

HISTORICAL-POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE:

The introduction here is a historical-political perspective of the demise of democracy in the United States. I have included it in this newsletter as numerous readers are interested in history and we are living in very historical times: an American president is trying to usurp all political power in the USA and become the autocratic leader there.

The intro has 4 sections:

1. Intro: Historical-political analysis;
2. Jim Acosta, former CNN broadcaster, commentary relating to termination of Stephen Colbert's Late Show;
3. A commentary of the significance of the Epstein scandal;
4. A short history of other sexual predators government leaders: Mussolini, Gaddafi, Berlusconi.
5. Conclusion

1. Historical-political analysis: The erosion of American democracy

Democracy Under Threat and the Path Forward

Democracy in the United States is in a precarious state, severely impacted by the Trump administration's actions and policies.

Deterioration of Democratic Institutions

Executive Overreach: The Trump administration is accused of trying to establish a police state, seizing power from Congress, and intimidating various institutions like law firms, universities, and media companies (e.g., CBS, ABC, Washington Post).

Judicial Complicity: The Supreme Court is seen as enabling Trump's power grabs, exhibiting a partisan nature, and undermining lower court rulings that oppose authoritarian moves.

Congressional Irrelevance: Congress has seemingly become ineffective in checking executive power.

Policy Reversals: Decades of progress have been reversed, leading to:

- A more regressive tax system.

- ❑ Increased prices and hobbled government services.
- ❑ Undermined science-based health and climate policy.
- ❑ Loss of healthcare coverage, food aid, and college assistance for millions.
- ❑ Spending cuts across various sectors, from the National Weather Service to Planned Parenthood.
- ❑ Crippled U.S. soft power globally.

Mitigation through Litigation: While significant harm has been inflicted, litigation wins have helped delay or minimize the negative impact on Americans and institutions.

Resilience and Opposition

Democratic Antibodies: Despite the decline, "democracy's antibodies" have surged, evidenced by:

- ❑ Millions protesting the abrogation of civil rights, the weaponization of the criminal justice system, and violence against people of color.
- ❑ Democratic politicians learning to respond more quickly and effectively to Trump's actions and showing solidarity with working Americans.

Trump's Approval: Trump's overall approval ratings are underwater, with public disapproval across most issues, including immigration.

The Upcoming Midterms (2026)

The upcoming 2026 midterms offer a crucial opportunity for Democrats.

- ❑ ***Historical Precedent:*** The 2022 midterms saw Democrats perform historically well despite Biden's approval ratings, unlike Obama's experience in 2010.

□ **Factors Favoring Democrats in 2026:**

- o The *Epstein scandal* may alienate some of Trump's base, potentially leading to lower voter turnout among MAGA supporters.
- o Republicans are seen as owning "every miserable vote and policy disaster," allowing Democrats to tie them to specific, negative results for ordinary voters.
- o The electoral map is expanding, with more House and Senate seats potentially within reach for Democrats.

- **Strategy for Democrats:** Bold action and direct confrontation with Republicans are emphasized, rather than inoffensive policies and modulated language, as real-world experience shows this mobilizes a broader electorate. Significant midterm victories are deemed essential to reverse assaults on democracy and economic well-being.

Lessons for Democrats: Longer Term

The past six months offer valuable insights for Democrats beyond the midterms.

□ **Voter Preferences: Voters respond to:**

- o "Fighters" who directly challenge MAGA extremists (e.g., Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Sen. Corey Booker, Gov. Gavin Newsom, Gov. J.B. Pritzker).
- o Fresher voices expressing righteous anger over "old fogies" who seem to view opposition as futile.
- o Politicians pledging dramatic change, not more of the same.
- o Those who acknowledge that corrupt billionaires are exploiting them.

- o Plain-spoken messengers regardless of ideology.
- o A secure social safety net.
- o Rejection of a "police state" that harms hardworking neighbors under the guise of border security.
- o Those who oppose power grabs, lawlessness, corruption, cruelty, and corrupt oligarchs, even if abstract appeals to "democracy" don't resonate as strongly.

□ **Recommended Democratic Actions:**

- o Offer bold programs supporting American workers and expanding opportunities (e.g., subsidized childcare, paid sick leave).
- o Back radical reforms to curb the power of oligarchs (e.g., Supreme Court expansion and term limits, financial transparency for politicians, ending gerrymandering).
- o Decry attacks on civil liberties, cruelty, and state violence.
- o Present an inspiring, authentic, and youthful leader with a message of hope and change, which could capture voters' imagination.

While democracy is in a critical state, its medium and long-term prognosis is brighter *if Democrats can impede its collapse and gain momentum through election wins in the near future*. The midterms are presented as a make-or-break moment for democracy.

2. Jim Acosta commentary: Trump just cant take a joke....but are Americans really joking?

This Just In: Trump Can't Take a Joke

American TV networks should stand up for free speech; not give it away to a thin-

skinned president

Jim Acosta, former CNN TV broadcaster

Imagine television legends Johnny Carson or David Letterman getting canned for telling jokes about a president. In the late 20th and early 21st century in the United States, a late-night comedian could poke fun at the commander-in-chief without fear of being fired. Not so in the thin-skinned age of the president I've called, "The Manchurian Candidate." There is no amount of make-up that can mask his easily bruised feelings.

Back in the late 1990's, Bill Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky provided nearly daily fodder for the late-night talk shows. It was once estimated that Letterman's arch-rival at NBC, Jay Leno told approximately 4,000 jokes at Clinton's expense. 4000! Robert Lichter, a professor at George Mason University's Center for Media and Public, told National Public Radio in 2014 that his students reviewed thousands of hours of talk show footage to arrive at the stunning tally of Leno's barbs aimed at the two-term Democrat.

"Leno's favorite target by far was Bill Clinton who accounted for over one out of every 10 jokes about all topics over the last 20-some years," Lichter said.

Leno's Jokes About Clinton

In its announcement explaining the cancellation of "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert," CBS claimed that "content" had nothing to do with its decision. Cue the laugh track. Nobody is buying that. Of course, they fired Colbert to placate Trump. The critically acclaimed Colbert program was a ratings winner in its time slot. But just three days before the broadcaster's stunning move, he had slammed a settlement paid by CBS's parent company Paramount to Trump as a "big, fat bribe." Paramount, in the middle of a media merger requiring the administration's blessing, forked over \$16 million to settle a lawsuit filed by Trump who complained about the editing of a piece on another CBS flagship program, "60 Minutes."

As I've noted in some of my previous pieces, America's corporate media companies have repeatedly bowed down to Trump in a fashion that is shameful, even for gutless network TV executives. Mark 2025 down. In television, this is the year of the kneepad. And what makes this kowtowing all the more deplorable is that the titans of the nation's entertainment industry should at least have a baseline of

institutional knowledge to understand that this country has a rich tradition of skewering presidents from both parties.

On NBC's Saturday Night Live in the 1970's, Chevy Chase portrayed President Gerald Ford, who occasionally stumbled off of Air Force One, as a bumbling klutz. Later in the early 1990's, Dana Carvey needled President George H-W Bush's verbal crutches. Bush's "not gonna do it" was lampooned by Carvey as "nah-gah-do." It was hysterical. Another SNL star Darrell Hammond later perfectly captured Clinton's patented lip-biting, thumbs-upping animatronics. Don't forget Will Farrell's send-up of George W. Bush's "strategery." Bush later revealed he thought he originated the term. The Bushes are now fondly remembered for enjoying the impersonations as much as the audiences at home.

Contrast the magnanimous Bushes with Trump who could never handle being impersonated by Alec Baldwin during his first administration. Trump once laughably lashed out at the actor with a tweet that initially misspelled the word "dying."

"Alex Baldwin, whose dieing mediocre career was saved by his impersonation of me on SNL, now says playing DJT was agony for him," Trump posted.

As Trump, Baldwin quipped in 2019 that he would like to build a wall around yours truly, also portrayed on the program. (see above) In 2017, SNL had me locked up in a cage, wearing a diaper. I'll never forget entering the White House security booth a few days later, when a secret service officer asked me, "was that you in the diaper?"

Hey, if you can't laugh at yourself, who can you laugh at? Well, not Trump.

On my old weekend program, I observed that Trump, then out of power but stewing over his 2020 election loss, was "wasting away in Mar-a-Lago-ville, looking for that next election to assault." It was a joke. On another show, I referred to the then-disgraced ex-president as the Mussolini of Mar-a-Lago. Again, I was just having a little fun.

"Too hot!" Trump's aide Jason Miller complained to me via text. Not as hot as trying to inciting an insurrection, but I digress.

What's more preposterous is that Trump and his aides have repeatedly tried to explain away some of his own crude and ridiculous remarks as just jokes. His

boasting that he could “grab (women) by the pussy” was just “locker room talk,” Trump claimed in 2016. Back in 2020, the White House insisted Trump was only kidding when he said his administration should “slow the testing” for the coronavirus, to somehow contain the spread of Covid.

"It was a comment that he made in jest," White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said at the time.

WH says Trump just joking about covid

Nobody thought he was joking. McEnany was lying, as Trump’s press secretaries often do.

During the 2016 campaign, Trump invited the Russians to hack into Hillary Clinton’s email server, in response to a question I had asked about Kremlin meddling in the election. Trump later said he was only joking then too.

“I will tell you this: Russia, if you’re listening, I hope you’re able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing,” Trump said. “I think you will probably be rewarded mightily by our press.”

Turns out Trump only complains when the jokes on him. He has now celebrated Colbert’s firing and is speculating other late-night stars could be next. Trump might be right. What’s one more scalp, the country’s TV executives must be thinking.

“I absolutely love that Colbert got fired,” Trump wrote. “Greg Gutfeld is better than all of them combined.”

Don’t be surprised if CBS fired Colbert to clear the way for the likes of Gutfeld, whose schtick recently included encouraging conservatives to greet each other by saying, “what up my Nazi?”

Gutfeld's Nazi "jokes"

Of course, Gutfeld can make such comments without any fear of being fired by Fox. That’s because, despite the president’s current beef with Rupert Murdoch over the Wall Street Journal’s Epstein reporting, the Australian-born media magnate’s right-wing outlet has all but become Trump state television. And CBS, apparently in a mood to curry favor with the same president who has derided the press as “the enemy of the people,” seems prepared to sink lower in its standards

than it already has.

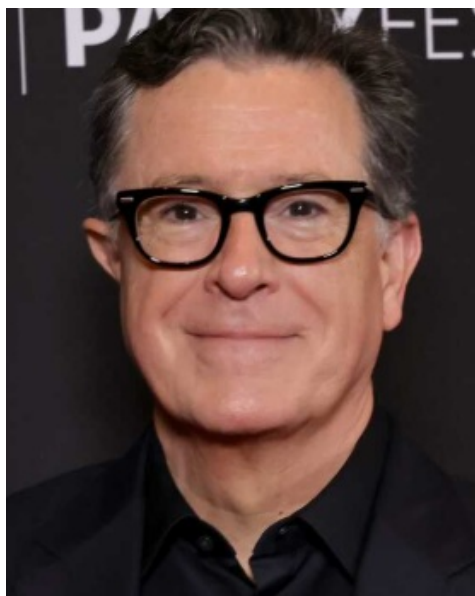
American TV networks are now doing Trump's bidding by firing his most prominent critics. In doing so, they have positioned the United States as a country with something less than First Amendment freedoms. Not just for journalists, but for comedians too. The Colbert firing does real damage to an entertainment industry that relies on artistic independence. Moving forward, as long as Trump is sitting in his gawdy, gilded Oval Office, television executives will be reluctant to showcase comedians who relish the delivery of well-crafted barbs aimed at the president.

As others have noted, perhaps this time-honored tradition of skewering the powerful with a pointed one-liner should relocate to independent media. "The Stephen Colbert Show" could easily move to Substack or YouTube.

If you build it, the audience will come.

It would be a shame to let Trump have the last laugh. He lacks a sense of humor... and honor. Yes, Colbert liked to tease Trump. But all comedians should be unafraid in taking on the commander-in-chief. It's the American way. In this country, presidents are occasionally supposed to be a punchline. The problem these days isn't the guy telling the jokes. It's the guy who just can't take them.

As the late comedian Henny Youngman might joke, "take my president – please!"



First it's Stephen Colbert. Next it'll be Jimmy Kimmel. Then it will be any and every AmeriKan.

The AmeriKans are caving in to the psycho in the White House. Trump sued CBS over the editing of the 60 minutes interview and won !!!! Never mind \$16 million dollars, but bringing a network to its knees. Free speech, the first major casualty and AmeriKans are just laughing as if it were all just a passing bit of humour.

The fools of the south just ralk, talk, talk while the nutbar in the White House keeps pushing the envelope, drawing new lines of pushing limits and getting away with it.

Read more about the story on my website at www.szpin.ca



3. A commentary of the significance of the Epstein scandal;

The Epstein files cannot be discarded as more 'hot air' in American politics. These files likely name politicians, important members of government, political leaders in files

dealing with sexual corruption in American government: sex trafficking, sexual exploitation of minors, and American politicians indulging in these sexual depravities.

Trump must be named in these files if one draws conclusions from how vehemently and energetically he is trying to bury the story, calling it a hoax, false news, a boring news story. He is working hard to get the story out of the news headlines. But the harder he works at its removal, the more the American public was its exposure.

Americans are a tolerant people but it seems like none can tolerate or accept a sexual predator in political office. The Epstein story is gaining steam and without that Trump is falling from favour with Americans. He cannot bury the story but again the more he tries to do so, the more the American electorate's conviction that there is deep scandal here grows. Americans are finally showing some moral integrity and ethical principles. They will not accept a child molester as their head of government.

In light of all of the above, let's look back in history and review the immorality of a few other well-known historical figures:

- Silvio Berlusconi, Italy
- Benito Mussolini, Italy
- Muammar Gaddafi, Libya

The source for the sections below is the news purveyor known as ***The Contrarian***.

Another dictator wannabe, Silvio Berlusconi went this route
But Italians came to their senses before it was too late...read more at [BERLUSCONI](#)

The stories behind the news

Source: The Contrarian

The Contrarian is a digital news source that tries to be objective in reporting news stories. The sections below were submitted by their associated writer, Jennifer Rubin.

"I've known Jeff for 15 years. Terrific guy. He's a lot of fun to be with. It is even said that he likes beautiful women as much as I do, and many of them are on the younger side. No doubt about it -- Jeffrey enjoys his social life."

This was how Donald Trump summed up Jeffrey Epstein when the magazine interviewed him for a profile on Epstein in 2002. We now know that Epstein's "social life" featured a system of sex trafficking and abuse of hundreds of young women, many of them underage girls, which went on for years at Epstein's homes in Manhattan, Palm Beach, and on his private island in the Caribbean.

News coverage has focused on Epstein's former girlfriend, Ghislaine Maxwell, who reportedly served as chief procurer of his victims (Maxwell is now serving a prison sentence for sex trafficking). Yet predation on a large scale always requires a *network of enablers*, and high school students were apparently among those Epstein and Maxwell utilized to recruit the young women, arrange their travel to his residences, and manage a "social life" that involved Epstein also "sharing" them with his powerful friends and associates.

In authoritarian states, secret police, paramilitaries, and the leader's personal security and fixers have filled the roles Maxwell and her associates performed for Epstein. *Authoritarian leaders* are known to be brutal and lawless, but their Epstein-like systems of sexual predation have remained largely in the dark.

Political leaders with sexual perversion stories associated with them

Whether the leader is Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, Chadian head of state Hissène Habré, or Paraguayan tyrant Alfredo Stroessner, state security forces have scouted for women, abducted them to detention cells and the leader's private spaces, and arranged for abortions, payoffs, and threats to keep their crimes a secret.

This two-part essay looks at the Epstein-like operations in authoritarian states that have provided female bodies for the sexual and psychological satisfaction of the leader and his cronies. Part 1 is about the Italian and Libyan dictators Benito Mussolini and Muammar Gaddafi.

Part I

Mussolini's Sex-Predator System

Mussolini was the first autocrat to develop a state-assisted machine of libidinal gratification. Police files, diaries, and testimonies from Mussolini's inner circle and

his last major lover, Clara Petacci, suggest that he had extramarital sex with up to four different women daily during his twenty-three years in power. The hours he spent on this pursuit did not decrease even in the run-up to World War Two, when the increasingly grandiose Mussolini headed the Ministries of War, Army, Navy, Colonies, and the Air Force.

When Autocrats Go to War: Where Delusions of Grandeur Can Lead

Initially, Mussolini's brother Arnaldo was the fixer who disbursed funds for abortions, maintenance of illegitimate children, and silence. After Arnaldo died in 1931, Fascist Police Chief and OVRA (secret police) head Arturo Bocchini became his chief enabler. Bocchini's secret police worked with Il Duce's Personal Secretariat staff to vet and track prospects and arrange for punishments or payments after sex.

Fascist police and secret police chief Arturo Bocchini (right), with SS Chief Heinrich Himmler and other Nazi officials, Rome, 1937. Credit: ullstein bild, via Getty Images.

Mussolini's treatment of Bianca Ceccato set a precedent. Ceccato served as his secretary at his newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia* in 1918 and suffered through a coerced abortion before she had a son with him in 1920. After Mussolini became Prime Minister in 1922, he had his personal secret police follow her, pay her to keep silent, and then threaten to take her child away when she wanted to marry her boyfriend.

After he declared dictatorship in 1925, the new secret police Bocchini created flagged new prospects for him at rallies and events, or through letters women sent to him. Five to twenty women per week received an invitation to meet Il Duce in his private quarters in Palazzo Venezia. When the "brief and violent" encounters (Fermi) that he favored had ended, the women became persons of interest to Mussolini's security apparatus: they were put under surveillance and were paid and threatened to keep them quiet, as were their husbands or boyfriends.

It is sobering to think of the numbers of unrecognized mini-Mussolinis who may have come out of Il Duce's sexual exploitation system. In the case of Epstein, an apparent desire to "seed the human race with his DNA" seems to have also fueled "his insatiable appetite for girls," but it is unclear whether Mussolini had such

avowedly eugenicist aims.

Feeling powerful because he and he alone could have as many women as he wanted, was as much the point of Mussolini's encounters as sexual satisfaction. In this he resembles many other dictators, the Libyan tyrant Muammar Gaddafi among them.

Gaddafi's Dystopian "Department of Protocol"

In public, Gaddafi supported women. His 1969 military coup granted Libyan women and men equal legal status and gave women educational opportunities. In private, the Libyan dictator constructed a state system to procure and confine women for his personal satisfaction.

The name chosen for this agency – the Department of Protocol –cloaked the violence and terror Gaddafi unleashed on his victims in a veil of gentility. His victims included students flagged by Gaddafi and his scouts during his speeches at universities and schools, women (many of them underage) who were abducted after being seen by his Revolutionary Guards while out at the market or in the family car, and wives of visiting foreign businessmen or his officials.

The Department was a full-service agency. It arranged for payments (sometimes called "investment agreements") to foreign victims who might expose the regime abroad, and oversaw "personnel" management. Gaddafi's captives were forced to serve as guards, housemaids, and servers when he entertained at home. Some of them were also trained to work as bodyguards when Gaddafi travelled abroad, generating media buzz as evidence of Gaddafi's "progressive" gender attitudes.

Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi with his female bodyguards on a visit to Italy, 2009. Credit: Alessandro Bianchi/Reuters/Corbis

Reducing people to mere instruments of your desires for money, sex, and more is part of the strongman way of life and rule. In Gaddafi's case, unlimited wealth from oil and unchecked power created a "monster who thought he was God," (Cojean) in the words of one of his former captives. It's a description that could also apply to some 21st century authoritarian leaders.

Part II

Billionaire Berlusconi's system of sexual exploitation capitalized on his de facto control of his television, publishing, and advertising empire while he served as Prime Minister (1994, 2001-2006, 2008-2011) and as head of the Forza Italia political party.

Those familiar with Epstein's activities will recognize the pattern: Berlusconi and his powerful friends [gathered](#) at Berlusconi's residences in Sardinia, Rome, or at Arcore, outside Milan, along with young women brought in from all over Italy and the world, [including](#) Karima El-Mahroug, who was reportedly 17 when she attended Berlusconi's parties. As with other predatory strongmen, Berlusconi combined payments and threats to keep the participants silent.

The professional trajectory of [enabler](#) Nicole Minetti shows how Berlusconi's businesses and his political life related to his sexual exploitation activities. Minetti worked as an events [hostess](#) for Berlusconi's advertising agency Publitalia and appeared on Berlusconi's television programs. After she proved her real worth by scouting women for Berlusconi's exploitation events and arranging their travel, Berlusconi backed her to become a regional deputy for his Forza Italia party in Lombardy. She was sentenced in 2013 to five years in prison for procurement, as were Mora and Fede (the convictions were [confirmed](#) by an Italian high court in 2019).

The last word about Berlusconi and his equivalents goes to Chiara Danese, a former Miss Italy contestant who attended Berlusconi's parties when she was 18 and moved to America because she feared for her safety after testifying against Berlusconi. "Berlusconi? I feel sorry for him...forced to organize parties so he's not alone," she [commented](#) to *Vanity Fair* in 2018.

A selected pictorial comparison:

TRUMP

VS

OBAMA

1. Trump with his daughter Ivanka.



Obama with his daughter Malia.



2. Trump tossing paper towels for victims of hurricane hurricanes in Puerto Rico



Obama hugging and comforting the parents of the victims of a public shootout.



3. Trump and children.



Obama with children.



4. Trump couple with Queen Elizabeth-II.



Obama couple with Queen Elizabeth-II.



5. Trump was busy protecting his wig from the wind.



Obama was helping the elderly.



The same girl is happy to hug Obama.



6. A child scared of standing near Trump.



7. The Pope is also not as happy with Trump.



..With Obama.



8. Trump protecting himself from getting wet in the rain.



Obama giving priority to others.

