

Why Is Trump Waging War on the Freedom Caucus?

Why is Trump attacking the House Freedom Caucus? He has [tweeted that](#) “we must fight them.”

My first thought: this is inevitable. Destiny is unfolding before our eyes!

There is the obvious fact that the Freedom Caucus was the reason the GOP’s so-called replacement for Obamacare went down to defeat. They fought it for a solid reason: it would not have reduced premiums or deductibles, and it would not have increased access to a greater degree of choice in the health-insurance market.

These people knew this. How? Because there was not one word of that bill that enabled the health care industry to become more competitive. [Competition is the standard](#) by which reform must be judged. The core problem of Obamacare (among many) was that it froze the market in an artificial form and insulated it from competitive forces.

At minimum, any reform must unfreeze the market. The proposed reform did not do that.

Bad Reform

That means the reform would not have been good for the American people. It would not have been good for the Republican Party. And then the chance for real reform – long promised by many people in the party – would have been gone.

Trump latched on to the proposal without understanding it. Or, other theories: he doesn’t care, he actually does favor universal coverage even if it is terrible, or he just wanted some pyrrhic victory even if it did nothing to improve the

access.

The Freedom Caucus killed it. And I'm trying to think back in political history here, is there another time since World War Two that a pro-freedom faction of the Republican Party killed a bill pushed by the majority that pertained to such a large sector and dealt with such a hugely important program?

I can't think of one.

What this signifies is extremely important. We might be seeing the emergence of a classically liberal faction within the GOP, one that is self consciously driven by an agenda that is centered on a clear goal: getting us closer to an ideal of a free society. The Caucus isn't fully formed yet in an ideological sense, but its agenda is becoming less blurry by the day. (And [please don't call](#) them the "hard right wing.")

The old GOP coalition included nationalists, militarists, free enterprisers, and social conservatives. The Trump takeover has strained it to the breaking point. Now the genuine believers in freedom are gaining a better understanding of themselves and what they must do.

For the first times in our lives! Even in our parents' and grandparents' lives!

The Larger Picture

Trump is obviously not a student of history or political philosophy, but he does embody a strain of thinking with a history that traces back in time. I discussed this in some detail [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#), among many other places. The tradition of thought he inhabits stands in [radical opposition](#) to the liberal tradition. It always has. We just remain rather ignorant of this fact because the fascist tradition of thought has been dormant for many decades, and so is strangely unfamiliar to this generation of political observers.

So let us be clear: this manner of thinking that celebrates the nation-state, believes in great collectives on the move, panics about the demographic genocide of a race, rails against the “other” invading our shores, puts all hope in a powerful executive, and otherwise believes not in freedom but rather in compliance, loyalty, and hero worship – this manner of thinking has always and everywhere included liberals (or libertarians) as part of the enemy to be destroyed.

And why is this? Liberalism to them represents “rootless cosmopolitanism,” in the old Nazi phrase. They are willing to do business with anyone, move anywhere, and imagine that the good life of peace and prosperity is more than enough to aspire to in order to achieve the best of all possible worlds. They don’t believe that war is ennobling and heroic, but rather bloody and destructive. They are in awe of the creation of wealth out of simple exchanges and small innovations. They are champions of the old bourgeois spirit.

To the liberal mind, the goal of life is to live well in peace and experience social and financial gain, with ever more alleviation of life’s pains and sufferings. Here is magic. Here is beauty. Here is true heroism.

The alt-right mind will have none of this. They want the clash, the war, the struggle against the enemy, big theaters of epic battles that pit great collectives against each other. If you want a hilarious caricature of this life outlook, no one does it better than [Roderick Spode](#).

Natural Enemies

This is why these two groups can never get along politically. They desire different things. It has always and everywhere been true that when the strongmen of the right-Hegelian mindset gain control, they target the liberals for destruction. Liberals become the enemy that must be crushed.

And so it is that a mere few months into the presidency of

this odd figure that the Freedom Caucus has emerged as a leading opposition. They will back him where they can but will otherwise adhere to the great principle of freedom. When their interests diverge, the Freedom Caucus will go the other way. It is not loyalty but freedom that drives them. It is not party but principle that makes them do what they do.

To any aspiring despot, such views are intolerable, as bad as the reliable left-wing opposition.

Listen, I'm all for working with anyone to achieve freedom. When Trump is right (as he is on environmental regulation, capital gains taxes, and some other issues), he deserves to be backed. When he is wrong, he deserves to be opposed. This is not about partisanship. It is about obtaining freer lives.

But let us not languish in naïvete. The mindset of the right-wing Hegelian is not at all the same as a descendant of the legacy of Adam Smith. They know it. We need to know it too.

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