd whipped up into an ecstatic frenzy that is too testosterone invigorated to be able to stop and think; **5)** Disguise your ideology in a promise that is fantastically diametrically opposed to what you are actually aiming for, because that would be diametrically opposed to the actual needs and social status of the constituency you are courting and catering to (undereducated, poorly paid, working class, rural white misogynist with a grudge). **6)** Give them purpose and direction by leading them down a path of impassioned rebellion against – you guessed it: (cynicism, hypocrisy, bigotry, projection, corruption and the almighty power of hate).

The hidden ideology is simple: no more government oversight, no consumer protection, no taxes for the extremely wealthy, no separation of powers, no leniency for dissents or freedom of the press, no tolerance for diversity or the sticky business of (voting rights, civil rights, women's rights, gender diversity), amnesty for political buddies, punishment for political opponents. At the top of the pyramid is big-money and big industry (the likes of the Koch Family, Peter Thiel, Elon Musk, to name a few). Their interests are protected above all else by a centralized nucleus of power, censorship of critical thinking, ending public education and all forms of equal opportunity, curtailing public health care, re-establishing capital punishment and ignoring aberrations of society that are uncomfortable to look at – like drug addiction, immigration, gun violence, suicide, domestic terrorism.

The leaders of this rebellion against our state, and frankly democracy itself, are well-educated, highly successful, as ruthless and morally depraved as they are intelligent and sinfully rich. They have been financing and conspiring since the early 70's and even as I write this, I know I am sounding like a conspiracy

theorist and incredibly woke. Guilty. But in my defense, I am sorry that I need to say, these are the bread crumbs that trace their march. They're openly visible to be objectively reviewed, if anyone cares. I do.

The principal characters in this story are (excuse my radical simplification here, but a few key words are enough to set every curious reader into action for days):

- 1) **Libertarianism:** A child of murky waters which ebb between philosophy and political jargon, it started out as a term for liberal personal freedom, anarchy and socialism. Then it got usurped by conservative activists, and bent to the service of corporate freedom from government regulation. As a toxic ingredient of the "culture wars", it now claims the right of conservatives to deny others their right of disagreeing with them. Good luck trying to sort out this genesis. In effect it is a prime example of the ability through social influencing, to morph a word into a new meaning that better suits one's motive. The word Woke, for example, originally came from Afro-American vernacular and meant being awake to racial prejudice and discrimination. Later its meaning expanded to encompass social inequities, sexism and denial of LGBT rights. The MAGA movement has demonized the word, equating it with treason, immorality, elitism, and uses it as a justification for banning books, restricting access to voting by undesired social and ethnic groups, even striking any reference to climate change from federal and state documents. What should have been a positive natural consequence of awareness out of the civil rights and women's movement became a four-letter word.
- 2) **The Federalist Society** was founded in 1982 by students at Yale Law School who were inspired by a visiting professor/lecturer, the Honorable Antonin Scalia. His novel concept of "originalism" saw the constitution as a base set of rules to be administered by the legislative state and a strong executive without undue interference by the judiciary – whose only task is judging, not making the rules. In the four decades since then, the concept of originalism has mutated from Scalia's original intention of deferring to governmental administration, to using the courts as a political instrument of revisionist conservatism. The capstone of this transition was the reversal of the Chevron deference doctrine of 1984. Today conservatives are taking the 'originalist' argument to support an idea that the constitution (written in 1787) is an ironclad mandate set in stone, and not a concept to be adopted with a changing and developing society. Justice Antonin Scalia was appointed to the Supreme Court by Ronald Reagan in 1986 on the recommendation of the Federalist Society. Since then, all six of the conservative judges currently on the supreme court have been protégés of the massively influential Federalist Society.
- 3) **Originalism and Professor Scalia.** According to Harvard Law Professor, Adrian Vermeule, during a lecture at the Harvard Law School in Oct 2022, Scalia's "originalist" reasoning SUPPORTED the Chevron deference in the interest of the public over private adventurism, for which he cautioned the Judiciary not to interfere too strongly with the Executive branch. By 2013 during the Obama administration, Vermeule argues, Scalia had begun to change his stance on 'originalism' and saw the executive more critically. It is not this change of heart however, that has inspired the current court. But rather Scalia's original idea of a strong executive, leading them not only to reverse Chevron, but also grant sweeping immunity for any actions carried out in the course of presidential duty. This is a prime example of the malleable principles of justice coalescing to become servants of specific political interests. GOP, strong executive, deconstruction of the administrative state, protection of deep pocketed special interests, government appointed Judges who overturn bedrock principles of the last 100 years.
- 4) **The Heritage Foundation** is a conservative "[think tank](#)" dedicated to countering liberal views on taxation and regulation, which they consider to be anti-business. Project 2025 is the Heritage's 10th "Mandate for Leadership" – a blueprint for the intended second Trump presidency. Its first was in 1981 for the Reagan administration. Although originally anti-Trump, as he gained the presidency in 2016 the Heritage quickly adjusted and made sweeping recommendations for key positions in his administration.

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Beginning in 2022, the Heritage Foundation began to incrementally embrace "national conservatism as its guiding ideology." In May 2022, the Heritage completely reversed its position to support military aid to Ukraine and claimed "Ukraine Aid Package Puts America Last". This is not a fly by night organization making random swings of faith. It has an agenda, and if one were looking for a silent behemoth in the shadows of power being influential in forming policy and directing the course of history, this would be a strong candidate. The Heritage Foundation was founded in 1973 by **Paul Weyrich** ("[an American religious conservative political activist and commentator associated with the New Right](#)"), **Edwin J. Feulner** co-founder and former president, and **Joseph Coors** of the Coors beer empire. "[While the organization was at first only minimally influential, it grew into one of the world's largest public policy research institutes and has been hugely influential in advancing conservative policies.](#)" For a look at the history of funding, influence, and ideology, go here ([SourceWatch Center for Media and Democracy](#))

If one delves into the copious literature on the topic of Authoritarianism, written by social scientists, political analysts and investigative reporters, one sees a consistent scenario for dismantling democracies. (**Reading List:** [Causes and Consequences of Authoritarianism](#) / [Reading List from FOREIGN AFFAIRS online magazine](#) / [PEW Research on America's view on foreign policy 2019](#) / [Charting the Radical Right's Influence on EU Foreign Policy](#) / [Popular Books on Authoritarianism](#))

In conclusion I would like to recommend you to read these two pieces.

The first is an in-depth portrait of the libertarian Federalist Society and the silent but enormously effective rise of Leonard Leo ([Link](#)) as a major influencer in the conservative restructuring of our courts. It appeared in the online investigative journalistic magazine ProPublica in October of 2023.

The second is a portrait of turncoat politician J.D. Vance and his ([Faustian](#)) pact with power. This excellent essay, which recently appeared in the NYTimes, was written by Ed Simon, author of "*Devil's Contract: The History of the Faustian Bargain*" and the editor in chief of Belt Magazine, which covers the Rust Belt and Appalachia. Here is a link to the (Gift Version of [full article](#) – Max 10x retrievable).

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Let me know if you are already privy to the things I post. If not, then I am glad I could share them.

If yes, then share them further and let me know what else you find important or would like to read about.

In the words of Joyce Vance, "We are in this together."
And the worse it gets, the more we'll need each other.

Sincerely,
Paul Kustermann

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With best wishes from Berlin
Paul Kustermann