

The true threat to democracy – the left

By Conrad Black

The period from late 2023 to November of this year has been widely described as the “year of elections” as more than 60 countries, including many of the largest electorates and most influential states in the world are voting. These include India, the United States, Indonesia, France, the United Kingdom, Poland, plus the European Union elections and most recently two German state elections which are seen as a bellwether for that country’s general election next year. There have been some hideously dishonest elections, as in Venezuela, but in general this process has been rightly seen as a test of the resilience of democracy and of the ability of democratic countries to regain their economic and social footing after or in the midst of, in many cases, periods of economic stagnation or sluggishness and social unrest, much of it attributable to population flows that have not been easily accommodated.



Seen from an aerial view, migrants walk towards the U.S.-Mexico border wall after crossing the Rio Grande into El Paso, Texas on Feb. 1, 2024 from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. PHOTO BY JOHN MOORE/GETTY IMAGES

As was mentioned in this column last week, Canada is enviably insulated from the dangers of destabilizing influxes of undocumented immigrants, because in practice,

while millions of people pour into the United States in any way that they can, practically nobody flees the U.S. across Canada's only border. American political scientist Francis Fukuyama suggested that with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of international communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, that we might have reached "the end of history" because liberal democracy had been revealed as the ultimate enlightened, preferable, and efficient means of government. Many of us were not quite so confident and no active process of evolution ever ends unless the evolving organism dies. In a piece this month in the magazine of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, Foreign Affairs, Fukuyama has recently rather graphically described what he apparently sees in this year's elections as the supreme post-Cold War test of the system of government whose permanent victory he proclaimed thirty years ago.

He suggests that the victory of liberal democracy has been confirmed by the victory of the British Labour Party in the

U.K. elections, as if any of the British political parties were a threat to democracy, and he implies that the not improbable victory of Donald Trump in this year's U.S. presidential election would be a grievous setback to democracy. Along parallel lines, the hasty and opportunistic alliance of French President Emmanuel Macron's centrist Together Party with the far left New Popular Front to stop Marine Le Pen's National Rally amounted to a victory for democracy. In the German elections in Thuringia and Saxony last weekend, the victory of the Alternative for Germany Party in Thuringia was somewhat counterbalanced by the progress of the Wegenknecht Socialist movement in both states.

I think Fukuyama inadvertently misreads the sum of these actual or possible results with a selectivity of observation or outright naïveté that, if it was adequately contagious, would itself constitute a genuine threat to democracy. The real threat to democracy in the United States is not Donald Trump, whom we have seen for four years as president in which time he did nothing to justify such fears, and the attempts to portray the events of Jan. 6, 2021 at the United States Capitol as an attempted insurrection are fatuous.

The real threat is the swamping of Republican states in the South and Southwest with illegal immigrants. There have already been movements to give non-citizens the vote at the state and municipal levels, and Trump has warned Democrats would do the same at the federal level. "Non citizen Illegal Migrants are getting the right to vote," he said in July. If they gain control of both houses of the Congress, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and other Democratic leaders have already indicated that they wish to admit Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia as states of the Union, assuring four more Democratic senators. Democrats have plans to expand the Supreme Court and populate it with practitioners of the preferred Democratic judicial practice of practically ignoring the words of the Constitution of the United States on the

assumption that vastly changed circumstances in the last 230 years justify a radically more authoritarian view of the prerogatives of the legislative and executive branches of the federal government, and a corresponding diminution of the rights of individuals and specifically of the unallocated powers clause, the 10th amendment of the Bill of Rights. That clause currently leaves all powers not constitutionally assigned with the states or the people themselves.

Gutting the Constitution of its guarantees of individual liberty and of the co-equality of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the federal government, and transforming America into a one-party socialist state, will end America's long and often over-stated, but generally not implausible representation of itself as the world's greatest champion of human freedom. We have had a foretaste of that with the attempts this year to strangle the campaign of the leader of the opposition with a Niagara of spurious and outrageous indictments. The politicization of the justice system in this way is completely irreconcilable with any respectable concept of democracy.

Assuming that Italy's agile conservative Prime Minister Georgia Meloni has lurched to the right because she is supporting the conservative bloc in the European Parliament and does not seek the re-election of current European union president Ursula Van der Layen, and that the Alternative for Germany Party is an extreme organization because it is tired of truckling to militant Islam and considers the maximalist green agenda to be oppressive nonsense, are potential tactical blunders illustrative of how, historically, befuddled democrats deliver themselves into the hands of their worst enemies. So is the attempt of President Macron to make common cause with the French Communists, the radical Greens, and Jean-Luc Melanchon's almost anarchic France Unsubdued Parties. Fukuyama and many other commentators think that Sahra Wagenknecht, a Marxist, though a stylish one, who is also

fiscally responsible, who wishes to disband NATO and form an alliance between Germany and Russia, is somehow preferable to the AfD and that Melanchon's outright Marxism is preferable to Le Pen's now heavily house-trained populism. He thinks Brexit was an anti-democratic disaster although Britain has fared better economically than France and Germany since it left the EU, though all three have performed dismally.

Fukuyama is just one of the most eminent exemplars of the current tendency to exaggerate the dangers of contemporary conservatism and ignore the threat of the dogmatic left. This is the exact opposite of what motivated the militarist and capitalist right in Germany in the early 1930's when they supported Hitler to stop the Bolsheviks. It more closely resembles the insanity of the German government in 1917 in giving Lenin free passage from Switzerland to Russia; 28 years later the Red Army occupied the rubble heap of Berlin.

Whether any of us like it or not, the best guardians of liberal democracy in the West right now are Trump, Meloni, and Le Pen. It is too early to call in Germany and Britain but neither Wegenknecht or Keir Starmer are going to do much for democracy. The refreshingly pallid Canadian facsimile of this are the still audible but wildly incredible contentions that Pierre Poilievre is a harsh and dangerous reactionary. Sometimes it is fortunate to be comparatively boring.

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