

"Looking Toward The Future"

OPINION
GUEST ESSAY

The Ground Is Shifting Under Biden and Trump



Credit...Shannon Stapleton/Reuters

Thomas B. Edsall, ~~The New York Times~~ Online Edition, June 26, 2024.

Have Democrats and Republicans traded places?

How has the ascendance of well-educated, relatively affluent liberals among Democrats, alongside the dominance of non-college voters in the Republican coalition, altered the agendas of the two parties?

Are low-turnout elections and laws designed to suppress voting now beneficial to Democrats and detrimental to Republicans? Would the Democratic Party be better off if limits on campaign contributions were scrapped?

[Nicholas Stephanopoulos](#), a law professor at Harvard, contended that the answer to these last two questions is changing from no to yes.

In a paper posted last week, "[Election Law for the New Electorate](#)," Stephanopoulos argued that "the parties' longstanding positions on numerous electoral issues have become obsolete. These stances reflect how voters used to — not how they now — act and thus no longer serve the parties' interests."

Stephanopoulos described the consequences of the reversal of the traditional class bases of the two parties like this:

One of the old rules of elections that no longer holds is that poorer voters lean Democratic while richer voters tilt Republican. Strikingly, the dominant traditional cleavage in capitalist societies — material well-being — doesn't currently divide the American electorate. If anything, more affluent voters now modestly prefer the party of the left.

This switch reflects what Stephanopoulos described as “a post-Marxist electorate.”

Data cited by Stephanopoulos demonstrates how Donald Trump's entry into presidential politics has accelerated these trends, pulling more voters without college degrees into the Republican Party while repelling Republican-leaning, well-educated suburban voters.

At the same time, Stephanopoulos continued,

the partisan divide between minority and white voters has narrowed somewhat. Cities have also become modestly less Democratic, exurban and rural areas have grown far more Republican, and suburbs have shifted from a reddish to a bluish shade of purple. And wealthier individuals' campaign contributions have followed their votes by flowing increasingly to Democratic candidates.

A fundamental reason for the erosion of the traditional lines of cleavage, Stephanopoulos contended, is the emergence of education “as a potent new axis of electoral segmentation. Among white voters, in particular, individuals with at least a college degree are now a much more Democratic constituency than people with less schooling.”

Stephanopoulos also described the slow process of “racial depolarization” as Republicans make gains among minorities and white voters become more Democratic. He cited data collected by [Catalist](#), a liberal voter analysis firm, that shows that “the share of African American voters backing the Democratic presidential candidate declined from 97 percent in 2012 to 91 percent in 2020. The share of Hispanic voters backing the Democratic candidate fell from 70 percent in 2012 to 62 percent in 2020.”

Simultaneously, “the fraction of white voters preferring the Democratic presidential candidate increased from 41 percent in 2016 to 44 percent in 2020,” according to Stephanopoulos.

He continued:

The transformation of the American electorate is only my starting point. My central aim is to analyze what voters' changing behavior means for election policy and law. It means quite a lot, I argue, little of which has yet been grasped by strategists or scholars.

I'll come back to look more deeply into Stephanopoulos's thesis, but it has already provoked widespread interest among scholars of voting rights, election law and campaign finance.

I asked [Samuel Issacharoff](#), a professor of constitutional law at N.Y.U., about the “New Electorate” paper, and he emailed back, “Quite simply, this is the most provocative and important article in voting rights scholarship in quite some time.”

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Issacharoff argued that Stephanopoulos’s analysis is based on the recognition that we are in the process of a partisan realignment that could prove as significant as the post-1960s consolidation of the ideological political parties that we have now. The Republican Party is clearly becoming the party of the working classes while paradoxically retaining its hold on certain business elites.

Meanwhile, the Democratic Party is becoming the party of the educated classes and their cultural agenda. Paradoxically, the Democrats have retained their foothold in minority communities, despite the cultural conservatism of many of these groups.

Other scholars with an interest in campaign law offered a mix of praise for and criticism of the Stephanopoulos paper.

[Jonathan Rodden](#), a political scientist at Stanford and the author of “Why Cities Lose: The Deep Roots of the Urban-Rural Political Divide,” replied by email to my query: “Nick does a great job summarizing a number of important national trends. However, going forward, it is important to keep an eye on variation across regions and metro areas.”

Rodden agreed that “cities are moving very slightly away from Democrats” and it’s “true that rural areas have become more solidly Republican as they lose population, while some affluent and growing suburban areas have realigned toward the Democrats, at least in presidential elections.”

But, Rodden continued,

in the most recent round of redistricting, anyone who attempted to draw fair districts in Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan or Pennsylvania can attest that ignoring partisanship and focusing only on compactness and respect for county and municipal boundaries would typically result in pro-Republican maps.

In these highly competitive states, it is only possible to achieve partisan fairness by actively trying. One must do things like split Milwaukee into two congressional districts or strategically connect college towns when drawing Ohio Senate districts. Even after such efforts, sometimes the most pro-Democratic maps under consideration still demonstrated slight pro-Republican bias.

“We should be careful not to speak too generally about efforts to restrict voting and ballot counting,” Rodden cautioned. “Some forms might hurt Democrats, while others are a wash or even hurt Republicans. Grand partisan bargains or unilateral disarmament might indeed be possible for some policies, while further hostilities are likely for others.”

[Tabatha Abu El-Haj](#), a law professor at Drexel University, replied by email to my query, saying that “Stephanopoulos is making an important intervention in the debate. Academics and policymakers should focus on the ways that the American electorate has and is changing and be open to the possibility that this renders certain debates obsolete.”

But, she wrote,

the question, in the end, is whether voter suppression laws impact poor white voters to the same degree and in the same ways that they impact voters of color. There are reasons to doubt the conclusion that they would.

Consider photo identification laws. The disparate impact of those laws on racial minorities stems from (a) lower propensities to have a driver’s license and (b) the difficulty older African American voters who migrated from the South face to obtain their original birth certificates. It is not clear to me that rural non-college-educated white voters are equally less likely to have driver’s licenses or that older non-college-educated white voters struggle to obtain birth certificates and thus the alternative forms of identification required by law.

In addition, Abu El-Haj argued, “to the degree that Democrats rely on younger voters, who tend to be less reliable voters regardless of their educational level, restrictions on early voting, absentee voting or ending automatic registrations would still burden Democrats more than Republicans.”

[Richard Hasen](#), a law professor at U.C.L.A., questioned whether the changing demographic and cultural patterns Stephanopoulos described will endure after Trump leaves politics: “Will others be able to build on the Republican Party appeal to working-class voters after he’s gone?”

Hasen contended that “rather than seeing these issues as creating an opening for Democratic Party voter suppression — though that is certainly possible — I see this rather as an opportunity to strengthen voting rights.”

“There could well be a window of time in which both parties see it in their self-interest to expand voting rights in the hopes of increasing their voting share,” Hasen added. “That’s the time to lock in more voting protections to help all voters.”

Stephanopoulos made similar suggestions in his paper.

[Spencer Overton](#), a law professor at George Washington University, argued in an email that Stephanopoulos’s paper

may add value by: 1) chilling voter suppression efforts by reminding Republican politicians that they may inadvertently suppress their own base and 2) highlighting a path for Republicans to win elections by engaging voters of color (rather than by suppressing votes of color and playing on cultural anxiety to stimulate white voter turnout).

That said, Overton argued, “racially polarized voting persists,” and “a slight fluctuation of racial preferences in polling data in the current election or even exit polls in a couple

of election cycles does not necessarily indicate the beginning of the end of racially polarized voting.”

In addition to racial polarization between the political parties, Overton continued,

white solidarity is growing as a political identity. Political scientist Ashley Jardina found that 30 to 40 percent of the white population in the United States identify heavily with their in-group as “white.”

Jardina found that white identity is “becoming a more salient force in American politics” because many people feel as though they are losing power and status due to demographic changes of the past 30 years stemming from immigration and birthrate differences across racial groups, as well as from symbolic changes like the election of Barack Obama.

More broadly, Overton argued,

Our primary challenge is to create systems that both respect identity while allowing people to work together and build new coalitions across cultural and political lines. Our current system was not established to facilitate a multiracial, pluralistic democracy — and that is our primary work today.

While Stephanopoulos addressed some of the ethical concerns raised by Overton and others, his focus was on the incentives and legal consequences of the upheavals involving income, education and race — his “post-Marxist electorate.”

One of the strengths of Stephanopoulos’s paper is his approach to the interaction of demographic and ideological shifts.

Take the impact of laws either suppressing or enhancing voting rights:

Because income and education are the main elements of socioeconomic status and the electorate has depolarized by income but polarized by education, Democratic voters now tend to be higher in socioeconomic status than Republican voters.

Higher socioeconomic status is strongly correlated with more political participation, including higher turnout. Today’s Democrats are therefore more likely to be high-propensity voters, while today’s Republicans are more apt to be lower-propensity voters.

Modern voting regulations (both restrictions and expansions of the franchise) primarily affect lower-propensity voters. Consequently, most modern voting regulations have negligible partisan impacts: if anything, slightly pro-Democratic when the franchise is restricted and slightly pro-Republican when it’s expanded.

Or take the case of income. Stephanopoulos wrote that polling data from 2008 onward showed “the emergence of a clear ‘U curve’ with Democratic presidential candidates faring best among respondents in the lowest and in the highest income quintiles. By 2020, the richest fifth of voters was the most Democratic income group in the entire electorate, narrowly surpassing the poorest fifth.”

Which wealthy voters became more Democratic?

This movement was concentrated among voters with an annual income of \$150,000 to \$500,000. The shift toward Democrats was also about the same across most professions: business/finance, human services/arts, professional/scientific and so on.

Geographically, wealthy voters in midsize metropolitan areas and the suburbs of large metro areas grew more Democratic. Wealthy voters in the cores of large metro areas began and ended this period as staunch Democrats, while wealthy voters in small metro areas, small towns and rural areas remained equally or even increasingly Republican.

In an email, Stephanopoulos noted that for low-propensity voters, the perceived costs of voting equal or exceeded the rewards and they “can be nudged more easily into not voting by anything that raises the perceived costs of voting (like a voting restriction).”

Stephanopoulos cited the 2024 paper “[How Election Rules Affect Who Wins](#)” by [Justin Grimmer](#) and [Eitan Hersh](#), political scientists at Stanford and Tufts.

Grimmer and Hersh defined “individuals as low in socioeconomic status if their family income is less than \$80,000 (near the American median) and if they lack a college degree. In the 2020 Cooperative Election Study, respondents in this group supported Donald Trump over Joe Biden by close to six percentage points. In contrast, respondents high in socioeconomic status backed Biden over Trump by more than 20 points.”

Along similar lines, Stephanopoulos cited another paper, “[The Crucial Role of Race in Twenty-First Century U.S. Political Realignment](#),” by [Michael Barber](#) and [Jeremy Pope](#), political scientists at Brigham Young University. Barber and Pope plotted over time “the differences between the shares of more- and less-educated white respondents (those with at least a college degree and those with no more than a high school education) voting for Democratic presidential and congressional candidates.”

In the 1980s and 1990s, Barber and Pope found, “more-educated white voters were up to 15 percentage points more Republican than less-educated white voters.” Starting at the beginning of this century, “educational polarization among white voters exploded. At the presidential level, the partisan gap between more- and less-educated white voters surged from close to zero two decades ago to almost 30 percentage points in Democrats’ favor.”

For the first time in modern history, Stephanopoulos wrote, “more-educated white voters are much more Democratic than their less-educated peers.”

These shifts in income and education have a profound impact on turnout.

In 2020, Stephanopoulos [reported](#), turnout was 47 percent for the poorest respondents (family income below \$10,000), 72 percent for respondents close to the American median (family income from \$50,000 to \$75,000) and 85 percent for the richest respondents (family income above \$150,000).

“Likewise,” he added, “2020 turnout was 38 percent for the least-educated respondents (less than ninth grade), 70 percent for respondents with near-median education (some college) and 83 percent for the most-educated respondents (graduate degree).”

The result?

“Since 2016, Democratic candidates have done better when turnout is low because they’re now preferred by richer and more-educated voters.”

Amid this turmoil, why is the Democratic loyalty of minority voters eroding, albeit by relatively small percentages? And why is it that poorer minority voters and less-educated minority voters are abandoning what was historically the party of the working man and woman?

Stephanopoulos’s answer: ideology.

In a manner reminiscent of the way conservative working-class white people left the Democratic Party in recent decades, “the relationship between ideology and voting behavior has recently tightened” for Black and Hispanic voters.

In 2016, Stephanopoulos noted, “according to the [Cooperative Election Study](#), 80 percent of conservative African American voters and 30 percent of conservative Hispanic voters backed the Democratic presidential candidate. In 2020, these proportions plunged to 64 percent and 15 percent.”

Ideological sorting, according to Stephanopoulos, “has thus reached the minority electorate. Conservative minority voters are no longer as glaring an exception to the modern rule that ideology and partisanship go hand in hand.”

What can we infer from the “New Electorate” argument, assuming the trends described by Stephanopoulos continue? Quite a bit.

First, that the Democratic coalition will continue on a path toward becoming increasingly upscale and well educated and that the growing share of minorities in the coalition will be slightly tempered by strengthened white support and by marginal losses among minorities.

This is a wholly different party from the New Deal coalition that operated from the 1930s to the 1960s. Strangely, the banner of progressive economic redistribution, [according to poll data](#), will be carried by those whose personal interests lie elsewhere: middle- and upper-middle-class, largely white liberals.

Despite its support for pro-business public policy favoring the wealthy, the Republican Party is moving toward the goal of becoming the party of the working class, including growing numbers of working-class minorities. The contemporary Republican Party will test the viability of such a conflicted coalition, although it is no more and no less conflicted than the contemporary Democratic coalition.

In this sense, the politics of Stephanopoulos’s “New Electorate” are strikingly symmetrical: Both Democrats and Republicans must deal with a “post-Marxist electorate.” Both face built-in class conflicts and fragile alliances between haves and have-nots, reflecting frustration when the disadvantaged on both sides are unable to share fully in the benefits of what we sometimes forget is our [\\$27.36 trillion national economy](#).

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OPINION
DAVID FRENCH

The Republican Party Has a Split- Personality Problem

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Credit... Ioulex for The New York Times

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/20/opinion/trump-bannon-republican-party.html>

Opinion Columnist

There is a paradox at the heart of Donald Trump’s campaign, a potentially irreconcilable divide that could damage his potential new presidency right from the start.

The people who would make Trump president want different things from him, and those differences present political perils for Trump and also make it difficult to predict the contours of his second term. It could be just as extreme as millions of Americans rightly fear or it could be more moderate — with the deciding factor being Trump’s own sense of self-interest and personal grievance. And when Trump’s emotions ultimately dictate policy, it’s fair for Americans to be concerned about worst-case outcomes.

As we have all learned, Trump’s most enthusiastic supporters have become deeply radicalized, convinced that the nation is on the verge of extinction, in need of revolution. Even worse, they feel personally persecuted by a “uniparty” or “regime” that supposedly

despises them and rejects their values. They want disruptive change, and if violence is necessary, so be it. As the president of the Heritage Foundation, Kevin Roberts, [put it recently](#), our country is “in the process of the second American Revolution, which will remain bloodless if the left allows it to be.”

The Heritage Foundation is arguably America’s most powerful and influential right-wing think tank, and Roberts said those words on “War Room,” the podcast hosted by a former Trump adviser, Stephen K. Bannon. Bannon, however, didn’t host the interview. He’d reported to prison the day before to serve a four-month sentence for contempt of Congress. Before he entered the prison, he [hosted a circuslike news conference](#) that featured a who’s who of MAGA cranks and ideologues.

Bannon sounded the same themes as Roberts. “Victory or death,” he declared. “We either win or we’re going to have the death of a constitutional republic.”

But here’s the paradox I mentioned. If Trump does win again, it won’t be because of the MAGA revolutionaries. It will be because millions of his voters want the opposite of revolution. They want calm. They want the world to feel less dangerous, and they want milk and eggs and gasoline to cost less. These are the [nostalgia voters](#), the people whose impressions of Trump’s presidency have improved since he left office, who long for the world of Jan. 1, 2020, when the economy was strong and the world seemed less chaotic.

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Yes, you can contest their memories of the Trump years. Why do they give him a pass for mishandling Covid, especially in the chaotic early days when he deliberately and [deceitfully](#) downplayed the disease’s risks? You can also question why they seem to excuse Trump for the horrifying [spike](#) in the murder rate in the last year of his presidency.

They’re also giving him a pass for his effort to steal an American election, a monthslong effort that culminated in the violent takeover of the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

Both the MAGA revolutionaries and the nostalgia voters do share a sense of distress about the current state of the country (most notably about immigration), but they diverge sharply on both the depth of the crisis and the extent of the necessary remedies. The complaint of the nostalgia voters is simple and straightforward: They still feel the effects of the spikes in inflation; they’re worried about crime; they want the border brought under control; and they feel uneasy about the multiplying conflicts abroad.

If nostalgia voters dominated the Trump coalition, then one would expect a rather normal second Trump term, at least by Trump standards. Yes, Trump would bluster and yell and post rants on social media, but his policies would not be that extreme. In fact, many of the worst domestic challenges are already easing. Inflation is lower, and violent crime is much lower. President Biden’s recent policy changes tightening border controls have contributed to a [sharp drop](#) in illegal crossings.

It does not require a revolution to change American foreign policy. It does not require a revolution to decrease inflation or crime. But don’t tell that to the MAGA revolutionaries. For them, the clock is about to strike midnight, and only the most drastic measures will save the United States from descending into universal darkness.

To the MAGA revolutionary, the country is in the midst of a foreign invasion, groaning under the oppression of woke tyrants and fighting for the very survival of the Christian faith in America. Defeating this corrupt American establishment requires disruption. That means deportation on a scale that America has never seen before. That means mass firings of civil servants. That means altering First Amendment jurisprudence to suppress the speech of cultural and political opponents. That can even mean prosecuting political opponents *because* they're your opponents.

All of those measures (and those are hardly the only dangerous proposals in MAGA America) add up to chaos. That's just fine with Steve Bannon. As he told my colleague David Brooks in a [disturbing conversation](#), "We need to be street fighters." He speaks of taking a "blowtorch" to the Department of Justice. He seeks the "deconstruction of the administrative state" and the "complete, total destruction of the deep state."

Even more disturbing, it's the radicals who are poised to staff a new Trump administration. Bannon brags that they will have "3,000 political appointees ready to go." And these people are powered by an immense amount of animosity. As Trump's vice-presidential nominee, J.D. Vance, told [The American Conservative](#), "I think our people hate the right people."

So, how do we predict the future when the different halves of the Trump coalition have such different outlooks and such different goals? Is it a true coalition at all or more an amalgamation of competing perspectives?

Predictions are complicated by Trump himself. Temperamentally, he's angry and impulsive. His record of public statements is replete with threats of war crimes, vows to punish his enemies and malicious lies about his opponents. Politically, however, he is less ideological than he is self-interested. He will abandon any person or any movement that he perceives as a threat to his power.

For now, that means social conservatives have to pay the price. Trump has [distanced himself from Project 2025](#), the Heritage Foundation's signature, comprehensive (it's outlined in a more than [900-page book](#)) policy program for a second Trump term.

Most significantly, the Republican Party platform on abortion is the weakest it has been in more than 40 years. Rather than seeking meaningful national restrictions on abortion, the party now says it wants to punt the issue almost entirely to the states. It's a strategic change that would probably have split the Republican Party in the years before Trump, but now he rules with such authority that many of the most outspoken anti-abortion activists have [meekly fallen in line](#).

I've never seen a presidential candidate march into a race with a more conflicted constituency. The very week that stalwart Christian Trump supporters, like [Josh Hawley](#) and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's [Albert Mohler](#), embraced Christian nationalism at Natcon 4, an annual gathering of right-wing nationalists, the Republican National Committee [invited Amber Rose](#), author of the book, "How to Be a Bad Bitch," who has launched successful accounts on [OnlyFans and Playboy Centerfold](#), to address the Republican National Convention.

If you watched carefully, you could see the Republican split personality during the convention this week. Early in the evening, there was more red meat for Trump's base (including when Peter Navarro, released hours earlier, after serving a brief prison

sentence for contempt of Congress, [addressed the roaring crowd](#)). Later in the evening, Republicans leaned hard into nostalgia, relentlessly reminding voters of the world before Covid, when unemployment and inflation were low, and crime seemed to be under control.

We don't know which Republican faction will prevail or for how long, if Trump wins. Will his next term be as malicious and radical as many of us fear? Or will it be tempered by the understanding that a vast majority of Americans desire calm? The nostalgia voters may not like an uncontrolled border, but they'd almost certainly recoil at the sheer misery and disruption of a true mass-detention and mass-deportation regime.

But there is one thing we can be sure of in a second Trump term, and that is Trump himself. If anything, he is angrier and more erratic than he was in 2016. He cares far less about his supporters' needs than his own impulses and desires, and the darker those desires become, the more we risk the chaos that Steve Bannon craves.

David French is an Opinion columnist, writing about law, culture, religion and armed conflict. He is a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom and a former constitutional litigator. His most recent book is [“Divided We Fall: America’s Secession Threat and How to Restore Our Nation.”](#) You can follow him on Threads ([@davidfrenchjag](#)).

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What Is Project 2025, and Why Is Trump Disavowing It?

The Biden campaign has attacked Donald J. Trump's ties to the conservative policy plan that would amass power in the executive branch, though it is not his official platform.



Kevin Roberts, the president of the Heritage Foundation, said that he expected the American government to embrace a more conservative era. Credit...George Walker IV/Associated Press

Simon J. Levien, *The New York Times* Online Edition, July 11, 2024.

Donald J. Trump has gone to great lengths to distance himself from Project 2025, a set of conservative policy proposals for a future Republican administration that has outraged Democrats. He has claimed he knows nothing about it or the people involved in creating it.

Mr. Trump himself was not behind the project. But some of his allies were.

The document, its origins and the interplay between it and the Trump campaign have made for one of the most hotly debated questions of the 2024 race.

Here is what to know about Project 2025, and who is behind it.

What is Project 2025?

Project 2025 was [spearheaded by the Heritage Foundation](#) and like-minded conservative groups before Mr. Trump officially entered the 2024 race. The Heritage

Foundation is a think tank that has shaped the personnel and policies of Republican administrations since the Reagan presidency.

The project was intended as a buffet of options for the Trump administration or any other Republican presidency. It's the latest installment in the Heritage Foundation's Mandate for Leadership series, which has compiled conservative policy proposals every few years since 1981. But no previous study has been as sweeping in its recommendations — or as widely discussed.

Kevin Roberts, the head of the Heritage Foundation, which began putting together the latest document in 2022, said he thought the American government would [embrace a more conservative era](#), one that he hoped Republicans would usher in.

“We are in the process of the second American Revolution,” Mr. Roberts said on Real America's Voice, a right-wing cable channel, in early July, adding pointedly that the revolt [“will remain bloodless if the left allows it to be.”](#)

A representative for Project 2025 said it did not speak for any candidate, adding that “it is ultimately up to that president, who we believe will be President Trump, to decide which recommendations to implement.”

What does Project 2025 propose?

[Much of the plan's nearly 900 pages](#) detail extreme executive-branch overhauls. Among many recommendations, Project 2025 lays out plans for criminalizing pornography, disbanding the Commerce and Education departments, rejecting the idea of abortion as health care and shredding climate protections.

It calls out the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which includes the National Weather Service, as “one of the main drivers of the climate change alarm industry.” And it backs deploying the military “to assist in arrest operations” along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Beyond the policy proposals, something else comes up over and over again in the document — Mr. Trump and the Trump administration, which are mentioned hundreds of times.

What are Trump's ties to Project 2025?

Project 2025 is led by the Heritage Foundation. It does not directly come from Mr. Trump. But that's only part of the story.

Portions of the plan were driven by people who were top advisers to Mr. Trump during his first term and would most likely serve in prominent roles if he wins in November.



Former President Donald Trump spoke during a campaign rally in Doral, Fla. on Tuesday. Credit...Scott McIntyre for The New York Times

Russell T. Vought, Mr. Trump's former budget director, led a section of Project 2025 that dealt with executive orders. Mr. Vought is the policy director for the Republican National Convention, and the national party is controlled by Trump allies. The party on Monday [adopted a new policy platform](#) that reflect priorities laid out on the Trump campaign website. Another person involved in Project 2025 is John McEntee, a former White House personnel chief who began Mr. Trump's [systematic attempt](#) to sweep out officials deemed to be disloyal in 2020.

Mr. Trump has recently gone to great lengths to distance himself from the project, even falsely claiming that he knows nothing about it or people involved in it.

Mr. Trump wrote in a post on his social media site on Friday that he knew nothing about Project 2025 but also that he disagreed with parts of it: "Some of the things they're saying are absolutely ridiculous and abysmal." He did not specify which items he was talking about.

What are Trump's plans for a second term?

The former president has been historically disengaged, even hostile, toward any type of transition planning for a possible second term.

But he has made no secret about his plans to gut civil-service protections, conduct the largest mass deportation effort in history, impose sweeping tariffs and target his enemies using presidential powers. His allies have developed a legal rationale to erase the Justice Department's independence from the president, and several of his closest advisers are now vetting lawyers seen as more likely to embrace [aggressive legal theories about the scope of his power](#).

Some of this, though not all of it, can be found in the Trump campaign's own [policy platform called Agenda47](#). It is more sparse than Project 2025. And even though Agenda47 is his campaign's official list of policy priorities, Mr. Trump himself rarely mentions Agenda47 by name on the campaign trail.

Mr. Trump won in 2016 in part by saying any number of things, some of them contradictory, about policy, letting different people hear what they wanted in his words. In keeping with that approach, the Republican Party platform released Monday presents a less-specific agenda he directly approved that he can point to. The platform reflects a softening on abortion — the issue he views as his biggest vulnerability after the Supreme Court's decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

How do the Trump campaign plans and Project 2025 differ, and overlap?

There are a few ways the two plans differ.

One is on abortion. Project 2025 takes an aggressive approach to curtailing abortion rights, stating that the federal Health and Human Services Department “should return to being known as the Department of Life” (it was never known by that name) and that the next conservative president “has a moral responsibility to lead the nation in restoring a culture of life in America again.” Agenda47, however, does not mention abortion once.

Mr. Trump's public position on abortion has regularly shifted. When he ran in 2016, he pledged to install justices who would overturn *Roe v. Wade*. He called the ruling that overturned it “a great thing” at the presidential debate this year. He also said at the debate that abortion rights should be decided on a state-by-state basis.

Despite the differences, there are numerous similarities. One overlap: eroding the independence of the Justice Department. Mr. Trump has frequently criticized the legitimacy of the department's investigation into attempts to overturn the 2020 election. Project 2025 argues that the department suffers from bureaucratic bloat and must be reined in, teeming with employees committed to a “radical liberal agenda.” On immigration, Mr. Trump has made no secret of his plans to hold the largest mass deportation effort in history. Project 2025, likewise, suggested the removal of any and all “immigration violators.”

The campaign and Project 2025 also share equal demands to end diversity, equity and inclusion programs and the “toxic normalization of transgenderism” as Project 2025 calls it. In many rallies, Mr. Trump asserts he will “keep men out of women's sports.”

On international policy, Mr. Trump and Project 2025 both emphasize a protectionist outlook, often called “America First” policies by the Trump campaign. Sections in Project 2025 and in Agenda47 both suggest higher tariffs on competitors, and increasing competition with China.

One of Project 2025's proposals to turn more federal jobs over to appointees loyal to the president mirrors a Trump-era policy. The back story: During Mr. Trump's presidency, he issued an executive order making it easier to fire career officials and replace them with loyalists. Mr. Biden rescinded the order, [known as Schedule F](#), but Mr. Trump has

said he would reissue it if he wins a second term. Project 2025 also calls for Schedule F to be reinstated.

What are Democrats saying about Project 2025?



President Joe Biden made a previously unscheduled stop at a campaign field office in Philadelphia on Sunday. Credit...Tom Brenner for The New York Times

President Biden's campaign and his supporters have yoked Project 2025 around Mr. Trump's neck, repeatedly warning that it is his shadow platform and that it is evidence of an extreme second-term agenda. They have called it an authoritarian blueprint in an onslaught of news releases, social media posts and TV appearances.

In a rarity for an in-the-weeds policy memo, Project 2025 has made its way into the wider public, drawing condemnations on late-night shows, podcasts and awards programs. Since February, [@BidenHQ](#), the campaign's social media account, has posted about Project 2025 hundreds of times, associating it with Mr. Trump. The effort has received more engagement than most of the account's posts, according to a Biden campaign official.

"Project 2025 should scare every single American," Mr. Biden said in a statement. "It would give Trump limitless power over our daily lives."

Late last month, John Oliver, the host of "Last Week Tonight," dedicated a nearly [30-minute segment](#) to criticizing Project 2025 and dissecting its dangers; it received over seven million views on YouTube. Taraji P. Henson, the actress and Biden campaign surrogate, encouraged people to vote against Republicans in a speech at the BET Awards by focusing on Project 2025.

Elected Democrats, particularly those on the left, have used the project to highlight the dangers of a second Trump term. Liberal members of Congress like Ayanna S. Pressley of Massachusetts have taken to news programs and congressional hearings to highlight what they say is Mr. Trump's unspoken platform.

At a [June 11 hearing](#), Ms. Pressley called Project 2025 “a far-right manifesto” that would “destroy the federal government as we know it.”

What are Trump's aides and other Republicans saying about Project 2025?

Last year, after Project 2025 gained traction in the media and the Biden campaign incorporated it as a core part of its messaging, top Trump campaign officials issued a statement.

Mr. Trump's top aides, Susie Wiles and Chris LaCivita, said in a December statement that unless indicated by campaign staff or the former president directly, “no aspect of future presidential staffing or policy announcements should be deemed official.”

Ms. Wiles and Mr. LaCivita have been continually frustrated with press coverage of Project 2025. They see much of it as potentially damaging in a general election. They are especially anxious about anything to do with restrictions on abortion, a sign that Mr. Trump is trying to appear more moderate on the issue as his focus shifts from the G.O.P. primary concerns of his base to the broader electorate in November.

Following the overturning of Roe, a decision put in place by conservative justices he appointed, Mr. Trump has grown ever more convinced that hard-line abortion restrictions are electoral poison. The new official Republican Party platform, which Mr. Trump directly approved, significantly waters down the abortion section compared with the 2016 and 2020 G.O.P. platform.

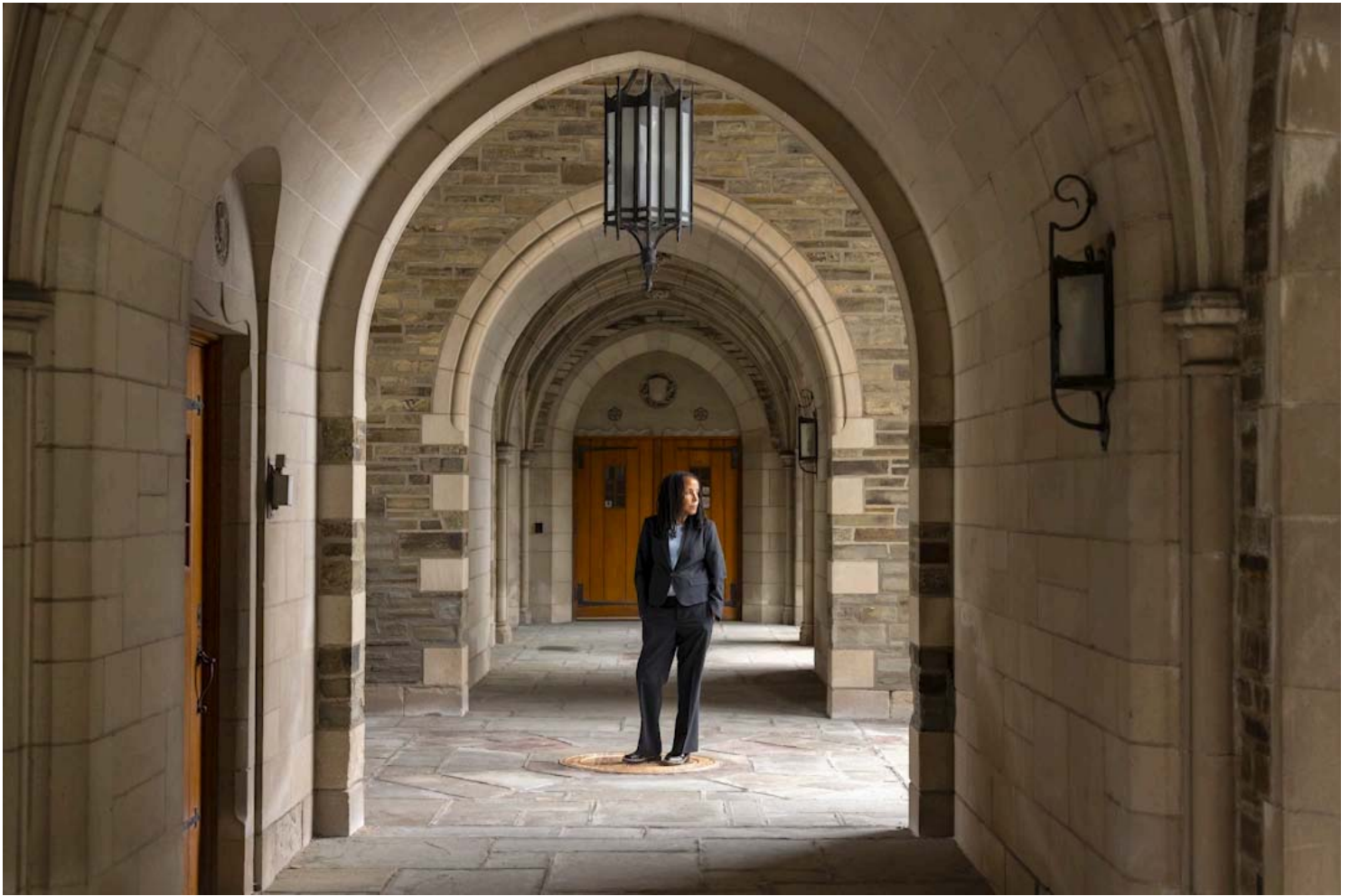
Beyond the abortion issue, many conservatives do not contest the radical nature of Project 2025, and they embrace the publicity.

Steve Bannon, a close Trump ally, told ABC News in late June, before he reported to federal prison to begin a four-month sentence for contempt of Congress, that Project 2025 would “take apart the administrative state brick by brick” as he brandished a copy of the report.

Michael Gold and Neil Vigdor contributed reporting.

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The Resistance to a New Trump Administration Has Already Started

An emerging coalition that views Donald J. Trump's agenda as a threat to democracy is laying the groundwork to push back if he wins in November, taking extraordinary pre-emptive actions.

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By Charlie Savage, Reid J. Epstein, Maggie Haberman and Jonathan Swan

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Opponents of Donald J. Trump are drafting potential lawsuits in case he is elected in November and carries out mass deportations, as he has vowed. One group has hired a new auditor to withstand any attempt by a second Trump administration to unleash the Internal Revenue Service against them. Democratic-run state governments are even stockpiling abortion medication.

A sprawling network of Democratic officials, progressive activists, watchdog groups and ex-Republicans has been taking extraordinary steps to prepare for a potential second Trump presidency, drawn together by the fear that Mr. Trump's return to power would pose a grave threat not just to their agenda but to American democracy itself.

"Trump has made clear that he'll disregard the law and test the limits of our system," said Joanna Lydgate, the chief executive of States United Democracy Center, a nonpartisan democracy watchdog organization that works with state officials in both parties. "What we're staring down is extremely dark."

While the Supreme Court on Thursday rejected an attempt to nullify federal approval of the abortion pill mifepristone, liberals fear a new Trump administration could rescind the approval or use a 19th-century morality law to criminalize sending it across state lines.

The Democratic governor of Washington State, Jay Inslee, said he had secured a large enough supply of mifepristone pills to preserve access for women in his state through a second Trump administration. The supply is locked away at a state warehouse.

"We have it physically in the state of Washington, which could stop him and his anti-choice forces from prohibiting its distribution," Mr. Inslee said in an interview. "It has a life span of five or six years. If there was another Trump administration, it'll get us through."

There is always discussion in any election year of what might happen if the other side wins the White House. Such talk has been typically limited to Washington chatter and private speculation, as much of the energy has focused on helping

one's party win the election and develop wish-list policy plans.



“I think from every measure the danger has increased from his first term.”

**Gov. Jay Inslee of
Washington State**

Ruth Fremson/The New York Times

But the early timing, volume and scale of the planning underway to push back against a potential second Trump administration are without precedent. The loose-knit coalition is determined not to be caught flat-footed, as many were after his unexpected victory in 2016.

If Mr. Trump returns to power, he is openly planning to impose radical changes — many with authoritarian overtones. Those plans include using the Justice Department to take revenge on his adversaries, sending federal troops into

Democratic cities, carrying out mass deportations, building huge camps to hold immigrant detainees, making it easier to fire civil servants and replace them with loyalists and expanding and centralizing executive power.

Ian Bassin, the executive director of Protect Democracy, said the planning for how to resist such an agenda should not be seen as an ordinary policy dispute, but as an effort to defend fundamental aspects of American self-government “from an aspiring autocrat.”

“He is no normal candidate, this is no normal election, and these are no normal preparations for merely coming out on the wrong side of a national referendum on policy choices,” Mr. Bassin said.

The leaders of many of the centrist and left-leaning groups involved insist their energies are primarily devoted to preventing Mr. Trump from regaining power in the first place. Many are also wary about discussing their contingency plans publicly, for fear of signaling a lack of confidence in President Biden’s campaign prospects. Their angst is intensified by Mr. Biden’s low approval numbers and by his persistent trailing of Mr. Trump in polls of the states that are likely to decide the election.

Interviews with more than 30 officials and leaders of organizations about their plans revealed a combination of acute exhaustion and acute anxiety. Activist groups that spent the four years of Mr. Trump’s presidency organizing mass protests and pursuing legal challenges, ultimately helping channel that energy into persuading voters to oust him from power in 2020, are now realizing with great dread they may have to resist him all over again.

The group leaders say they learned a lot from 2017 to 2021 about how to run an effective resistance campaign. At the same time, their understanding of what Mr. Trump is capable of expanded after the Capitol riot on Jan. 6, 2021. They believe that the orbit around Mr. Trump has grown more sophisticated and that a second Trump White House would be both more radical and more effective, especially on core issues like immigration.

“What Trump and his acolytes are running on is an authoritarian playbook,” said Patrick Gaspard, the chief executive of the CAP Action Fund, the political arm of the liberal think tank the Center for American Progress. He added, “So now we have to democracy-proof our actual institutions and the values that we share.”

The Biden administration pushed through a flurry of regulations in the spring, meeting a deadline to ensure that those rules could not be summarily overturned next year under a 1996 law if Mr. Trump wins the election and Republicans take total control of Congress. But administration officials have generally been reluctant to engage in contingency planning, insisting they are confident Mr. Biden will win a second term.

Steven Cheung, a Trump campaign spokesman, denounced these efforts as a way to pre-empt Mr. Trump from being able to implement a legitimate policy agenda.

“It’s not surprising Biden and his cronies are working overtime to stymie the will of the American people after they vote to elect President Trump and his America First agenda,” Mr. Cheung said. “Their devious actions are a direct threat to democracy.”

Different groups worried about what a second Trump presidency could mean are also starting to think about how to work together.

Earlier this week, representatives from 50 national and local immigration rights organizations convened at a hotel outside Phoenix for a three-day retreat under the umbrella group Immigrant Movement Visioning Process. On the agenda for two days was “Scenario Planning: Post Election Readiness,” building on a four-hour exercise the group had conducted online in May, according to Kica Matos, president of the National Immigration Law Center.

And next month, the anti-Trump conservative group Principles First and Norman Eisen, who was a lawyer for House Democrats during Mr. Trump’s first impeachment and helped produce an “autocracy threat tracker” focused on Mr. Trump’s plans, are organizing a conference at New York University entitled

“Autocracy in America – A Warning and Response.” They are inviting dozens of practitioners and scholars to discuss how to resist leaders with authoritarian leanings around the world, Mr. Eisen said.

Maurice Mitchell, the head of the Working Families Party and a co-anchor of Fight Back Table, a progressive coalition that formed in 2017, said activists opposed to Mr. Trump’s agenda were primarily trying to prevent him from winning. But he said they were also determined to be prepared if he does retake power and to stay out of each other’s lanes.



“I don’t want to feel flat-footed again.”

Maurice Mitchell, the national director of the Working Families Party

Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

“A lot of folks are in the mind frame of, What can we learn from the past?” Mr. Mitchell said. “How can we apply those lessons going forward? And how can we think through the various scenarios that might present themselves, and how might we leverage everything that we have?”

A new litigation wave

A common tactic to push back against the first Trump administration was through litigation that tied up his policies in court. Sometimes that work succeeded in blocking actions entirely, and in other cases it delayed those policies from taking effect.

The American Civil Liberties Union, one of the chief litigants against the first Trump administration, is planning to assume a similar role if he regains the White House. In anticipation of that role, the A.C.L.U. has hired a new auditing firm to do a top-to-bottom scrub of the organization’s finances to ensure it can withstand scrutiny if a Trump administration were to sic the I.R.S. on it.

The A.C.L.U.’s director, Anthony Romero, said his group had mapped out 63 scenarios in which a new Trump administration could pose a threat to individual rights and the rule of law. The A.C.L.U. team cataloged the threats by their severity, timing and other factors.

That exercise, he said in an interview, led the group to focus on four areas, for which it is drafting potential legal filings. Those areas are Mr. Trump’s plans for an unprecedented crackdown on unauthorized immigrants, the potential to further curtail access to abortion, firing civil servants for political reasons and the possibility that he would use troops to suppress protests.

In 2020, as racial justice protests sometimes descended into riots, Mr. Trump had an order drafted to invoke the Insurrection Act — a law that grants presidents emergency power to use federal troops on domestic soil to restore order — but never signed it. He has since suggested that next time, he will deploy troops in Democratic-run cities even if the local authorities have not asked for assistance.

The A.C.L.U. is preparing litigation that would challenge the Insurrection Act, arguing that it was never intended to be used to shut down protest and debate. In parallel, Mr. Romero said, the group would be prepared to bring First Amendment challenges to specific deployments in specific cities.

“You’re going to have to go retail, protest by protest,” Mr. Romero said.

A large part of the pushback to Mr. Trump in his first term centered on immigration policy, from protests against his ban on travel to the United States by citizens of several Muslim-majority countries to outrage at his administration’s policy of separating children from their parents in immigration detention.

Since Mr. Trump left office, the political environment on immigration has shifted amid the post-Covid surge of migrants arriving at the border and claiming asylum, overwhelming the system. Mr. Biden recently issued an executive order requiring summary rejection of asylum claims when the numbers are too high.

Several immigrant rights groups, assisted by the A.C.L.U., are challenging that order in court. But immigrant rights leaders say they believe Mr. Trump’s policy plans, from mass deportations to giant detention camps, would be vastly more draconian.

A memo circulated by the immigration group FWD.us is warning of a range of restrictive immigration policies that could come in the future. The intention of the memo, a person familiar with its contents said, was to prompt a discussion about finding lessons on how Mr. Trump had responded during his first term to public pressure on his most controversial immigration actions.



Kendrick Brinson for The New York Times

“We’re going to be the David to the government’s Goliath.”

Anthony Romero, the director of A.C.L.U.

At the National Immigration Law Center, scenario planning and preparations for a second Trump term have been underway since last fall — particularly after a New York Times article detailed Mr. Trump’s plans for a vast deportation effort, Ms. Matos said. The group convened planning meetings in response to the article and has been working both internally and in coordination with other groups, she said.

For example, during Mr. Trump’s presidency, a network of volunteers convened in New Haven, Conn., to be a rapid response unit when there was chatter about immigration raids. The volunteers recorded the raids on video and were prepared

to intervene if they saw any legal rights violations; her center is exploring how to replicate that model nationally, she said.

The center's scenario planning has also focused on the possibility of "much more intense attacks" and harassment targeting immigration rights advocates, from death threats to the possibility of actual violence. "And so what else can we anticipate under Trump 2.0 that we didn't see under Trump 1.0, and how do we prepare for that?" Ms. Matos said.

Another hub of liberal resistance plans for a second Trump administration is Democracy Forward, an organization that formed after Mr. Trump's 2016 victory that filed scores of legal challenges to policies during his first term in the White House. The organization has developed a 15-page threat matrix that covers issues including abortion, health care, climate, civil rights, environmental protections, immigration and the "weaponization of government."

In addition to drafting potential lawsuits to file against expected Trump administration actions, Democracy Forward's chief executive, Skye Perryman, said the organization had also begun recruiting sympathetic plaintiffs who would have legal standing in court.

"We are ensuring that people and communities that would be affected by a range of policies that we see with respect to Project 2025 know their legal rights and remedies and are able to access legal representation, should that be necessary," Ms. Perryman said, referring to a policy planning project developed by conservative think tanks for a second Trump administration.

But there is also a widely held view among Democrats that many types of legal actions may be less effective during a second Trump term than they were during his first. A Supreme Court remade by Mr. Trump is far more conservative and likely to be more sympathetic to his administration's actions.

A Blue-State Bulwark

That legal reality has left those planning for a Trump return to power to focus on state-level actions that can be locked in before the 2024 election.

Lawyers working for Democratic state attorneys general have been quietly studying the playbooks of their Republican counterparts in Texas and Florida, whom they view as being most successful at attacking and obstructing the Biden administration.

A person with knowledge of these conversations, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said one of their goals was to see what aspects of the red-state anti-Biden playbook could be appropriated to ensure that Democrats can play offense as well as defense against a potential Trump administration.

The Supreme Court's 2022 decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* also forced a sense of urgency upon liberal groups and governors. Immediately after the decision, Democratic governors and state attorneys general began arranging calls and meetings to figure out how to counter the new threat to abortion access in their states.

California's governor, Gavin Newsom, founded a group called the Reproductive Freedom Alliance as a hub for governors to coordinate their strategies. Though nonpartisan, it now comprises 23 governors, all Democrats.

The governors in the alliance have worked together to plan litigation, pass shield laws to protect abortion providers and patients from penalties in other states and secure the emergency stockpiles of abortion pills in case they become unavailable or severely restricted. It could be the seeds of a broader collaboration to resist Mr. Trump's agenda.

"The Reproductive Freedom Alliance has pioneered a model of coordination across states to defend, and expand, access to reproductive health care — enabling governors and key staff to develop relationships and a structure for collaboration

that could be replicated on other issues, like immigration and gun safety,” said Julia Spiegel, a lawyer who helped start the Reproductive Freedom Alliance from Mr. Newsom’s office.



Tom Jamieson for The New York Times

“Governors, working together, are essential force multipliers and firewalls against threats to our democracy.”

Julia Spiegel, who helped Gov. Gavin Newsom of California found the Reproductive Freedom Alliance

Mr. Inslee, in Washington State, is one of at least five Democratic governors who have established stockpiles of mifepristone to guard against the possibility of any Trump administration using federal power to stop its interstate distribution. The others are the governors of California, Massachusetts, New York and Oregon.

The Supreme Court rejected a lawsuit challenging the Food and Drug Administration's approval of mifepristone on technical grounds, finding that the plaintiffs lacked legal standing to bring the case. But that would not prevent the agency itself from rescinding its approval of the pills. If that happened, Mr. Inslee's aides said, they would argue that the F.D.A. lacked authority to restrict use of the existing stockpiles if the pills did not cross state lines.

The blue-state governors who served during Mr. Trump's first term developed a template in dealing with him that was tested during the peak of the Covid pandemic, when Mr. Newsom, Mr. Inslee and others found themselves issuing public praise for the president if they hoped for basic federal assistance. That experience has left the governors with little room for imagination about what a worst-case scenario would look like in a second Trump term.

At the Brennan Center for Justice, the bulk of the immediate work has been around voting-rights issues for the 2024 campaign.

The group hired the journalist Barton Gellman from The Atlantic to help with scenario planning and tabletop exercises focused on what could unfurl during a Trump presidency, with a report likely to be made public this summer. Other work has included a focus on the Insurrection Act and the National Emergencies Act.

"We are doing scenario planning for a Biden victory and for a Trump victory," said Michael Waldman, the Brennan Center president. "For Biden, we are preparing for the chance to pass significant legislation strengthening the freedom to vote, and for Trump we are mapping out how to limit the damage from an epic era of abuse of power."

Charlie Savage writes about national security and legal policy. [More about Charlie Savage](#)

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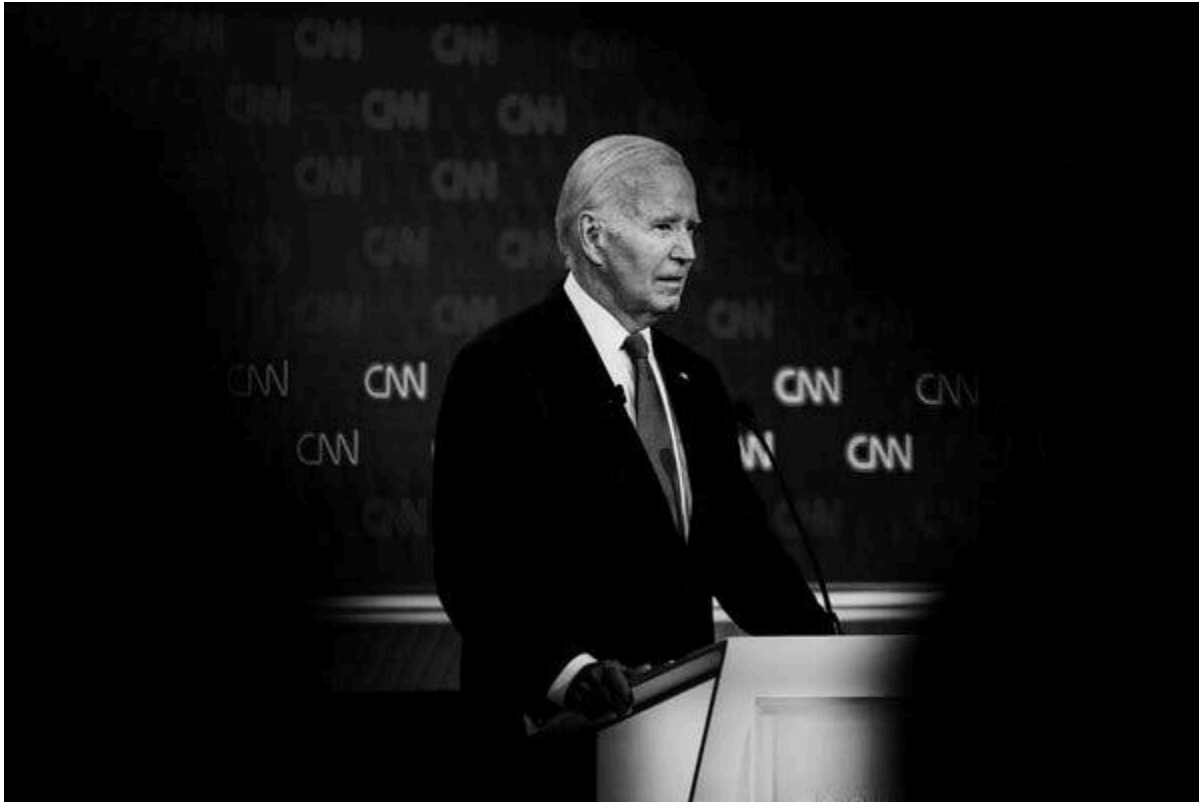
Maggie Haberman is a senior political correspondent reporting on the 2024 presidential campaign, down ballot races across the country and the investigations into former President Donald J. Trump. [More about Maggie Haberman](#)

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More about Jonathan Swan

OPINION

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

To Serve His Country, President Biden Should Leave the Race



Credit...Damon Winter/The New York Times

The Editorial Board, *The New York Times* Online Edition, June 29, 2024.

President Biden has repeatedly and rightfully described the stakes in this November's presidential election as nothing less than the future of American democracy.

Donald Trump has proved himself to be a significant jeopardy to that democracy — an erratic and self-interested figure unworthy of the public trust. He systematically attempted to undermine the integrity of elections. His supporters have described, publicly, a 2025 agenda that would give him the power to carry out the most extreme of his promises and threats. If he is returned to office, he has vowed to be a different kind of president, unrestrained by the checks on power built into the American political system.

Mr. Biden has said that he is the candidate with the best chance of taking on this threat of tyranny and defeating it. His argument rests largely on the fact that he beat Mr. Trump in 2020. That is no longer a sufficient rationale for why Mr. Biden should be the Democratic nominee this year.

At Thursday's debate, the president needed to convince the American public that he was equal to the formidable demands of the office he is seeking to hold for another term. Voters, however, cannot be expected to ignore what was instead plain to see: Mr. Biden is not the man he was four years ago.

The president [appeared on Thursday night](#) as the shadow of a great public servant. He struggled to explain what he would accomplish in a second term. He struggled to respond to Mr. Trump's provocations. He struggled to hold Mr. Trump accountable for his lies, his failures and his chilling plans. More than once, he struggled to make it to the end of a sentence.

Mr. Biden has been an admirable president. Under his leadership, [the nation has prospered](#) and begun to address a range of long-term challenges, and the wounds ripped open by Mr. Trump have begun to heal. But the greatest public service Mr. Biden can now perform is to announce that he will not continue to run for re-election.

As it stands, the president is engaged in a reckless gamble. There are Democratic leaders better equipped to present clear, compelling and energetic alternatives to a second Trump presidency. There is no reason for the party to risk the stability and security of the country by forcing voters to choose between Mr. Trump's deficiencies and those of Mr. Biden. It's too big a bet to simply hope Americans will overlook or discount Mr. Biden's age and infirmity that they see with their own eyes.

If the race comes down to a choice between Mr. Trump and Mr. Biden, the sitting president would be this board's unequivocal pick. That is how much of a danger Mr. Trump poses. But given that very danger, the stakes for the country and the uneven abilities of Mr. Biden, the United States needs a stronger opponent to the presumptive Republican nominee. To make a call for a new Democratic nominee this late in a campaign is a decision not taken lightly, but it reflects the scale and seriousness of Mr. Trump's challenge to the values and institutions of this country and the inadequacy of Mr. Biden to confront him.

Ending his candidacy would be against all of Mr. Biden's personal and political instincts. He has picked himself up from tragedies and setbacks in the past and clearly believes he can do so again. Supporters of the president are already explaining away Thursday's debate as one data point compared with three years of accomplishments. But the president's performance cannot be written off as a bad night or blamed on a supposed cold, because it affirmed concerns that have been mounting for months or even years. Even when Mr. Biden tried to lay out his policy proposals, he stumbled. It cannot be outweighed by other public appearances because he has limited and carefully controlled his public appearances.

It should be remembered that Mr. Biden challenged Mr. Trump to this verbal duel. He set the rules, and he insisted on a date months earlier than any previous general election debate. He understood that he needed to address longstanding public concerns about his mental acuity and that he needed to do so as soon as possible.

The truth Mr. Biden needs to confront now is that he failed his own test.

In polls and interviews, voters say they are seeking fresh voices to take on Mr. Trump. And the consolation for Mr. Biden and his supporters is that there is still time to rally behind a different candidate. While Americans are conditioned to the long slog of

multiyear presidential elections, in many democracies, campaigns are staged in the space of a few months.

It is a tragedy that Republicans themselves are not engaged in deeper soul-searching after Thursday's debate. Mr. Trump's own performance ought to be regarded as disqualifying. He [lied brazenly and repeatedly](#) about his own actions, his record as president and his opponent. He described plans that would harm the American economy, undermine civil liberties and fray America's relationships with other nations. He [refused to promise](#) that he would accept defeat, returning instead to the kind of rhetoric that incited the Jan. 6 attack on Congress.

The Republican Party, however, has been [co-opted by Mr. Trump's ambitions](#). The burden rests on the Democratic Party to put the interests of the nation above the ambitions of a single man.

Democrats who have deferred to Mr. Biden must now find the courage to speak plain truths to the party's leader. The confidants and aides who have encouraged the president's candidacy and who sheltered him from unscripted appearances in public should recognize the damage to Mr. Biden's standing and the unlikelihood that he can repair it.

Mr. Biden answered an urgent question on Thursday night. It was not the answer that he and his supporters were hoping for. But if the risk of a second Trump term is as great as he says it is — and we agree with him that the danger is enormous — then his dedication to this country leaves him and his party only one choice.

The clearest path for Democrats to defeat a candidate defined by his lies is to deal truthfully with the American public: acknowledge that Mr. Biden can't continue his race, and create a process to select someone more capable to stand in his place to defeat Mr. Trump in November.

It is the best chance to protect the soul of the nation — the cause that drew Mr. Biden to run for the presidency in 2019 — from the malign warping of Mr. Trump. And it is the best service that Mr. Biden can provide to a country that he has nobly served for so long.

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