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## What Trump's Conviction Says About America

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**MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR  
PUBLIC POLICY**

Dear Michael,

**You can tell a lot about someone's politics based on what they have to say about the conviction of Donald Trump.**

Anyone telling you that Trump's conviction is comeuppance for a sordid hush-money scandal, in which he broke the law, probably leans left.

Someone explaining that it was all a disgraceful attempt by Joe Biden's Democrats to stop the 45<sup>th</sup> President from being re-elected, is likely to be a conservative.

In an increasingly post-religious society, politics has become a substitute belief system for many. **The danger is that we view everything through the prism of politics.**

Rather than ask what Trump's conviction means for your side in the Reds versus Blues battle, perhaps what we ought to spend this weekend reflecting on what this might all mean for America.



*Where you stand on Trump's conviction says a lot about your politics.*

**For most of human history, the law meant whatever the powerful said it meant.** Anyone who has ever tried to do business in Russia or China knows that's still the way things are in much of the non-Western world.

**A system in which the law is elevated above the executive – in which the rule of law has supremacy – is historically unusual.** Indeed, it is largely the creation of people who spoke and wrote in the language in which you are reading this.

**It was English-speaking civilization that invented the notion that the powerful are constrained by rules, and that the rules should apply to everyone equally.** A straight line runs from Magna Carta at Runnymede to the Founders at Philadelphia. The US Bill of Rights of 1789 was preceded by the English Bill of Rights of 1689

**America has become the most successful society on earth precisely because in this Republic, government doesn't get to change the rules as it likes.**

"Exactly!" the anti-Trumpers will say. "Trump's conviction is true to that tradition! Even former Presidents are subject to the same rules as everyone else".

But is that really so? In what way has Trump been subjected to the same set of rules? Surely, those on the right will say, he has been singled out, prosecuted

over something essentially trivial?

**Those that brought the charges, it seems to me, were motivated by politics, rather than justice.**

**Prosecuting political rivals is what they do in Russia, Brazil or Malaysia. It is awful to see political prosecutions in the United States – and it bodes ill for the future of freedom in this country and around the world.**



*Russia has a long history of incarcerating political opponents.*

**Twenty years ago, George Bush’s electoral strategist, Karl Rove, hit upon the idea of using ‘wedge-issues’ to galvanize the conservative base. At the time, Rove seemed to be remarkably successful. Republicans won.**

Two decades on, I wonder if it was partly Rove’s ‘wedge-issue’ approach that provoked the left into doing something similar. Under Obama, the left became increasingly inflammatory. **Perhaps there is a straight line that runs from the politics of ‘wedge-issues’ in the noughties to the culture wars we see today?**

Some on the left might be tempted to celebrate the use of lawfare to try to take down a political opponent. They might want to stop and think first. It is, I worry, only a question of time before we start to see something similar from the right.

**If lawfare becomes part of American politics, what chance is there that the United States remains exceptional compare with all those other less**

## happy republics?

It is not just the legal process that America needs to de-politicize. We need to stop making everything a question of where you stand in the culture war. Your views on Disney or money management or Chick-Fil-A should not automatically correlate with the way you vote.



*Enjoy the music. Not everything should be about how we vote...*

**If it is politics alone that gives you a belief system in life, you are going to end up desperately disappointed with both politics and life.**

The United States was founded by people that believed that to survive, a Republic needs a moral citizenry. **America needs to believe in something above politics and beyond the next election cycle.**

Have a wonderful weekend.

**Forward this email to a friend!**



Warm regards,

*Douglass*

Douglas Carswell  
President & CEO

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