DEMOCRACY AND SOCIETY 01.02.2022 | Thomas Greven

Why the Democrats need to get behind power politics

Under Trump's leadership, the Republican Party is threatening democracy in America. The Democrats need to wake up and adopt their opponents' tactics

A growing number of Republicans are being riled directly by Trump and other right-wing agitators into an increasingly apocalyptic fear of the Biden administration's alleged 'left-wing fascism'. The majority of citizens feel there is some threat of authoritarian political violence from this faction, yet continue to act as if things were completely normal as we approach the House of Representatives elections. The surveys on this speak volumes: two-thirds of Republicans believe Trump's lie at his rally in Arizona this month – that the election was 'stolen' from him. Worse still, more and more Republicans now regard breaking the law and violence as both legitimate and necessary 'to save their country'. But it is this attitude that is the threat.

On the first anniversary of the Biden-Harris administration's inauguration, one thing must be made clear: the attempt to reconcile American society has failed spectacularly. Biden simply cannot get across to the Trump cult. And these cultists pose a real danger – both for American democracy and for the life and limb of all who stand in their way. But who actually will stand in their way?

A question of democracy

Democrats in Congress haven't even managed to bring about enough unity to protect the fundamental right to vote at a federal level, which is being blocked in the Senate by the parliamentary minority. For decades, the practice of filibustering prevented racial segregation from being abolished, but now this relic of segregation is effectively stopping us from protecting the right of minorities to vote. We must be under no illusion: as soon as Republicans are in the majority again, they would waste no time in immediately abolishing the filibuster to get what they want through. This is what they did without hesitation as soon as Trump took office, allowing him to appoint the federal judges he wanted to. National

election reform failed at the filibuster, meaning there is nothing to stop Republicans from cutting minority voting rights in more and more states, which they believe will lead them to victory in the House of Representatives elections.

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But Democrats must win this election without question – not to drive through the Biden agenda, currently bogged down in the Democratic infighting, but to preserve democracy. If we look beyond the absurd apocalyptic rhetoric of Republicans and the appalling opinion ratings to get a sense of perspective, the Biden administration is at least viewed as 'satisfactory'. With his uninspiring style of governing, Biden has brought some dignity back to the President's office. His policies are intended to improve the lives of many Americans – even if not everything turns out as planned due to the pandemic and rising inflation. There are also some questions surrounding the supposed return of the country's international credibility, or whether 'America is back'.

But we've seen over and over again how the older gentleman tires easily, which has obviously also affected the fighting power of his already tame party. 'Lower the temperature' was the slogan. Reconciling the people should be achieved through a calm and polite approach, being open to dialogue and compromise. A continuation of Michelle Obama's maxim: 'when they go low, we go high', meaning we won't demonise and dehumanise political opponents by calling them 'the enemy'. 'We Americans are not like that' or 'We're all Americans', the Democrats repeatedly proclaim, almost desperately.

But both Trump and an alarmingly high number of his followers simply disregard being part of the same American people as those who don't look like them or believe in the same thing – both religiously and politically. As far as they're concerned, the country needs to be saved from black people, brown people, leftists or non-Christians, if necessary, by armed force. The opposite is, of course, is true: the Trumpists and conspirators, armed to the teeth and now a lost cause, are the real, lethal danger for the majority of citizens and for American democracy.

The silent majority must break their silence

So, the temperature is going up, not down. Democrats, left-wing voters, Republicans, and independent voters who are not part of the Trump club need to pull themselves together and fight for their country and democracy, before it's too late. They form a clear majority against the Trump cult, albeit a silent majority – a reflection of the pandemic-era debate everywhere, where public perception is also dominated by a loud, hard-of-thinking minority.

The majority must speak up, and the Democrats must become more partisan to do so. Americans who define themselves as democrats with a small *d* must throw their support behind Democrats with a capital *D*. We are proud Democrats and will do everything we can to stay in power. Because we have to save democracy from those who still call themselves Republicans but have long since become the blind followers of an autocratic leader, we must become more partisan than ever.

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Naturally, there are many concerns about the idea of abandoning restraint in favour of consistently pursuing power politics. Will dividing the population not only create even more tribalisation? Yes. But what's the alternative? Oversee the destruction of democratic institutions without fighting for them? Republicans have an institutional advantage in the US's anachronistic electoral system, essentially because of the overrepresentation of rural voters, so they don't need a majority to govern.

What will happen if they can determine who can vote and whose votes will ultimately count? If universal suffrage is effectively abolished, then it is difficult to regain power by democratic means, even in a nominal democracy. For Trump and his cronies, elections are already unnecessary, because by his own statements he already knows he's going to win from the outset. Any other result can only be 'fraud'.

Why do white Christians, who make up the vast majority of Republicans, feel so much more threatened than the majority of Democrats? Many of them claim they're concerned about their identity. So far, only a few Democrats, presumably ethnic minorities, have felt such an existential threat. But it goes without saying that the majority of non-Republicans are needed to help put up an effective resistance to this autocratic threat

to American democracy.

Rule through fear

How can support be drummed up? Debates on the pros and cons of political programmes such as Biden's *Build Back Better* bill or academic discussions about the balance needed between urban justice and working-class needs will probably put most citizens to sleep. Actually, this is somewhere else where we need to learn from Republicans: it must be based on fear. Fear of tyranny from a crazed, hateful mob, which is having less and less of a problem being associated with groups like the right-wing extremist *Oath Keepers*. It's no longer that longing kind of question of what kind of country do you want to live in? It's more a question of what kind of country do you not want to live in ever?

At a federal level, Democrats have practically nowhere to go. A new partisan Democratic force would therefore have to be demonstrated primarily at a state and local level, basically everywhere where they still have power. Where is it written that only Republicans can influence the size of constituencies in their favour and fill key election posts with their party's troops?

If the Democrats cannot get on board with power politics, then they might as well give up. Or we could well see a far more dangerous scenario, as this fear could also lead to some Democrats turning to violence. There are already reports of armed groups on the left. This cannot be surprising given the growing aggression of the other side. Recently, a man with a mental illness threatened to assassinate Donald Trump. Should Trump run for president again, the Secret Service would likely have to adapt to serious threats from organised forces.



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