



Nostalgia in the World of Politics

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Introduction

Throughout history, using nostalgia as a tool to galvanize public opinion to vote for political leaders has been very common (O'Shaughnessy). Even today, leaders around the world have been proclaiming about bringing their country back to the "good ol' days." To understand how nostalgia is used in politics, it's important to see the comparison made in "False Nostalgia". The way that nostalgia is used in politics is exactly like the reason why people back in the mid-18th century built mock castles/fake ruins. As explained by "False Nostalgia", those architects wanted to make an impression, a conception that this "ruin" used to be a place that went through many events before it's inevitable destruction; however, in actuality, it's a false version of history (Norberg). The definition of nostalgia backs it up as it means the sad and obsessive wishing and longing of the past or what used to be. Just like these past and present world leaders, they use the destruction of the "good old days" to make the past seem better. The reason that this is an issue is because of the past examples of leaders who used nostalgia to rise to power were individuals like Adolf Hitler with Nazi Germany. Hitler exploited the German people's sentiment after World War 1, and promised a return to the past of greatness (O'Shaughnessy). But were they really that good back then for them to glorify those past days? And should leaders like Trump glorify times where certain ethnic groups didn't have much rights like the 1950s, and use nostalgia with slogans like Make America Great Again (MAGA) to lead America?

How Hitler Rose to Power and Led Germany during World War 2

It's important to first understand what Hitler believed in. Fascism, the core political ideology he implemented in the country during World War 2, is explained by a professor of history and Columbia University in New York City as the extremist belief who violently exercises authority over people and situations, mostly because of the idea of racial superiority (Mazower). Hitler found most races to be inferior and a threat to his plan of bringing Germany back to its former glory of a pure Aryan country (United States National Holocaust). He wanted these races monitored and eliminated to make his plan happen. Not only that, but a study done on Hitler's psych and analyzed by a professor at Troy University in the Journal of Psychohistory found that many personality traits that Hitler had, like narcissism and manipulation, were his personality traits rather than psychological pathologies (Mankelwicz). Mankelwicz continues on, explaining how he misguided the German people at the time to follow him with his idealism of the past. Hitler was so self-enamored and confident in his ability to rule the country and build them back up was exactly what got him feared among all of Europe at the time (Mankelwicz). To spread his idea around, as analyzed by a licensed psychologist and certified psychoanalyst, he needed some type of propaganda to enhance his delusional ideas, and the biggest thing he used for it was antisemitism (Hartman). Hitler needed something to blame to bring the country together after he took over, something to get his fantasies into the heads of the German people. It's this exact narcissism, nostalgia, and manipulation that got the idea of fascism so popular back then. A similar situation with Israel was analyzed by a political scientist, specifically of Israeli studies, at Oxford University, and in that situation, Yadgar explains how the type of nostalgia found in the land debates between Israel and Palestine silences certain parts of the past, distorting the reality of the past. This evidently led to persecution on both sides, especially of the Palestinians (Yadgar). This nostalgia found in Israel idealizes the time before immigrants came into their land, exactly what Hitler was doing with Jews, Slavs, etc. In the words of Yadgar,



the nostalgia Hitler had was for the elimination of any disturbance, in this case Jews or other minorities, for his dream of a pure Aryan country (Yadgar). As Norberg mentioned in "False Nostalgia", 31% of the UK, 41% of the U.S., and 46% of France all say that life 50 years ago was worse (Norberg). This is backed up by the fact that even before World War 2 and fascism, there was already widespread antisemitism, and even resistance against it. But Hitler, using that antisemitism and the nostalgia of having no outsiders, was able to affect those who he saw as inferior by invoking fear into those ethnic groups, as analyzed by a UK writer and journalist, Bob Dickinson.

Whether it was Croatians, Poles, Slavs, each of these people feared him as a result of his propaganda and his ability to spread his ideals around. (Dickinson). In summation of what has been mentioned so far, the nostalgia that Hitler utilized to rise to power and spread his ideology was at the extent of racial minorities whom he saw inferior. It can even be seen, and was analyzed by a philosopher and professor of law at Columbia University, in modern times where extremists groups in Europe have been opposing the immigration of certain groups, specifically Muslims (Benhabib). One specific group is less extreme and should be more obvious, but really isn't, and that is the American government.

How Trump Governs and Leads the United States and how it Compares to Hitler

Before going into how Trump governs, it's important to note that Trump isn't at all as extreme as the Nazi's or these other extremist groups in Europe. According to the White House Archives, during Trump's administration and before the pandemic occurred, the economy was very prosperous. More than 7 million jobs were created, and the unemployment rate reached 3.5%, the lowest since half a century (White House Archives). As well as the obvious, he didn't commit mass genocide against a certain group of people.

He does, however, have strong opinions about immigration and other ethnic groups, a common similarity between these fascist groups. A Canadian social entrepreneur and former Canadian foreign service officer, and writer mentions that, following the attacks on Paris, Trump announced in a speech that Muslims should carry a special ID, as well as be tracked in a national database (Gilmore). This is comparable to Hitler's tracking and persecution of the Jews back in World War 2. Hitler wanted to keep track of them, and to know where they were so they didn't start any "trouble" and rebel against him. Trump also focuses on Latin Americans. He sees both of these ethnic groups as disturbances, and even as a risk to the country, as analyzed by an Associate Professor of International Studies at the University of New South Wales (Clampton). However, the issue here is that he's preventing the people who aren't here to harm our country, or are trying to escape from danger in their home country. Although Clampton explains that the precautionary action of building a wall between America and Mexico was logical, according to Gilmore, the threats of these Islamic terrorists and cartels are heavily exaggerated on the news (Gilmore).

All these actions against immigration bring us back to our main topic, nostalgia. The popular slogan that Trump brought during his 2016 campaign, MAGA, is the embodiment of bringing nostalgia to politics. If we look at how Hitler was trying to make Germany great again, he wanted any minority out, and it's exactly the same as Trump wanting any minority to stay out of America to make America great again. Once again, Trump isn't as extreme or violent as past and some present fascists, but he is pushing for a return to the past, just as Hitler did. But as seen by Norberg in "False Nostalgia" it's just a distorted past that he made out. As Gilmore has seen, Trump has been pushing for the past where minorities had less rights and freedom, and even states that he is being shown as a modern Hitler (Gilmore). In recent news, Trump had a bill he



made rejected, which was getting rid of birthright citizenship. The reason why Trump is still popular despite these obvious similarities is his oration. Former attorney and American political commentator David French explains that the American people aren't immune to misinformation. Trump says what's right to say in these situations, like when he called the election rigged or when conservatives explain how Trump will save the nation (French). Especially at the time of that election, during a pandemic and heavy unemployment rates, Trump knew exactly how to get the people riled up and ready for the next election. Hitler did the same exact thing with public sentiment after World War 1.

Now a question is proposed: why should all this be so important to know? Exactly how both Gilmore and French put it, America is being led the wrong way. Trump is trying to bring us back to that aforementioned past with less freedom for minorities (Gilmore). Not only that, but Trump, ever since he came onto the scene in 2015, he loved violent mobs. If Trump isn't as dangerous and extreme now, what's stopping him from doing it in the future? He's already regressing us back to this past of less rights for certain groups of people, and he does it in a way similar to the Nazi dictator. Just like how Deborah Paredez explains the significance of the remembrance of the Tejana singer, Selena Quintanilla Pérez, also known as Selenidad, there is a significance in analyzing and studying Hitler, so the same mistakes aren't being made (Paredez). Each significant person who has passed serves some type of purpose and example, whether bad or good. Even with all these examples set before all world leaders showing them why nostalgia shouldn't be used in politics, time and time again there's still groups and politicians who continue to try and utilize it in the world of politics anyway.

Conclusion

Now that the issue of nostalgia, as well as the comparison between Trump and Hitler has been explained, a solution is now needed. Many solutions could be considered, one of which being just to simply impeach him. But, since most of the House of Representatives and Senate are Republican, this plan most likely won't work. Instead, we add another part to the solution. If the impeachment does work, there isn't much stopping the next president from doing the same whether in the near or far future. The solution to this will be to inform people of the situation, and show the comparisons between the two. It's obvious that when someone thinks of Trump, their minds don't immediately go to Hitler. They're ignorant to the threat of bringing nostalgia to politics, which is exactly what informing them would help them with. Getting rid of this ignorance, and impeaching Trump, is, according to French, the first step to curing this nation from his tyranny (French). We need to stop bringing all this nostalgia and fascism to modern world politics if we want to progress, rather than regress and go back to the past.



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