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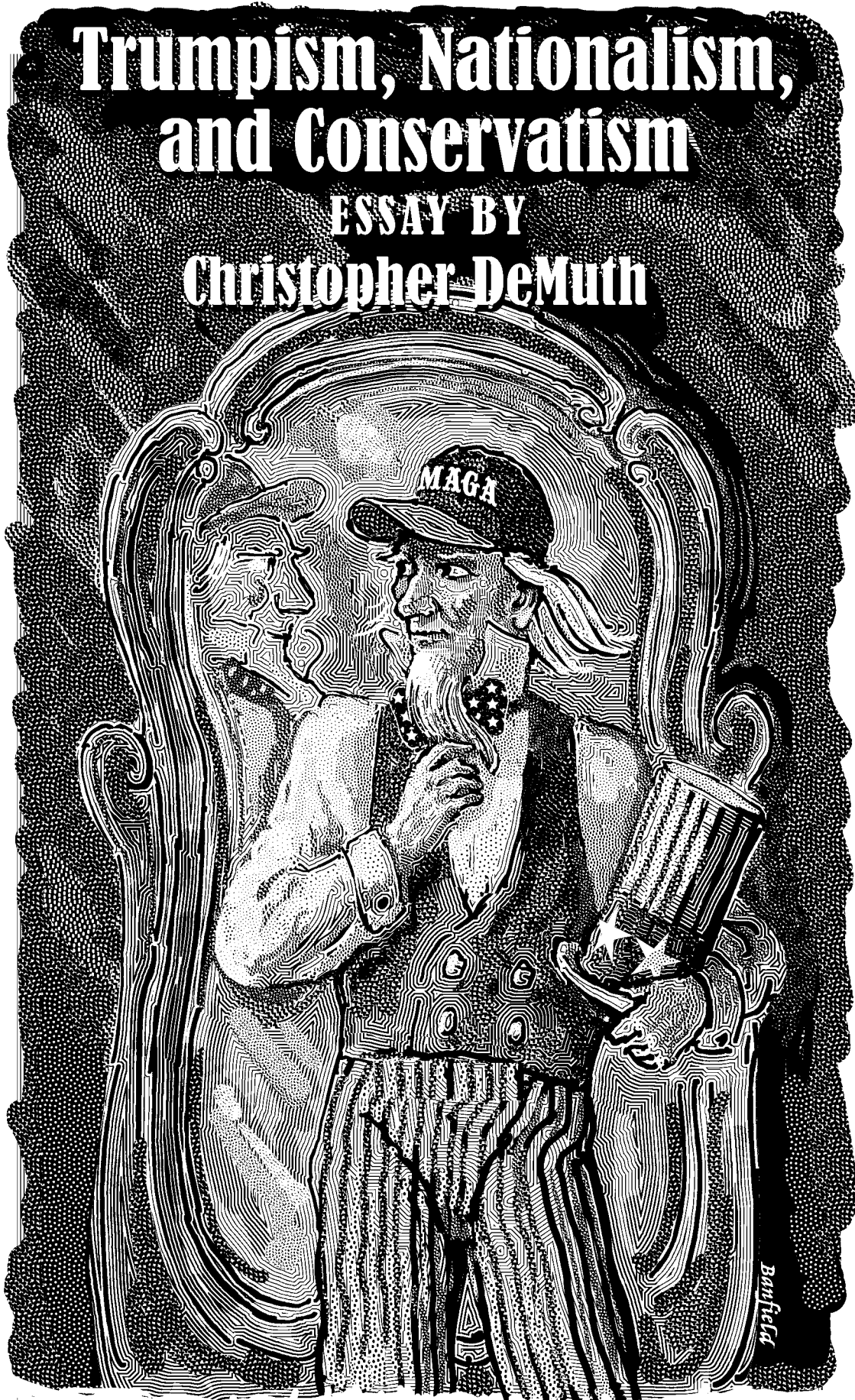
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TRUMPISM, NATIONALISM, AND CONSERVATISM

Christopher DeMuth

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Trumpism has an essence, and that essence is nationalism. It is the American version of the revival of the spirit of nationhood in the rich democracies of the North Atlantic. It is bigger than President Trump's personality and program, and is certain to outlast the drama and fate of his tenure in office.

A useful analogy is the 1848 "Spring of Nations," when ecstatic revolutionary uprisings swept across continental Europe and Scandinavia, taking everyone by surprise. The target of discontent was the self-absorbed global elites of the day—pan-European networks of monarchs, royalty, and aristocrats. The popular demands went under various banners with many local variations—national self-determination, liberal reform, democracy, and the then-amorphous notion of "socialism." Their common goal was representative government for people united by language, religion, culture, and geography.

The uprisings, spontaneous and disorganized, were largely suppressed by the end of the year. But they reflected irrepressible social changes—the emergence of a sizable middle class, the discontent of workers and rural serfs and outcasts, and the introduction of consciousness-raising communications media such as popular magazines and the telegraph. The years to come would see the establishment of new nations (including Germany and Italy), the formation of representative assemblies in many nations new and old, and the extension of the voting franchise to many or all adult men.

Our nationalist upheavals have been much less violent than those of 1848, but they have been similarly abrupt and tumultuous. They have pressed upon and sometimes trespassed contemporary boundaries of civil politics. And the similarities, I believe, run deeper. In what follows, I argue that our upheavals are the result of powerful social and technological developments that have weakened our institutions of representative government. Harnessing today's nationalist impulses is a task for conservatives and libertarians, who stand in the shoes of the liberal reformers of the middle and late 19th century. I have several suggestions for how to proceed.

Anywheres vs. Somewheres

Donald Trump's presidential candidacy began as a furious attack on both the Democratic and Republican political establishments, and a vow to do something neither party had done recently—to put “America First.” In both respects, his campaign and presidency have been strikingly similar to the nationalist movements in England and Europe, from Brexit to the E.U.-skeptical governments in Poland, Hungary, and Italy, to the neo-nationalist parties of Germany and France. In each case, the insurgents have claimed that their nation's political and business leaders are really part of, and loyal to, an international elite with its own, self-serving agenda. The elites sacrifice the sovereignty of their home nations in ways—from free trade and open immigration to murky treaties and remote bureaucracies—that harm many of their countrymen.

The harmed countrymen are, disproportionately, less educated, working-class, old-stock hinterlanders and, in the urban centers, laborers and service providers. They feel they have been left behind by modern society and government, and have now at last found robust political representation in the nationalist movements. Their electoral successes have come as a surprise, sometimes as late as the evenings the votes were counted. The shocked establishments of each nation—incumbent politicians of Left and Right, government careerists, mainstream media and entertainers, executives of leading corporations, academics and intellectuals—have responded in striking unison. The political arrivistes, they say, are ill-informed populists, xenophobic at best, racist at worst, inflamed by irrational hatred of immigrants, exhibiting authoritarian tendencies. In Hillary Clinton's incautious term, “deplorables.” Europe's leading internationalists, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron, have coordinated their actions and policies to help each other keep their nationalist movements at bay. The synchronous counterattacks have seemed to validate the charge of an autonomous global elite.

These developments have scrambled traditional partisan alignments and, in some nations such as Italy, produced governing coalitions of the far Left and Right that would have been inconceivable just a few years ago. The new divide is conventionally described in economic or regional terms, but it is best understood as social and cultural. The British political analyst David Goodhart, in his superb book *The Road to Somewhere* (2017), describes the divide as the “Anywheres” versus the “Somewheres.” These are what sociologists call ideal-typical categories—they

synthesize group tendencies in order to illuminate some larger issue. I think Anywheres and Somewheres are more useful than the loaded political categories of “elites” or “establishment” on the one hand and “Trumpians” or “nationalists” on the other.

The Anywheres are people who are cosmopolitan, educated, mobile, and networked. They live their personal and professional lives in communities of affinity rather than locality, among friends and colleagues who might be anywhere on any given day—Santa Barbara or Singapore, Boston or Berlin. Their attachments to place are secondary; they tend to regard national differences as quaint, national borders as nuisances, and divergent regulations as irrational. Their politics are liberal—some are liberal progressives, others classical liberals or libertarians. The Anywheres are generally more affluent than the Somewheres, but they include many people of moderate income such as younger academics and schoolteachers and employees of government agencies and non-profit organizations.

The Somewheres, in contrast, are rooted in particular local communities. Their jobs and weekends, their commitments and friendships and antagonisms, are part and parcel of their families, neighborhoods, clubs, and religions. Many work with their hands and on their feet. Whether their partisan leanings are to the left or right, they tend to be socially conservative and patriotic. Somewheres probably have a smartphone but their loyalties are with the home team—with the folks they associate with personally. They do not have strong inclinations or opportunities for cutting free and following some abstract dream to a distant horizon. Less disposed to “vote with their feet,” they are more affected by local economies and government policies than the Anywheres.

The Decline of Representative Government

Now these differences in circumstance and allegiance have been around for quite a while, at least since the appearance of commercial jet travel, easy long-distance communications, and multinational business corporations. The economic divide between those who did and did not graduate from college has been growing for decades. So why is it that they have burst upon the political scene, all across the advanced democracies, in just a few short years—suddenly and by surprise, accompanied by angry polarization and sometimes violence, threatening serious instability?

Several recent books address this question, including David Goodhart's just mentioned, Yuval Levin's *The Fractured Republic* back in 2016, and, just in 2018, Sir Roger Scruton's *Where We Are*, F. H. Buckley's *The Republican Workers Party*, and Tucker Carlson's *Ship of Fools*. I have an explanation of my own, based on my studies of regulation and the administrative state. I believe that an important cause of our political turmoil is the decline of representative government—where law is enacted by elected legislatures—and the rise of declarative government—where law is dispensed by bureaucracies and courts.

In recent decades, the U.S. Congress has permitted its constitutional powers to atrophy. It has delegated its lawmaking powers: voting for clean air and gender equality by lopsided margins, but leaving the hard choices—the real legislating—to specialized agencies in the executive branch. It has abandoned regular budgeting and appropriations and put most federal spending on autopilot, which has greatly weakened its “power of the purse” over the executive agencies. And it has stood by passively, and often with palpable relief, as courts have resolved contentious issues of sexual autonomy and moral obligation that were previously matters for legislative deliberation. The national legislatures of Europe and the United Kingdom have done approximately the same thing, with the added twist that they have delegated considerable powers as well to the supranational bureaucracies and courts of the European Union.

The conventional criticism of these developments is that they evade democratic accountability and lead to overregulation and “agency capture” by special-interest groups. Administrative agencies can make rules—de facto laws—in much greater profusion than a cumbersome assembly of generalist representatives. Agencies often go to extremes, or cut deals among insider groups, that could never survive a vote in an elected legislature. Delegation produces more law than most citizens want, and often bad law by any objective standard. But bureaucratic lawmakers cannot be voted out of office except by extreme measures such as Brexit (and even here it remains uncertain whether the 2016 popular vote will actually be followed).

Now the nationalist insurgencies cast a new light on these issues. The administrative state has emerged since the early 1970s partly in response to two broad social developments—high affluence and high technology. In wealthy, educated societies, many more people have the time, interest, and facility for politics, and they bring many refined, upscale issues to the table. Traditional domestic issues of jobs

and economic welfare now jostle with a multitude of new ones concerned with personal health and safety, environmental quality, consumerism, and individual and group identity, dignity, lifestyle, discrimination, and “access.” At the same time, modern technology, especially in mass and networked communications, has radically lowered the cost of political organization. The slightest complaint or enthusiasm can now find far-flung allies, achieve self-awareness as a political cause, and press its claims in the public square and in the Congress.

On the government side, political aspirants and officeholders can now build their careers as solo entrepreneurs, by joining and servicing networks of ideological and economic interest. Party and legislative hierarchies that had long disciplined political careers and policy platforms have lost their clout.

These trends have swamped Congress with demands for action that vastly exceed the capacities of legislative decision-making, with its profuse internal conflicts and elaborate procedures. They are what have led Congress to delegate policymaking to missionary agencies that can be proliferated without limit, and to sigh with relief when courts take prickly issues off the legislative docket. But they have also led to something else. While the United States, United Kingdom, and Europe have become highly affluent, educated, and networked in general, some of us have become so to a much greater degree than others, and the changes in government structure have reflected our proclivities. Declarative government suits the interests and values of Anywheres, while representative government suits the interests and values of Somewheres.

Those who are highly educated, articulate, mobile, and networked are well positioned to influence the administrative state and the judiciary. They care much less about the positions of their local congressmen and senators than about the decisions of the Environmental Protection Agency or the Office for Civil Rights or the U.S. Trade Representative; they focus on those legislators, wherever domiciled, who specialize in the issues they follow. They think that policy should be determined by reason, science, and expertise rather than legislative horse-trading and nose-counting. They themselves work in meritocracies—of business, finance, the professions, universities, media, and think tanks. Meritocracy, not democracy, provides the justification for their power and the means of exercising power.

In contrast, those who are less educated, articulate, mobile, and networked are more beholden to their votes and the votes of their representatives. They are attached to a locality, and no one else champions local interests with the zeal and particularity of a congressman. National government may appear as a distant, corrupt, impenetrable mess. One might think that national lobby groups and membership organizations would provide Somewheres with the means to influence the administrative state. But often they do not. EPA rule-makers navigate around the positions of manufacturers, refiners, utilities, unions, and environmental groups. In doing so, they may and often do give short shrift to local interests. Community solidarity is foreign to regulatory missions; lost jobs may count as efficiencies in the agencies' cost-benefit analyses.

It is telling that Donald Trump's two galvanizing issues, trade and immigration, have been matters of extreme policy delegation. Since the 1960s, trade agreements have been forged by executive officials in collaboration with business and union leaders, with Congress relegated to fast-track, up-or-down votes on the whole package. When President Obama took it upon himself to rewrite fundamental immigration policies in 2016, congressional opponents responded that they would simply forbid the changes with a rider to the appropriations of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Then came the sheepish apology: They discovered that the USCIS doesn't need congressional appropriations—it is entirely self-funded by its own fees and other devices.

Beyond immigration and trade, President Trump has made “deconstructing the administrative state” a top priority. Similarly, Brexit proponents emphasize repatriating domestic lawmaking from the E.U. to Westminster, and the nationalist governments of Eastern Europe devote considerable energy to outfoxing their bureaucratic overlords in Brussels. Declarative government seems to be adverse to nationalist constituencies in many different circumstances.

The suddenness and ferocity of the nationalist insurgencies and counterattacks suggests a thought experiment. Imagine that, during the past several decades, government in the U.S., U.K., and Europe had continued to be dominated by their national legislatures, with all of the posturing, parochialism, and muddled compromises that would have entailed. The march toward centralized E.U. government and a common currency, and toward executive and judicial government in the United States, would have been much slower and more complicated and

compromised (and less highhanded) than it was. In other words, more representative and less declarative. The governing elites and Anywheres would have had to accommodate the hinterlanders and Somewheres at every incremental step. Each side would have won some and lost some. But the results, quite plausibly, would have been more stable and harmonious than where we have ended up—at rule-or-ruin precipices in nation after nation. In politics, stability is a cardinal virtue, something we had lost sight of and are relearning.

Conservative Nationalism

The political energies Donald Trump has unleashed present a singular challenge to American conservatives and libertarians. Liberal progressives are entirely unconflicted by Trumpism: they are fervently opposed, and many have joined “The Resistance.” It is true that some Democratic Party stalwarts are unhappy to lose, once again, many white working-class men—the “Reagan Democrats”—to the Republicans. And the industrial unions are generally happy with President Trump’s trade and tariff policies. But the Democratic Party is dominated by progressive activists, who view it as a holding company for groups, causes, and grievances that depend on the administrative state and the courts for their rights and remedies. They are comfortable with global governance and many are ethically committed to the idea of a universal humanity of open borders. Nationalism seems to them a sly euphemism for “white nationalism” and an impenitent excuse for the many injustices of American society.

Conservatives, in contrast, are deeply conflicted. Donald Trump invaded their party, not the other one, and made sport of many of their apostles. Some conservatives were America Firsters to begin with, others have become converts, and others began and remain Never Trumpers who loathe the man and his policies. Some love his judicial appointments but are aghast at his protectionism. Some admire his nerve, media bashing, and political incorrectness but wish these were a bit more modulated. Some regard his nationalism as an overdue reassertion of American sovereignty and foreign-policy realism, while others see a destabilizing retreat from global leadership. One thing certain is that when President Trump has finished his work, the conservative movement and Republican Party will not be the same. The result will not be a mid-point between Trump and John Kasich. Rather it will be a fresh formulation of what it means to be conservative or libertarian in the modern age.

This is, initially, an intellectual enterprise, which if successful will set the stage for practical political leadership. We have two robust precedents. In the 1950s, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower was accommodating the New Deal and Soviet Communism was on the march, William F. Buckley and the band of diverse, disputatious intellectuals he gathered at *National Review*—lapsed Communists, anarcho-libertarians, conservative Catholics, Southern agrarians—created the modern conservative movement. It led to Barry Goldwater’s capture of the Republican Party and his losing-but-galvanizing 1964 presidential campaign.

Years later, rising from the social turmoil and government failures of the late 1960s and early 1970s, came the neoconservatives, led by Irving Kristol at *The Public Interest* and Norman Podhoretz at *Commentary*. This period of conservative ferment was even more variegated than Buckley’s had been. It featured academic and empirical research as well as intellectual essaying, embraced moderate liberals such as Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and included distinct schools such as the law-and-economics movement at the University of Chicago. Some traditional conservatives—the “Old Right”—fretted that the newcomers were weakening their movement’s fiber and cohesion. But it was a period of tremendous intensity and growth that infused conservatism with new energy, ideas, adherents, and institutions—eventually incarnated in Ronald Reagan.

A third era of intellectual reformulation is now underway. This time it is not centralized in a few journals, institutes, and godfathers. Rather—reflecting the spread of wealth and education and improvements in communications that I have emphasized—it is distributed and reticulated. Dozens of new and old journals, websites, and think tanks, plus innovations such as long-form podcasts and celebrity recirculation platforms, are variously devoted to politics, policy, law, economics, society, culture, philosophy, and security and foreign policy. The digitized, networked competition of ideas has generated new conservative and libertarian divisions and alliances, a parade of impressive new talents, and the appearance almost daily of substantial books and essays and vigorous rebuttals and surrebuttals to what was published last week. There is a certain amount of pro- and anti-Trump positioning in all of this, but also an abundance of serious analysis of the fissures and problems Trump’s ascendancy has revealed and what ought to be done about them. The voluminous pro-and-con commentary on Patrick J. Deneen’s *Why Liberalism Failed*, Yoram Hazony’s *The Virtue of Nationalism*, and Oren Cass’s *The Once and*

Future Worker (again, just in 2018) has been equal to the best of the conservative argumentation in the previous eras. The Left, meanwhile, has doubled down on identity progressivism in its strongholds in the universities, popular entertainment, and the national media. It has fielded some striking political figures (the Democrats' 2020 presidential primaries will certainly be a hoot) but has largely abandoned the high-brow introspection and sharp ideological infighting that were once its hallmarks. Today the intellectual action is on the Right.

My interpretation of Trumpism suggests that the conservative rearticulation should aim to give shape and substance to the nationalist revival. The nation-state has acquired a bad reputation in recent decades, and not only among liberal progressives and globetrotting Anywheres. It is widely regarded as an arbitrary inheritance and source of misery—of wars over territory and ancient myths, and of grievances and hatreds among racial and ethnic groups. The uprisings of 1848, in the view of many historians, replaced relatively stable empires and principalities with jerry-built, unstable nations—taking continental Europe to World War I and thence to fascism. Among libertarians, the nation-state is often seen as a mechanism for exploitation and the suppression of individual liberty—recall Albert Jay Nock's great polemic, *Our Enemy, the State*.

But this reputation is superficial. All political orders—nation-states, empires, federations, tribal societies—have grave imperfections and have been the setting of terrible violence and injustice. Hazony's *The Virtue of Nationalism* includes a compelling demonstration that the nation-state is less conducive to violence and discord, and more conducive to liberty and progress, than any alternative known to history. The self-governing nation-state was forged in the Israelites' Biblical escape from Egypt to a homeland of their own: much later, it was developed and propagated in the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, the Peace of Westphalia in the 17th, and the American Revolution in the 18th. It was seen as the ideal unit of political order as recently as Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points during World War I and Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill's Atlantic Charter during World War II. The nationalist order rested on two principles: First, nations were obliged to protect their people and dispense justice—so as to promote individual freedom and dignity and collective cohesion and cooperation. Second, nations possessed self-determination—each one free to follow its own traditions, institutions, and ways-of-life. The successful nation-state has been the seedbed of our living institutions of

individual liberty and democratic equality—separation of powers, representative assemblies, the universal franchise, due process, the common law. Successful orders of nation-states—decentralized, diversified, and competitive—have fostered historic advances in art, science, commerce, and social well-being.

President Trump’s articulation of nationalism follows the classical formulation precisely: “We do not expect diverse countries to share the same cultures, traditions, or even systems of government,” he told the United Nations General Assembly in September 2017, “[b]ut we do expect all nations to uphold these two core sovereign duties: to respect the interests of their own people and the rights of every other sovereign nation.” He reiterated these principles in his September 2018 U.N. address. His formulation, despite its distinguished heritage, has prompted crude “white nationalism” attacks in the blogosphere and more refined ones elsewhere. French President Emmanuel Macron, in his November 2018 Armistice Day speech in Paris with President Trump sitting nearby, asserted that nationalism is a “betrayal of patriotism” and a cauldron of “chaos and death.” True patriotism, he said, consists of adhering to moral values that have now been entrusted to international law and institutions.

The proof of these arguments will come in deeds and consequences. President Trump’s immigration, trade, and foreign-policy initiatives are vivid applications of his nationalist credo, and time will tell their results. But they need to be complemented by domestic initiatives. The successful nation-state not only asserts but cultivates its sovereignty—and that requires sustaining the allegiance of its citizens and tangibly promoting their interests and well-being. It does not aggravate, but rather respects and builds upon, the parochial loyalties of its constituent tribes of community, locality, and ethnic, racial, and religious identity. It does so both to moderate internal conflict and to pursue objectives that require large-scale cooperation across its entire geography. Americans have done this brilliantly down the centuries: our shared devotion to pragmatic compromise, prosperity and opportunity, and the Declaration and Constitution have gotten us through many bitter, often violent, conflicts. But lately we seem to have lost the knack. In the wake of the Trump rebellion, we should aim to supplant rebellion with relatively stable political competition and mutual accommodation and a spirit of common destiny. We need a more capacious nationalism. I have three suggestions.

Conserving Congress

My first suggestion is a determined effort to resurrect the U.S. Congress. It is difficult to conceive of an effective revival of American nationalism that does not involve a revival of representative government. In the West, the rise of the legislative assembly was coterminous with the rise of the nation-state; while it admits of many variations in electoral design and internal structure, no one has yet conceived of a plausible substitute for the basic institution.

Consider the alternative proposed by Harvard's Adrian Vermeule ("Integration from Within," *American Affairs*, Spring 2018): "integration from within" the current structure of declarative government. Communities of local and moral commitment that have been ignored or suppressed by the executive state should, Vermeule says, insinuate themselves into the bureaucratic apparatus and use it to propagate their own values. There have been a few stabs at this in Republican administrations, such as the George W. Bush Administration's "community and faith-based initiatives" and the Trump Administration's proposals to call off the "war on coal." But the results have been marginal. The approach founders on the specialization and instrumental rationalism of executive government and the incentives of missionary agencies. The representative legislature is the forum where a nation's multifarious tribes and communities make peace with one another, and where numbers and intensity count even when cogent rationalization is lacking. It is nice to say that the Anywheres, depending as they do on the Somewheres for the necessities of daily life (household and transportation services, food), ought to be more respectful of Somewhere interests in the political realm. But the conflicts between the two are genuine and wide-ranging. As a practical matter, Congress is the only available institution where they can come to terms on national policy and negotiate through the twists and turns of national politics.

The great difficulty is that, as I have argued, the developments in society and technology that have fostered our new political cleavages are the same ones that have sidelined Congress as an effective arbiter. Think tanks and advocacy groups are now bristling with programs on congressional reform. Their proposals run to restoring annual budgeting and appropriations, strengthening the committees and their chairmen, revising internal rules and procedures such as the Senate filibuster, and requiring up-or-down votes on agency rules. These are excellent ideas, and very few members of Congress are interested in any of them. Most have adapted to the times

and are content with their new business model of affinity networking, agency lobbying, and nonstop personal fundraising. The Madisonian ideal of a Congress whose members' interests are "connected with the constitutional rights of the place" has lost its tug. There are a few exceptions, such as Senator Mike Lee (R-Utah), but not nearly enough to form a Vanguard of Reconstruction.

These problems have been conspicuous in the last two congresses, when the Republicans held majorities in both chambers and had strong incentives to unlimber legislative powers. During the 114th Congress (2015-16), the Obama Administration engaged in repeated, aggressive usurpations of legislative authority; individual members responded with speeches and press conferences and a few lawsuits, but the institutional Congress offered no resistance at all. The 115th Congress (2017-18) roused itself to just one consequential reform: the Senate abolished its supermajority procedures for Supreme Court appointments in order to confirm President Trump's two nominations of judicial conservatives. The 115th did pass a few regular appropriations bills and, using established exceptions to the Senate supermajority, repealed several fairly narrow Obama-era regulations and enacted major tax reforms. But the Republicans ignominiously failed to make good on their other big campaign promises—to repeal-and-replace Obamacare and to secure the Mexican border.

They also failed to counter the president's tariff campaign that many of them, and many Democrats too, opposed on legal or policy grounds (recall that this is a field where Congress has delegated particularly wide discretion to the executive). The Congress concluded with a short-term "continuing resolution" spending bill—a patch for its failure to pass seven of the requisite 12 appropriations bills for 2019. That set the stage for the extended "partial government shutdown" over President Trump's insistence on funding for walls along portions of the Mexican border. Border security is a critical national issue. In a world of regular agency appropriations, it would have proceeded on its own merits—with less free-floating rage, less collateral damage to non-germane federal activities, and more attention to the prerogatives of president and Congress on the matter at hand.

Congressional reform, it seems, will have to come from without. Three institutions are sufficiently powerful for the assignment—the other two federal branches and the political parties.

The courts have accommodated the growth of the administrative state by giving Congress free rein to delegate its Article I powers to the executive and by deferring extravagantly to agency interpretations of statutes and rules. They are now beginning to reconsider their “nondelegation” and “agency deference” doctrines and are likely to move toward greater constitutional discipline. The result would be to oblige Congress to make more policy decisions itself—and, consequently, to choose its policy interventions more carefully. American law would become somewhat more representative and less declarative, and less expansionist to boot.

The executive branch may seem an unlikely source of congressional revival because it is Congress’s political rival in the constitutional scheme. But the president is its CEO, and his interests often differ from those of the bureaucracy that nominally reports to him. Americans look to their president for national leadership; if presidents shared greater responsibility with Congress, they would be more popular and less polarizing than ours have become in recent decades, and therefore more powerful when we really need them. President Trump has taken two major policies that President Obama decided by declaration (concerning the status of children of illegal immigrants and certain Obamacare appropriations) and referred them to Congress for resolution in tandem with priorities of his own. He has complained repeatedly that the Senate’s still-cherished supermajority for legislation has prevented Congress from resolving these and other matters by partisan majority (as it did for Supreme Court confirmations, tax reform, and repeal of Obama regulations). At the same time, he rejected the congressional Democrats’ proposal, during the January 2019 government shutdown, to send him regular appropriations for the agencies not involved in the border-wall dispute—a reform he would have welcomed in other circumstances and should have welcomed here. A president committed to constitutional rebalancing could pledge himself to a set of procedures in advance of individual policy battles—for example, to submit all major new regulations to Congress for approval, or to refuse to sign budgetary “continuing resolutions” in place of regular agency appropriations.

The political parties may seem unlikely reformers because congressional paralysis is frequently blamed on excessive partisanship. But partisan paralysis is actually the result of weak parties beholden to ideological activists—the Tea Party kept Republican leaders from making deals with Democrats during the Obama Administration, and the Resistance now keeps Democratic party leaders from making

deals with Republicans. In a forthcoming paper to be released by the American Enterprise Institute in the spring, political historian Jay Cost argues that the surest route to congressional revival is strong national parties—parties with the wherewithal to select House and Senate candidates, bankroll their political campaigns, and announce party election platforms and enforce legislative adherence to them. In times of unified government, such parties could enact the campaign pledges that brought them to power; in times of divided government, they could negotiate with each other from positions of strength.

Each of these approaches has advantages and disadvantages. The shift in judicial doctrines is well underway, grounded in years of scholarship by legal conservatives and reinforced by President Trump’s Supreme Court and lower court appointments—but it will be limited to the issues arising in litigated cases, and it will never reach the “political questions” in executive-legislative relations that courts wisely avoid. Presidential leadership is a proven method for overcoming Congress’s inherent irresolution (the legislative “collective action problem”)—but it depends on a president’s placing congressional reform high on his to-do list and sticking with it amid the many urgent problems demanding his attention. Party reform would aim to establish a hierarchical, willful Congress through the medium of hierarchical, willful parties—but that would require a very high level of political leadership to overcome current campaign finance laws, state prerogatives in the design of elections (especially primary elections), and other obstacles. Congressional reconstructionists should pursue all three approaches and be alert to opportunities for combining them.

The New Nationalism

My second suggestion for effective nationalism is to bring issues of American identity and purpose to the forefront of political debate. This is not a job for Congress, which at its best is a reactive institution, devoted to managing the political inbox and parceling out benefits. Rather it is for presidents and governors, leaders of civic institutions, and intellectual activists and “thought leaders.” Leadership often requires taking sides on controversial subjects; nationalist leaders should do so in ways that counter our tribal politics and fissiparous technologies and emphasize our collective interests.

Consider, for example, three governing precepts that are distinctively American and deeply engrained in our national experience—equal educational opportunity as

an instrument of citizenship and social mobility, freedom of inquiry as an instrument of knowledge and discovery, and the competitive market economy as an instrument of prosperity and growth. Our commitment to these precepts is now in doubt, due to the politicization of K-12 schooling, the hardening of progressive orthodoxy at colleges and universities, and the spread of regulation in naturally competitive economic sectors. But I believe the precepts still run deep in popular understanding and can be drawn upon to make headway in today's divisive controversies. Doing so could demonstrate their continuing worth.

The issues I have in mind are already well developed in the intellectual wing of the conservative-libertarian movement; they need to be picked up by the political wing and marched into partisan combat. My three all-American precepts were once widely embraced within the Democratic Party and liberal intelligentsia. But there they have fallen victim to the rise of progressivism—which is devoted to segmenting the populace into interest and identity groups, and which conflates “progress” with political control and cultural hegemony. In response, American conservatism has been gradually assimilating these and other tenets of old-fashioned American liberalism. Republican presidents and governors have been following in fits and starts, and the Trump Administration's education and regulatory officials have gone furthest of all. But we are still not there yet.

K-12 public schools in poor and minority communities are performing extremely poorly. There and elsewhere, union rules inhibit superintendents from sanctioning poor teachers and promoting good ones, and teachers from using their best judgment in managing their classrooms. School curricula are increasingly devoted to political indoctrination on issues of race, sex, and environmentalism, and to portraying American history as a saga of unmitigated injustice and exploitation. Now, these and other troubles involve many variations and subtleties best left to local policy and management; the most ambitious Republican effort to nationalize reform, George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act, was a terrible failure. But there are three structural reforms where national leadership is appropriate and could be largely free of regimentation and micromanagement: school choice, charter schools, and vocational education.

These are not panaceas but are almost certainly necessary preconditions of major improvement; they are popular with the general public; and Democrats are bound to oppose them because of their party's heavy dependence on the teachers' unions and

devotion to college-for-everyone progressivism. There is much that federal policy could do to facilitate parental school choice and advance the already-robust charter school and vocational education movements against the opposition of local school, school accreditation, and teacher certification monopolies. Persistent, top-level Republican leadership on these issues would address the interests of the Party's Somewhere constituents and aim to garner new constituents from poorer and minority communities and maybe even suburban moms. That would stimulate partisan controversy of the most productive kind.

American higher education is much more competitive and variegated than K-12 education and boasts many outstanding institutions with impressive records of teaching, scholarship, and scientific discovery. The system is, however, decaying. Colleges and universities have always featured rowdy protests against unpopular speakers, and faculty shunning of scholars who challenge reigning academic paradigms. But these have now become routine and systematic—they are no longer incidents to academic freedom but rather efforts to suppress that freedom. The elite campuses, especially, are now rife with official speech codes, restrictions on permissible subjects of research and teaching, and sensitivity-training programs to root out “implicit bias.” Many faculty departments practice implicit blackballing of known political conservatives.

The decline of open inquiry and debate has many cultural dimensions, akin to the growth of progressive indoctrination in K-12 schooling, best left to the ministrations of governors (in the case of state institutions), university and college presidents, and tenured iconoclasts such as those at Heterodox Academy. But there are important national interests in sustaining the immense intellectual and material benefits of our university system. Those interests are embodied in the First Amendment and are subject to several regulatory and grant-making programs. For one example, university “Institutional Review Boards” control the design, conduct, and publication of faculty research and have become increasingly bossy and politicized; they are also agents of the federal government and subject to its policies—where legal scholar Philip Hamburger and others have recommended thorough de-censorship. For another, the federal government invests scores of billions of dollars annually in university-based research (accounting for more than half of the research budgets of Harvard, Stanford, and other top universities). The funding has been predicated from the beginning on the universities' robust commitment to open inquiry and scientific norms.

If, as a condition of eligibility for such grants, colleges and universities were required to guarantee that they “do not restrict constitutionally protected speech, engage in viewpoint discrimination, or constrain free inquiry” (as Frederick M. Hess and Grant Addison have proposed), that would be a straightforward application of the programs’ founding assumptions—and would spark huge, illuminating controversies over the continuing viability of those assumptions.

Throughout our history, business regulation has been an awkward combination of populism, consumerism, and industry politics. Sometimes Democrats have stirred the pot, sometimes Republicans. The deregulation movement of the 1970s through the 1990s, which focused on transportation, communications, and banking and finance, was thoroughly bipartisan. (Jimmy Carter and Teddy Kennedy abolished airline regulation before Ronald Reagan got to town.) Following the 2008 financial collapse, “deregulation” became a bipartisan dirty word, and then the Obama Administration turned aggressively pro-regulation with the new Affordable Care Act and Dodd-Frank Act and a host of bold agency initiatives under existing statutes. The Federal Communications Commission’s imposition of New Deal public-utility controls on the internet would have horrified the Democratic deregulators of earlier years.

The Trump Administration has swept aside these internet controls and pursued a wide-ranging program of deregulation and regulatory reform, covering all of the sectors just mentioned and also pharmaceutical, environmental, energy, education, and labor-market regulation. Two years in, the administration has mainly been revising Obama-era policies, and the president has not been entirely consistent (proposing, for example, price controls on certain Medicare drugs). Nevertheless, regulation is now largely a partisan issue. Our now-enormous regulatory state presents manifold opportunities for large-scale reform that have been thoroughly developed by libertarian and conservative intellectuals and academics of all stripes.

“Dezoning” the electromagnetic spectrum would eliminate obnoxious bureaucratic blockades against innovation in high-information communications and cybersecurity. Requiring banks to maintain adequate equity capital would make owners rather than taxpayers the underwriters of bank performance. Defenestrating Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the “government sponsored enterprises” that engineered the 2008 financial collapse, would stop them before they kill again. These steps would permit market competition to do its work where government cartels have failed. Like airline deregulation in the 1970s, they could be introduced at the agency

level, would provoke vociferous opposition from industry insiders (which Republicans could turn to advantage), and would produce palpable, widely shared consumer benefits. A federal deregulation campaign against state occupational licensure, now infesting quotidian callings such as gardening and hair-braiding, would be a natural for mobility-promoting Republicanism; like vocational education and other school reforms, it would appeal to job-challenged Somewheres and also aim to convert others, from members of minority groups to libertarian Anywheres. Practical initiatives such as these would be the best possible answer to the vague “end of capitalism” theorizing now popular among progressives and, regrettably, among some conservatives as well.

My proposals for national leadership in K-12 schooling, higher education, and business regulation are meant to be suggestive, not a battle cry. They would need to be weighed against other priorities in the councils of pragmatic politics. Notice, however, that they have a common theme: each emphasizes pluralism and competition over monopoly and regimentation, and leaves cultural and ideological battles to be fought out, privately and locally, within a framework that discourages coerced conformity. Pluralism and competition have been central to American exceptionalism from the get-go. In a nation as heterogeneous and fractious as ours has become, they are means of keeping our many constituent tribes interconnected and interdependent. And they are the best-known means of fostering economic prosperity and social dynamism. Prosperity and dynamism can be unsettling—they are, I have argued, deeply implicated in our current political dilemmas. But they have many offsetting benefits, including sheer pride in one’s amazing national home, and are clearly preferable to stagnation and decline.

The Welfare State

The third plank in my nationalist platform is to prepare for the impending collapse of the debt-financed welfare state. My terminology here is not part of the language of contemporary politics and will be puzzling to many readers. For all of the fretting about partisan polarization, we have achieved solid bipartisan agreement on perhaps the most significant feature of domestic policy: to maintain an extensive welfare state, not to pay for it, and not to talk about what we are doing.

Large federal deficits and mounting national debt are, of course, staples of the economic news. This year’s spending deficit will be \$1 trillion. The national debt is

\$22 trillion, which is more than 100% of Gross Domestic Product and the largest debt in our history. But these incomprehensibly large numbers, and the various ratios and historical comparisons that usually accompany them, are difficult to interpret. For every economist who warns the debt is much too large, there is another saying we should borrow more and invest it in worthy things such as repairing our dilapidated highways and bridges. Our growing debt is sometimes tied to growing entitlement spending on Medicare and Social Security; we are told that funding for them will run out in 10 or 20 years. That means the spending trends are “unsustainable”—which, to political officials, means they will need to be addressed sometime in the future and will be headaches for their successors. President Trump has said so explicitly (“I won’t be here”). We already have more than enough problems this year!

These formulations mask a deep problem in the here-and-now, and the most seductive of all of modernity’s corruptions of representative government. From 1789 through the late 1960s, the U.S. Congress used its taxing, spending, and borrowing powers to follow a balanced-budget policy, where annual revenues and regular expenditures were kept roughly in balance. It sometimes borrowed heavily—to finance wars and continental expansion and to respond to natural disasters and economic hard times—but it paid the debts down in businesslike fashion. Then, beginning in the early 1970s, everything changed. Congress increasingly sloughed off its fiscal responsibilities. The government ran large and growing deficits as a matter of routine—in good times and bad, whether faced with emergencies or not. And federal spending was radically transformed, from mostly providing public goods (national defense, federal courts, interstate highways) to mostly making payments to individuals as entitlements or means-tested welfare. The burgeoning “transfer payments”—for pensions, medical care, food, housing, and other particulars of personal welfare—were about 35 percent of federal spending in 1970 and are now more than 75 percent.

Federal borrowing is not generally allocated to particular spending items, but there is no doubt that its growth has been driven by the growth of payments to individuals. Regular annual deficits emerged and grew on approximately the same path as entitlement and welfare spending. The entitlement programs are exempt from budget procedures and most have been exempted from our recurrent government shutdowns and spending-control bargains. At the same time, a succession of tax reforms has lowered tax rates and taken many citizens off the income tax rolls

altogether. Through a long sequence of moves and reactions—“learning by doing”—public officials and voters have discovered a new calculus of political consent. It is for the government to pay out benefits to voters considerably in excess of what it collects from them in taxes, and to borrow the difference from nonvoting future generations. State and local governments have pioneered a similar path, accumulating trillions of dollars of unfunded liabilities (implicit borrowing) for employee pensions.

This is a jolly state of affairs for the time being, highly agreeable to both Somewheres and Anywheres, but it is not going to last. Expenditures on national expansion and infrastructure are long-term investments and therefore, in principle, appropriate to borrow against. (Of course, they may or may not turn out well—the Louisiana Purchase was one of the highest-return investments in history, while several recent investments in green energy have gone bust.) In contrast, transfer payments to individuals are devoted largely to immediate personal consumption. However worthy, urgent, or enriching the purchases may be, they are not going to generate returns to pay down the borrowed funds.

So our current borrowing habits are certainly “unsustainable,” but they are worse than that. Cutting the link between tax revenues and transfer payments unleashes many pathologies that undermine political unity. Public officials are much less constrained to police against waste and fraud, or to resist extending benefits to ever-larger categories of citizens. Liberal progressives are free to pretend that payments to ordinary folks are being paid by the taxes of rich people and corporations, and that higher taxes would permit more generous payments (such as “Medicare for All!”). Conservatives are free to pretend that goosing economic growth, especially by lowering taxes, would permit painless retirement of our debts. In fact, the U.S. tax system is already exceptionally progressive, and for that reason raises much less revenue than the flat, inclusive tax systems that support the European welfare states. Growth is good, but no level of growth known to history is going to take us to reasonable levels of debt without fundamental policy reforms.

The overwhelming political consensus in favor of this state of affairs means that we are unlikely to be rescued by enlightened statesmanship. Much more likely, a crisis will deliver us to a reckoning. On the day the secretary of the Treasury is forced to choose between paying bondholders and paying Social Security annuitants, the political system will respond. At our current level of debt, a sustained increase in interest rates could bring us to this point. So could a military crisis or natural or

economic disaster that requires massive borrowing beyond current levels. (The main reason for fiscal prudence is be prepared to borrow heavily for such catastrophes, which come along for America at least once every generation.)

One way or another, America is going to move from a debt-financed welfare state to a tax-financed welfare state. If the transition is abrupt and chaotic, it will bring widespread hardship, especially to the Somewheres who have become increasingly dependent on transfer payments, and possible political instability. For this reason, it would be nice if a few courageous souls in active politics would specialize in mastering and advertising the problems; this could help condition public expectations and encourage personal contingency-planning, and might even set the stage for a Churchill-like summons to leadership down the road. But the transition, hard or soft, will present opportunities as well—as the political scientists say, the American system gets around to needed reforms only in response to crises. When Congress is obliged to fund a much larger share of entitlement and welfare spending with tax revenues, it will just have to pick up its fiscal reins and exercise a level of collective discipline that no current member has experienced. The political parties will have to wake up from populist hallucinations over taxation, redistribution, and economic growth. And American citizens will acquire a much keener sense of their obligations to one another.

These eventualities are not to be relished, given the risks and adversities lying in wait, but now is not a moment too soon for patriotic nationalists to begin preparing for them. We are a very rich people, fully capable of paying for our own government. When we do, we are bound to insist on better, more continent government. Facing up to these responsibilities will be a severe test of our national character and ability to remain united.

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