

## **Introduction to Political Philosophy and Ideology** (Adapted from *Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal*)

### **Ideology**

An ideology is a set of ideas that shapes people's thinking and actions. For most of the twentieth century, the clash of three political ideologies – liberalism, communism, and fascism – dominated world politics. Every ideology and political movement has its origins in the ideas of some earlier thinker or thinkers. All ideologies and political movements, that is to say, have their roots in the past. Our minds, our thoughts, our beliefs and attitudes – all have been forged in and shaped by earlier ideological conflicts and philosophical debates.

Ideologies attempt to shape how people *think* – and therefore how they *act*. An ideology is a fairly coherent and comprehensive set of ideas that enables an individual to comprehend the world and make decisions about how to act. One function of ideology is to offer an explanation of why social, political, and economic conditions are as they are, particularly in times of crisis. A second function of ideology is to supply standards for evaluating society that help people assess, judge, and appraise policies and conditions so that they can decide whether those policies and conditions are good or bad. An ideology also supplies the individual with an orientation towards the world and a sense of identity. Lastly, an ideology provides instructions for how to act and what to do. Ideologues are people who try to persuade others to accept their ideology and often offer simple explanations of complex events and circumstances (ex: politicians, demagogues).

Political ideologies perform these four functions because they are trying to link thought – ideas and beliefs – to action. An ideology provides a vision of the social and political world as it is, and as it should be, in hopes of inspiring people to act either to *change* or to *preserve* it. Political philosophies perform the same four functions as an ideology, but they do so at a higher, more abstract, more principled, and more dispassionate level. Because their concern to link thought to action is so immediate, political ideologues tend to simplify the ideas of political philosophers in order to make them accessible – and inspiring – to masses of people.

### **Human Nature and Freedom**

Implicit in every political philosophy and ideology is a belief about human nature and a conception of freedom. Examples of beliefs about human nature that serve as foundations for ideologies are that humans are naturally competitive, naturally cooperative, inherently corrupt, or perfectible. An ideology's belief about human nature sets limits on what it considers to be politically possible. Every political ideology claims to defend freedom, or liberty. However, different ideologies define freedom in different ways. Within political philosophy, freedom is an essentially contested concept, which means that there is no one indisputably correct definition of freedom.

Every conception of freedom includes three features: 1) an agent, 2) an obstacle blocking the agent, and 3) a goal. To say that someone is free is to say that he or she is *free from* obstacles and therefore *free to* achieve a goal. Therefore, “freedom” refers to a relationship involving an agent who is both free from some obstacle and free to achieve some goal. Political ideologies frequently see other ideologies as obstacles to be removed, and to the degree that they are unable to overcome the obstacle, they are not free. Thus, the struggle between competing ideologies such as liberalism, communism, and fascism.

Almost all political ideologies claim to be democratic. This suggests that democracy, or rule by the people, is an *ideal* rather than an ideology. Almost all political ideologies agree that democracy is a good thing, but they disagree about how best to bring it about. In other words, democracy, like freedom, is the *end* or *goal* of the ideological activity, but disagreements arise over the proper *means* for achieving the goal. In many ways, democracy, like freedom, is an essentially contested concept.

## **Republicanism**

Whereas democracy can mean direct rule by the people, a republic usually has a mixed government that combines forms of democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy. Classical philosophers such as Aristotle insisted that democracy promoted vice – the self-interested “class-based” rule of the common people – while a republic promoted virtue. Republican virtue was the ability of an individual to rise above personal or class interest to place the good of the whole community above one’s own.

Republicanism re-surfaced in the city-states of Italy during the Renaissance when scholars recovered the classical philosophy of Athens and Rome. The central tenets of this new modern republicanism were civic virtue and active participation in politics. Renaissance philosophers such as Machiavelli argued that liberty is synonymous with self-government, and that the greatest enemies of free government are complacent and self-interested citizens. *Indifference to public affairs was considered a form of corruption.* Republicanism spread to Great Britain in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and included calls for a more equal distribution of land and the extension of the franchise to all men. Self-government, in republican terms, implied political equality and economic independence.

These ideas became influential in the American colonies and the United States created a mixed government similar to Great Britain’s, but based on republican ideals intended to prevent corruption. Over time, particularly during the Jacksonian period, democracy would increase in the United States. It appeared that republicanism and democracy could be complementary in that democracy, by offering participation to all citizens, could cultivate a republican devotion to the common good. The belief was that political participation – direct participation at the local level – would educate and improve people. Republicanism understands political participation as an integral part of self-fulfillment and self-development. The type of democracy that emerged in the United States is referred to as *liberal democracy* because it is based on the political philosophy of liberalism.

## Liberalism

Liberalism promotes individual liberty, and the emphasis on individual liberty rests on a conception of human beings as fundamentally rational individuals. In general, liberals stress individual liberty because they believe that most people are capable of living freely. Classical liberals of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries acknowledged that people have passions and desires, but they maintained that people also have the ability, through reason, to control and direct their desires. Liberals generally agree that self-interest is the primary motive for most people. Some argue that self-interest should be given free rein, while others respond that it should be carefully directed to promote the common good. Liberals are inclined to regard competition as a natural part of the human condition. Liberalism views the individual agent as rational, self-interested, and competitive. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, classical liberals promoted free trade and *laissez-faire* economics as the means to equal opportunity and the exercise of individual liberty.

Liberals attempt to remove obstacles (legal, political, economic, social, and cultural) to the exercise of individual liberty. Liberals argue that each person is to have equal opportunity to enjoy liberty. Liberalism, in addition to promoting liberty, therefore, also promotes equality and competition. Anything that prevents a person from having an equal opportunity to succeed can be understood as an obstacle to a person's freedom that ought to be removed. In the United States, Republicans (conservatives) and Democrats (liberals) disagree *within* the liberal tradition about what counts as an obstacle to liberty and what actions should be taken to guarantee equal opportunity. For both groups, however, the goal is for the individual to live as they choose. The divisions that exist within liberalism emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in response to the economic and social effects of the Industrial Revolution. Again, both Republicans and Democrats are "liberal" in this philosophical sense.

## Liberalism Divided

Liberals who promoted more government activity to regulate the economy in order to reduce poverty and improve public health were called *welfare liberals*, while those who continued to regard government activity and regulation as an obstacle to individual liberty were called *neoclassical liberals*. Neoclassical liberals argued that government should be as small as possible in order to preserve individual freedom. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, some neoclassical liberals were influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution by means of natural selection and viewed competition between individuals in society as a natural phenomenon that government should not interfere with. These "Social Darwinists" argued that they had "scientific" support for *laissez-faire* economics. Most neoclassical liberals were not as extreme as the Social Darwinists, but they actively resisted the growth of government because they considered government merely a necessary evil rather than a positive good.

Welfare liberals argued that government, properly directed, could be a positive force for promoting and enhancing individual liberty. Welfare liberals desired to remove an increasing number of obstacles that they argued blocked the free growth and development

of individuals. They distinguished between two different ways of thinking about freedom, referred to as “negative” and “positive” freedom. Neoclassical liberals viewed freedom in negative terms, as the *absence* of restraint, or freedom *from*. Welfare liberals viewed freedom in both negative and positive terms; freedom is not merely a matter of being left alone, but is the power or ability to *do* something, or freedom *to*. For example, welfare liberals would argue that public education is a positive aid to individual liberty, and even society as a whole, despite infringing on people’s individual liberty in the form of taxation. Welfare liberals viewed an active government as a useful tool to expand individual liberty. For example, conservationist policies in the United States that created national parks expanded the individual’s freedom to enjoy nature, while regulation of food and drugs expanded the individual’s freedom to consume safely. By the middle of the twentieth century, welfare liberals were usually known simply as “liberals,” while their neoclassical rivals were often called “conservatives.”

After World War II, welfare liberalism became the dominant political philosophy and ideology of the democratic world. Conservatives and democratic socialists accepted the desirability of the welfare state as the proper balance between unregulated capitalism and state-directed socialism. In the United States, the consensus in support of welfare liberalism was so strong that major differences between Republicans and Democrats were minimal and scholars spoke in the 1950s of “the end of ideology.” The 1960s, however, witnessed intense divisions within liberalism as neoclassical liberalism was championed by conservatives/libertarians such as Barry Goldwater and democratic socialism/social democracy was promoted by the New Left. The post-WWII consensus has not been recaptured and intense divisions exist today between Republicans and Democrats about the role of government in society and the parameters of the welfare state. The “establishment” or “moderate” members of the Republican and Democratic parties are welfare liberals, whereas the Republican base (Tea Party) is more neoclassical and the Democratic base (progressives) are more socialist.

### **Liberal vs. Social Democracy**

While the United States embraced welfare liberalism, democratic socialism/social democracy arose within Western Europe. Liberal democracy values liberty more than equality, while social democracy places equal value on liberty and equality, and believes that political equality requires relative economic equality. Both liberal democracies and social democracies have welfare states, but they differ in degree. Whereas a liberal democracy such as the United States has publically funded health care programs such as Medicare and Medicaid accompanied by a vast for-profit private health care industry, a social democracy would have a publically funded national health care system. Whereas a liberal democracy such as the United States has a publically funded K-12 education system, a social democracy would also publically subsidize higher education and Pre-K. Government programs cost money, and the difference between liberal and social democracy is the extent to which people are willing to be taxed in order to fund public programs and regulated in order to create equal protection/opportunity.

Liberal democracy predominantly defines “freedom” as the individual’s right to be free *from* outside interference (taxes, regulations) to do as he or she thinks best. Again, both Republicans and Democrats are “liberal” in this sense. Whereas Republicans may not want to pay higher taxes to support public programs, Democrats may not want laws that restrict lifestyle choices. Both are “liberal” in wanting to do what they want with their own money and personal choices, that is, both want to be “free.” Again, both major parties in the United States are “liberal,” but we typically describe Republicans as “conservative” and Democrats as “liberal.” To make things even more complicated, the Republican Party includes both welfare and neoclassical liberals, as well as libertarians, while the Democratic Party includes both welfare liberals and social democrats, commonly referred to as progressives.

## **Conservatism**

Classical conservatism resisted classical liberalism and arose in response to the French Revolution. All conservatives share a desire to “conserve” or preserve something; in the case of classical conservatism it was monarchy and aristocracy. All conservatives are typically resistant to change, at least fast-paced or radical change. The term “conservative” was applied to the liberals in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that resisted the reforms promoted by welfare liberals and social democrats. Thus, today’s “conservatives” embrace what early conservatives resisted, that is, classical liberalism with its emphasis on individual liberty and *laissez-faire* capitalism.

*Modern conservatives* are, therefore, properly understood as *neoclassical liberals*. They are “conservative” in that the philosophy and ideology of conservatism influences their view of welfare liberalism and progressivism. Again, liberals view human nature as rational and self-interested, and the more optimistic liberals believe that human nature can be morally improved, and society gradually improved along with it. Such confidence in the potential of human reason to reform society was evident in late 18<sup>th</sup> century liberals such as Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine. Conservatives, in response to the liberal view of human nature and the radicalism of the French Revolution, viewed human nature as deeply flawed, both intellectually and morally imperfect. Conservatives, therefore, viewed attempts to improve society through government as misguided and foolish. Conservatives believe that the desire for comprehensive change is unwise and the quest for perfection futile. Change and reform should come slowly, cautiously, and incrementally in piecemeal fashion.

The founder of conservatism was Edmund Burke, an Irish-English politician and contemporary of Thomas Paine that engaged in philosophical debates over the merits of the French Revolution. Burkean conservatives criticized the individualistic view of society promoted by liberalism. They argued that liberalism’s focus on individual freedom would undermine social order and that individuals should be restrained by government for the good of society. Incremental reform was good, radical schemes to redesign society were bad. Burkean conservatives view society as a contract not between individuals to protect their individual rights, but between past, present, and future generations.

John Adams is sometimes understood as a Burkean conservative, and the 19<sup>th</sup> century American novelists Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville, as well. Burkean conservatism is the foundation for cultural/traditional conservatism, which is suspicious of the impact that industry, commerce, and materialism has on traditional morality and community. Again, it was the classical liberals who promoted free trade, industrialization, *laissez-faire* capitalism, and individualism. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as welfare liberals and progressives promoted an active government to regulate industrial capitalism and enhance individual liberty through public programs and services, the wealthy business and industrial classes became the “conservatives” who resisted “liberal” reforms. These new conservatives valued the protection of private property over equal opportunity and maintained the earlier conservative skepticism about the ability of government to improve society. Thus, whereas conservatism had been previously concerned with preserving community, *conservatism began to celebrate individualism* as “conservatives” became essentially neoclassical liberals.

### **Conservatism Divided**

Burkean conservatives, those who oppose the individualistic view of society offered by liberalism and view unregulated capitalism as a force that undermines traditional community and morality, are now a small minority within the Republican Party. The individualist conservatives that emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century remain influential. They believe in individual competition within a free market as the best solution to economic problems, and believe that many social problems stem from too much government interference in a misguided attempt to improve society. Individualist conservatives have much in common with libertarians, and the divide between individualist conservatives and Burkean conservatives has widened significantly.

In the 1960s, a new group of conservatives often described as disenchanted welfare liberals emerged, referred to as “neoconservatives.” They were initially supporters of Lyndon Johnson’s “Great Society” reforms, but concluded that government attempts to improve society were actually making things worse. The neoconservatives also possessed a Burkean suspicion of capitalism. They interpreted capitalism as being at odds with itself in that it rewards the virtues of thrift, saving, and hard work, on the one hand, while on the other hand credit and installment plans encourage people to buy now, pay later, and aspire to a life of luxury and ease. Again, they are disenchanted welfare liberals, or skeptical liberals, in that they support government welfare programs, but they insist that these programs should help people become independent, not dependent upon the government.

Neoconservatives see politics and culture as two sides of the same coin, and they express concern that an “adversary culture” of left-leaning intellectuals, feminists, and others are undermining the values that are the foundation of society. They also see music, literature, film, and schools as part of the “adversary culture” that must be resisted in order to restore the discipline and self-restraint necessary to a stable and moral society. In the 1970s, the cultural concerns of the neoconservatives evolved into a larger movement

known as the “Religious Right” that deplored the cultural changes that had taken place during the 1960s. Like the neoconservatives, the Religious Right viewed politics as a cultural battle. Unlike the neoconservatives, the Religious Right viewed politics through an explicitly Christian, often fundamentalist, lens. The Religious Right protested against abortion rights, the teaching of Darwin’s theory of evolution in public schools, and the role that “liberalism” was playing in undermining traditional morality.

The Religious Right both united and divided conservatives. They promoted less government intervention in the economy, which pleased the individualist conservatives and libertarians, but they promoted a more active government in cultural matters that some conservatives found confusing. Because liberals were using government to expand individual liberty, which in the eyes of conservatives resulted in cultural decline, the Religious Right sought to use government to restore and preserve what they considered to be traditional morality. Like neoconservatives, the Religious Right understood politics and culture as two sides of the same coin, and they planned to use government to actively slow down the cultural changes that they perceived liberals had used government to actively accelerate. The neoconservatives and Religious Right were influential in electing Ronald Reagan in 1980. Reagan, however, is often understood as being more of an individualist conservative with libertarian leanings.

### **Republicans and Democrats Today**

The Democratic Party underwent a gradual transformation during the 1980s, both becoming more business-friendly and more concerned about community. Gone were the days when the left wing of the Democratic Party, the New Left, promoted revolution to resist capitalism and imperialism. Gone too were the days when individual freedom trumped concerns about personal responsibility and community. Academic critics of liberalism, referred to as “communitarians,” argued that liberals had been so concerned with protecting individual rights that they ignored the common good and the value of community. According to these communitarian critics of liberalism, rights must be balanced by responsibilities. They insisted that the United States is degenerating into a condition in which everyone is jealously guarding his or her rights against everyone else, which leads to a hostile, suspicious, “me-first” approach that makes it impossible to act for the common good. The argument is that *society has become hyper-individualistic* to the point where people are increasingly no longer willing to make the small sacrifices that are necessary to hold society together. Communitarian ideas have been evident in the policies and rhetoric of Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, but the Republican and Democratic parties remain intensely divided and partisan.

Most Democrats are welfare liberals, while the Progressive Caucus supports a welfare state more akin to that in the social democracies of Western Europe and Scandinavia. For example, the Progressive Caucus promoted single-payer national health care rather than the expansion of private health care that occurred under the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare). The Occupy Wall Street movement was a diverse left-wing movement that included liberals, progressives, socialists, and anarchists. The Occupy movement was plagued by divisions between those who rejected the two-party system specifically and

capitalism more generally, and those who aimed to pursue reforms through the Democratic Party. While the oftentimes revolutionary rhetoric of the Occupy movement rendered it a fringe group in the eyes of many Americans, most of its concerns were consistent with welfare liberal and progressive proposals: financial regulatory reform, campaign-finance reform, increasing the minimum wage, making higher education more affordable, increasing access to health care, etc. Despite accusations of being a “radical, socialist ideologue,” Barack Obama is properly understood as a welfare liberal with communitarian and progressive leanings and was willing to compromise with neoclassical liberals (Republicans) on taxes, health care, and entitlements. The Democratic Party today remains committed to welfare liberalism and promotes an active government that will expand the influence of the welfare state. The Democratic Party has also begun to aggressively support LGBT issues, which has resulted in further dividing the two major parties. However, the success of Bernie Sanders in the Democratic presidential primary suggests that the Democratic Party may be heading for internal divisions over the identity of the party. It is possible that the Democratic Party will begin to reclaim its FDR and LBJ legacy by again calling for ambitious government action to address public policy challenges. For example, Bernie Sanders and his supporters are pushing for paid family leave (maternity, paternity, sick leave) and public funding for higher education.

The Republican Party is currently undergoing a transformation the results of which remain to be seen. While most Democrats remain welfare liberals, an increasing number of Republicans have become more neoclassical and/or libertarian. The result has been what political scientists refer to as “asymmetric polarization” as the Republican Party has gradually moved further from the previous “center” than the Democratic Party. Think of it this way: both parties used to have lots of welfare liberals so the “center” was welfare liberalism, but in the last three decades more Republicans have become neoclassical liberals with libertarian leanings. The result is gridlock and a lack of compromise because the “middle ground” between the two parties has moved further to the right on economic and social policy. Whereas previous disagreements arose between comprehensive liberal change and incremental conservative change, the Tea Party (Freedom Caucus) has appeared increasingly opposed to any government action whatsoever other than the reversal or repeal of existing policies and programs. Some have criticized the Tea Party as a reactionary group committed to dismantling the welfare state, while others have praised it for its rejuvenation of civic engagement and opposition to deficit spending.

The Tea Party (Freedom Caucus), which is a caucus within the Republican Party rather than a third party, can be understood as a fusion of libertarian-leaning individualist conservatives and the Religious Right. The libertarian/individualist half is committed to decreasing the size of the federal government and the national debt, while the evangelical half is committed to a spiritual and cultural revival of traditional Christian morality. The Tea Party (Freedom Caucus) in the House of Representatives is large enough to effectively control the Republican Party’s agenda, and the previous House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (#2 ranking Republican) actually lost his primary election to a Tea Party challenger in 2014. Some argue that the gridlock between Republicans and Democrats is rooted in the fact that the Republican Party has largely been taken over by

the Tea Party, which views the Democratic Party as an existential threat to the country, and no longer wants to govern through compromise and bipartisanship. In fact, the Tea Party has frequently attempted to implement its policy preferences despite being a minority within the Republican Party, which only controlled one house of Congress from 2011 to 2014. For example, the Tea Party attempted to defund the Affordable Care Act in 2013, which contributed to the temporary shutdown of the federal government. The divisions within the Republican Party led to the resignation of the Speaker of the House in 2015.

It remains to be seen what the Republican Party will become in the next few years; it is clearly undergoing philosophical and ideological changes. The Republican Party gained more seats in the House of Representatives and took control of the Senate in the 2014 midterm elections. The House is more conservative, or “Tea Party” than ever, while the Senate gained more “traditional” Republicans. If the Tea Party continues to increase its influence within the Republican Party *and* remains unwilling to compromise with Democrats, then government will likely remain gridlocked until one party possesses large majorities in Congress and control of the White House. In such a scenario, compromise and bipartisanship will still not have returned, but rather one party will be imposing its agenda on the other. The Tea Party seems to already feel this way about the actions of Democrats and the Obama Administration prior to the 2010 election, arguing that the Affordable Care Act was just such an imposition.

The political environment has become so toxic the last few years, and distrust and resentment between Republicans and Democrats has become so intense, it seems unlikely that even if the Republican Party were to control Congress and the White House in 2016 that compromise and bipartisanship will return. Unless the Republicans had filibuster-proof majorities in Congress, what would stop the Democrats from engaging in the same type of obstructionism that plagued the Obama Administration? *Democracy requires a political culture that fosters compromise and cooperation between competing factions and such a political culture is fragile and difficult to regain once it has been lost.* Nonetheless, we must address our short-term and long-term challenges in order to remain a prosperous country. The task we face does not look easy, but participating is the privileged responsibility of citizenship.

**2016 Election Update:** While Democrats are unlikely to regain control of the House of Representatives due to multiple rounds of “gerrymandering” that heavily favored Republicans, they could retake control of the Senate in 2016 simply because the electoral map is in their favor even more than it was for the Republicans in 2014 (likelihood of winning the Senate is impacted by which party is defending more seats and which states those senators are from). The nomination campaigns for president in 2016 were significantly influenced by feelings of populism within the electorate. While the Republican Party has been expelling most of its moderate members and moving further to the right for some time, Democrats are now possibly undergoing a similar process of moving further to the left. Democrats no longer support the moderate, business-friendly, free trade policies of Bill Clinton and may have been turned off by Barack Obama’s repeated attempts at bipartisanship during his first term. This led to the progressive wing

of the party becoming quite energetic about the candidacy of Bernie Sanders, a senator from Vermont and self-described “democratic socialist” (promoting the social democracy that exists in Western Europe and Scandinavia). Even Hillary Clinton’s campaign is much further to the left than her husband’s 1992 campaign. Ultimately, Hillary Clinton prevailed to win the nomination, but Sanders delegates were able to help write the most progressive party platform in the Democratic Party’s history.

On the Republican side, populism and nativism have been the foundation of Donald Trump’s candidacy. What is most interesting about the support being shown toward Trump is the fact that he does not fit into any of the conservative labels discussed earlier: he is not Burkean, he is certainly not a social conservative or representative of the Christian Right (despite adopting their policy positions as a candidate), and he isn’t particularly libertarian either. His constant criticism of the Iraq War is an implicit rejection of “neoconservative” foreign policy and other than criticizing illegal immigration it isn’t clear how Trump’s policy proposals make him “conservative” or reflective of the Republican Party’s legislative history. Furthermore, the fact that Trump criticizes free trade and promotes protectionism places him at odds with Republican economic orthodoxy. In fact, Trump’s critique of free trade is similar to the viewpoints expressed by some progressives in the Democratic Party who in the past were attacked by Republicans as being anti-capitalist and anti-free market.

Ted Cruz, on the other hand, perfectly embodies the agenda of the Tea Party in both substance and style. He combines the individualist/libertarian call for limited government with the cultural call for religious revival and has consistently condemned members of his own party for compromising with Democrats. It remains to be seen how the multiplicity of currents running through the electorate will be channeled. Trump managed to secure the nomination, but he has alienated many long-time Republican voters due to his proposals on foreign policy and trade policy. Numerous Republican officials from previous Republican administrations have endorsed Hillary Clinton, but Trump has also galvanized a white working-class that has not been politically active in recent decades. It remains to be seen whether Trump can attract enough new voters to make up for the fact that he is perceived as being unorthodox or even extreme by moderate Republicans and Independents.

**Post-Election Update:** In one of the most dramatic presidential elections in American history, Donald Trump won the Electoral College by inspiring a large percentage of white, working-class voters in the Midwest. Not only did Trump win the battleground states of Ohio and Pennsylvania, he also won the typically “safe” blue states of Wisconsin and Michigan. Trump’s unexpected victory produced widespread disbelief within the mainstream, establishment press and sparked nationwide (and global) protests. Hillary Clinton, the first female to win a major party nomination, won the national popular vote by roughly 3 million ballots, sparking a chorus of criticism of the Electoral College system reminiscent of the 2000 election in which the Republican candidate again won despite receiving less votes than the Democrat. The election has been clouded by the reality that Russia hacked into the Democratic Party’s databases and strategically leaked information to the press with the intention of harming the Clinton campaign, and the

controversial decision by the FBI director James Comey to announce 11 days before the election that Hillary Clinton was under investigation again, only to announce 3 days later that the investigation was again closed. The negative press from Russian leaks, as well as fake news articles attacking Clinton (ex: Pizzagate), coupled with the FBI investigation, enabled Trump in the last week of the campaign to drive home his argument that Clinton was corrupt and crooked. He insisted that her victory on election day would produce a constitutional crisis because her presidency would begin with an FBI investigation. The irony of that effective argument is that Donald Trump's campaign has been under FBI investigation since July 2016 for its interactions with Russian civilians and officials. James Comey, who was actively investigating whether Trump's campaign colluded with Russia (example: coordinated leaks of hacked information) was subsequently fired by President Trump, which prompted calls from Democrats and Republicans to insure an impartial investigation. The FBI and four congressional committees are currently investigating Russia's influence on the 2016 election, whether members of Trump's campaign colluded with Russia in that effort, and whether Trump himself is attempting to obstruct the investigations.

On the legislative front, President Trump has seemingly reversed many of his campaign pledges and appears to be pursuing an orthodox Republican agenda on health care, taxes and environmental regulation. For example, the American Health Care Act passed by the House of Representatives would severely diminish the accessibility and affordability of health care insurance for white, working-class people.