

THE YELLOW JACKET POLICY RESEARCH SERIES



THE ARCHITECTURE OF CONSENT

*How an Apparatus of Causal Substitution
Authorizes Its Own Extraction*

A Companion Volume to The Party Left the Building
An Examination of the Architecture That Authorizes Its Own Extraction
A Documentary Analysis of Causal Attribution and Coalition Cohesion
A Citizen's Guide to the Mechanisms of Consent

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A Note Before You Begin

This paper is the third volume in the Yellow Jacket Policy Research Series. It follows *The Record Is Real* (April 2026), which documented the architecture of structural capture and democratic erosion as it has assembled across the period 2012 through 2026, and *The Party Left the Building* (April 2026), which documented the structural failure of the institutional opposition to interrupt that assembly. This volume examines the third side of the same triangle: how the population that bears the cost of the architecture continues to deliver the electoral majorities that authorize its construction.

That question is an analytical question with an analytical answer. It is not a partisan question, and this paper is not a partisan document. It does not argue that one political party is correct and the other is wrong. It does not propose a program, endorse a candidate, advocate a policy package, or recommend an electoral strategy. The conclusions belong to the reader. The record is what is offered.

What the record establishes is documented with the same discipline applied across the rest of the series. Every claim in this paper is sourced to publicly available evidence: peer-reviewed scholarship published in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *American Economic Review*, *Political Behavior*, *American Sociological Review*, *Comparative Politics*, and the comparative-politics literature on competitive authoritarianism; primary economic data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the Centers for Disease Control, and the Congressional Budget Office; primary documentary records, including statements made on the record by the architects of the political strategies under examination; and the published work of conservative writers, religious leaders, and institutional figures who have documented the same architecture from inside the conservative tradition. Where claims rest on interpretation, the interpretation is argued. Where they rest on documentation, the documentation is cited.

This series operates from a single working premise: that the documentary record of what is happening in American political institutions, examined with sufficient specificity, is more useful than any narrative constructed on top of it. Narratives are revisable. Interpretations are contested. The record is not unwritten by disagreement.

What This Paper Is

The reader who has come to this paper from outside the series should know what kind of writer they are dealing with. *The Party Left the Building* is a documentary indictment of the Democratic Party's structural failures from 2005 through 2026. It documents, with quantitative specificity and primary

sourcing, how the institutional left replaced governing strategy with fundraising tactics, displaced its working-class base with a professional class whose value priorities are structurally misaligned with the electorate it needs, built a media ecosystem that insulates it from evidence of its own decline, and arrived at a moment in which it cannot form a coherent governing coalition in its safest state or hold the votes of the workers in the precincts that gave it its historic mandate. That work is unsparing. It does not flatter the institutional left. It does not flatter the writer's own analytical premises. It documents what it documents, and it lets the reader conclude.

This paper is the companion volume. Where *The Party Left the Building* documents why the institutional opposition cannot interrupt the architecture under construction, and *The Architecture of Consent* documents why the population from which the architecture is extracted continues to authorize it. The two papers are the two sides of the same structural failure. Read together, they describe a political condition in which the institutional left is incapable of providing functional opposition and the institutional right is sustained by an apparatus that converts the harm produced by its own program into electoral support for the program's continuation. The first is a story of architectural collapse on one side. The second is a story of architectural construction, on the other hand. Both are documented. Neither is theoretical.

What This Paper Is Not

The reader should also know what this paper does not do. It does not argue that the conditions of your life are imagined. The wages, the towns, the healthcare costs, the pharmacies that closed, the hospitals that closed, the manufacturing jobs that left, the mortality data, the loss of community institutions, the ground-level evidence that something has been done to the places where you live — these are not in dispute. They are documented in the same primary government sources that this paper draws on. Whatever else this paper says, it does not say that you are wrong to feel that something has gone wrong. Something has.

The question this paper takes up is not whether the harm is real. It is who has been doing it, and how the apparatus that authorizes its continuation operates. That question is uncomfortable to examine, because the answer, traced through the documentary record, places the cause closer than the named enemies the dominant political narrative has supplied. This paper does not ask the reader to accept that placement. It asks the reader to look at the record and reach the conclusions the record supports. If, after the documentary chain has been walked, the reader concludes that the record points elsewhere, that is the reader's conclusion. If the record points where this paper finds them, the reader will see that for themselves. The paper does not argue. It documents.

On the Comparative Frame

The American case under documentation here is not unique. The comparative-politics literature on democratic erosion and competitive authoritarianism, developed across the post-2010 trajectories of Hungary, Poland, Turkey, India, and Brazil, identifies a recognizable pattern of institutional capture: the legalistic construction of a hybrid regime that retains the procedural forms of democratic competition while progressively narrowing the conditions under which democratic competition can produce a different outcome. The Varieties of Democracy Institute's longitudinal data, Freedom House's annual reports, and Bright Line Watch's expert surveys have, since 2017, documented that the United States exhibits the indicators of that pattern. The American case is not an isolated claim about the reader's country. It is a recognizable instance of a pattern, with measurable indicators, documented in peer-reviewed comparative scholarship, and tracked by global democracy-monitoring institutions whose methodologies are transparent and whose findings are publicly available.

This frame matters because it removes one of the most common defensive responses to documentary critiques of American politics: the response that the critique is exceptional, novel, or speculative. The framework applied in this paper has been applied, in peer-reviewed comparative scholarship, to other functioning democracies that have undergone analogous transformations. The mechanisms have names. The trajectories have been measured. The reader who finds the analysis here unfamiliar should know that the analytical frame is not unfamiliar to political scientists who study these questions for a living. It is the standard frame. The American case is examined within it because the comparative record places it there.

The Structure of the Paper

The paper proceeds in six parts. **Part One** documents the material record: the harms, the policies that produced them, and the institutional infrastructure that produced the policies. **Part Two** documents the cosmology — the framework of named enemies and causal substitutions through which the harms are interpreted by those who bear them, and the delivery system through which that cosmology arrives in the reader's daily life. **Part Three** documents the pre-categorization apparatus — the information ecosystem that filters contradicting evidence at the source-attribution step. A short hinge then locates the American case in the comparative-politics literature on competitive authoritarianism. **Part Four** documents the loyalty-by-repetition layer—the mechanism that maintains coalition cohesion in the face of observable contradiction. **Part Five** presents the in-tradition counter-witness: the body of conservative and religious writing that has documented the same architecture from inside the tradition the reader belongs to. **Part Six** is the convergence — the closing of the loop between this paper and *The Party Left the Building*, and the precise architectural account of what the two volumes together describe.

Each part stands on documentation rather than argument. The reader who walks through the parts in sequence will have walked through a chain of inference in which every link is sourced. Where the chain concludes, that conclusion is the conclusion the documentation supports. The reader who disagrees with the conclusion will have a clearer view of where, specifically, the disagreement lies — which source they reject, which inference they decline, which evidentiary register they refuse. The disagreement is permitted. The documentation is the floor.

On the Discipline of This Series

This paper was not written to demoralize you. Demoralization is easy. It requires only a catalog of losses, a recitation of failures, and a general claim that the institution is broken beyond redemption. What demoralization produces, in the absence of diagnosis, is despair or dismissal — two responses that are equally useless to anyone who wants to understand what has actually gone wrong and what, specifically, can be done about it.

This paper was written to be specific.

There is a tradition in documentary research — older than political science, older than journalism, older than the republic itself — that holds that the specific and documented truth of what happened is worth more than any narrative constructed on top of it. Narratives can be revised. Interpretations can be contested. The record cannot be unwritten.

This series is a record. It documents, with the specificity and sourcing that documentation requires, what has been built and is being built across the architecture of American political institutions, and how the consent of the population those institutions affect has been engineered, sustained, and protected against the evidence of its own consequences. It does this because documentation is necessary. Documentation has never been sufficient on its own to repair the things it documents as having failed. It is necessary because the structural failure described in these pages depends, at least in part, on the assumption that the people inside it will not fully understand what they are inside. Naming a mechanism precisely — not gesturing at it, not describing it metaphorically, not summarizing it in a slogan, but documenting it specifically enough that it cannot be unsaid — is a small act. It is also one of the few acts that survives the conditions it describes.

The conclusions belong to you.

— E. Lawrence Anderson
April 2026

THE ARCHITECTURE OF CONSENT



PART ONE

The Material Record

What Has Been Done, By Whom, and Through What Apparatus

*Three subsections: the harm record, the policy record,
Moreover, the institutional infrastructure that produced them.*

The Material Record

Any documentary analysis of consent must begin where consent is presumed to originate: in the lived conditions of the population whose votes authorize the architecture's election. The political coalition under examination has been sustained, across the 2016, 2020, and 2024 presidential cycles, by majorities concentrated in specific geographies — non-metropolitan counties, deindustrialized regions, the deep-red precincts of the Midwest and the South, the agricultural stretches of the Plains, the small cities and towns where economic anchor industries have been hollowed out by trade liberalization, automation, and capital concentration. The dominant political narrative attributes the conditions of these populations to a defined set of named causes: immigration, cultural change, the intrusion of the federal government, the secular professional class, and the policies of the institutional left.

The documentary record places the causes elsewhere. This part assembles that record. It does so in three layers. The first documents the harm — what has actually happened to the populations under examination, with specificity and primary sourcing. The second documents the policy regime that produced the harm: the legislative, regulatory, and judicial choices made by political actors across administrations that generated the measured outcomes. The third documents the institutional infrastructure that produced the policy regime — the donor networks, think tanks, legal organizations, and movement-building apparatus through which a forty-five-year construction project converted concentrated capital into legislative outputs and judicial doctrine.

The three layers, taken together, establish a documentary chain. The harm is real. The policies that produced it are identifiable. The institutional infrastructure that produced the policies is locatable in primary sources. None of the three layers requires interpretive amplification to function as evidence. Each is documented in peer-reviewed scholarship, primary government data, or the architects' own statements. The reader who walks through the chain has been walked through, not an argument, but a record.

I. The Harm Record

Begin with mortality. The single most authoritative documentary record of what has happened to the working-class population in the United States since approximately 1990 is the body of work produced by the economists Anne Case and Angus Deaton at Princeton University. In a sequence of peer-reviewed papers culminating in the 2020 Princeton University Press volume *Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism*, Case and Deaton documented a historic reversal in American life-expectancy trends: a sustained, measurable rise in midlife mortality among white, non-Hispanic

Americans aged forty-five through fifty-four, driven by what the authors termed deaths of despair — suicide, drug overdose, and alcoholic liver disease.

The defining demographic marker in the Case-Deaton methodology is education. The mortality reversal is concentrated among Americans without a four-year college degree, with statistical clarity. For Americans with a bachelor's degree, mortality continued to fall across the period. For Americans without one, mortality rose. The authors attribute this divergence to the destruction of what they describe as the working-class way of life: stable employment, marriage and family formation, community institutions tied to long-tenured jobs, and the social meaning that participation in those institutions historically supplied. Their subsequent work, including NBER Working Paper No. 29328 (2021) and the updates published through 2024, documents that the COVID-19 period exacerbated rather than interrupted the gradient. The non-college cohort suffered disproportionately, not only from the virus but from accelerated rates of overdose, suicide, and alcohol-related mortality during the period of economic and social disruption.

The geographic distribution of this mortality is documented in primary government data. The Centers for Disease Control's longitudinal mortality records establish that in 1990, the mortality rates for rural and urban Americans were essentially identical. By 2019, the rural mortality rate exceeded the urban rate by approximately twenty percent. A 2022 study published in the *British Medical Journal* — "US county level trends in mortality rates for major causes of death, 2001 to 2019" — measured this gap against partisan voting patterns and found a widening life-expectancy divergence corresponding to county vote share. Counties carried by Republican presidential candidates by margins of twenty points or more in 2016 and 2020 experienced what the study termed a mortality penalty: stagnating or declining life expectancy relative to counties carried by Democratic candidates, driven principally by deaths of despair and chronic disease.

The economic correlate is documented with comparable specificity. Brookings Institution research, conducted by Mark Muro and the Brookings Metro program across a sequence of analyses from 2016 through 2024, established that the counties carried by Republican presidential candidates by twenty points or more represent a contracting share of national GDP — approximately thirty percent in 2024, down from nearly forty percent in 2000. Bureau of Economic Analysis regional GDP data confirm the pattern. Since the 2008 financial crisis, virtually all aggregate net job growth and GDP expansion have been geographically concentrated in the top 100 Metropolitan Statistical Areas, while non-metropolitan areas have experienced flat or negative real GDP growth. Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data documents the consequence: the wage premium for urban workers over rural workers has expanded substantially across the period, as mid-skill manufacturing jobs in non-metropolitan areas have been replaced by lower-wage service-sector employment.

The China Shock and Its Scarring Effects

The mechanism by which manufacturing employment was extracted from the affected regions is documented in the body of work assembled by David Autor, David Dorn, and Gordon Hanson, as well as in the subsequent literature that emerged from their findings. Their 2013 paper, “The China Syndrome: Local Labor Market Effects of Import Competition in the United States,” published in the *American Economic Review*, established that local labor markets exposed to Chinese import competition following China’s 2001 accession to the World Trade Organization experienced higher unemployment, lower labor-force participation, and reduced wages. The promised frictionless transition to higher-skill sectors did not occur. Displaced workers did not relocate to labor markets with better functioning. They dropped out of the workforce, in many cases permanently, and increasingly relied on Social Security Disability Insurance and other federal transfer programs.

Pierce and Schott’s 2016 paper in the same journal — “The Surprisingly Swift Decline of US Manufacturing Employment” — connected the manufacturing collapse directly to the granting of Permanent Normal Trade Relations to China in October 2000, establishing that the removal of tariff uncertainty incentivized rapid offshoring of supply chains in the immediate post-PNTR period. Subsequent work by Autor, Dorn, Hanson, and Majlesi (*American Economic Review*, 2020) documented the political consequence: commuting zones most exposed to the China Shock systematically displaced moderate political incumbents in favor of hardline candidates of both parties, with the rightward shift dominating in numerical terms. This was not an interpretive claim. It was a measured electoral consequence of a measured economic shock, traceable to a specific legislative authorization in October 2000.

The longer-term finding, documented in the authors’ subsequent updates, is what they term scarring: even after Chinese import volumes leveled off in the late 2010s, the affected regions did not recover. The destruction of the manufacturing base produced permanent demographic and economic stagnation. The manufacturing jobs did not come back. The workers who lost them did not transition to other sectors at meaningful rates. The communities in which those jobs were concentrated entered a long contraction whose endpoint has not yet been reached.

Healthcare Consolidation and the Pharmacy Desert

The infrastructure of rural healthcare has contracted in parallel. The Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research at the University of North Carolina has tracked rural hospital closures across the period; its data establishes that more than 190 rural hospitals have closed or ceased inpatient services since 2005. The causes documented in the Sheps Center’s research are specific: inadequate Medicare reimbursement structures, the refusal of Republican-controlled state legislatures to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act (which left rural hospitals with high uncompensated-

care burdens), and the population depletion that compounds with each closure. Hospital consolidation has proceeded in parallel: economist Martin Gaynor's work, particularly his 2020 Hamilton Project/Brookings analysis, shows that hospital mergers over the last three decades have led to substantial price increases for patients and employers without measurable improvements in care quality.

The pharmacy infrastructure has contracted on a similar trajectory. The Rural Policy Research Institute reports that hundreds of independent rural pharmacies have closed over the past decade, largely because Pharmacy Benefit Manager reimbursement rates often fall below the cost of dispensing medications. The PBM market is itself an oligopoly: the top three PBMs control approximately eighty percent of the national market. The policy outcome is what RUPRI terms a pharmacy desert: counties in which residents must drive substantial distances to access prescription medications, with measurable adverse health consequences for chronic-disease patients.

Agricultural Consolidation and the Erosion of Independent Farming

The agrarian economy, which constitutes a significant portion of the conservative coalition's self-identity, has been subject to a parallel consolidation. United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service data documents the steady displacement of mid-sized, family-operated farms by large corporate operations. The processing infrastructure has consolidated to a degree that distorts price formation: four corporations now control approximately eighty-five percent of the United States beef-packing market, a level of monopsony power that allows packers to depress prices paid to independent ranchers while raising prices charged to consumers. The Open Markets Institute and the Economic Policy Institute have documented this dynamic in detail. The independent farmer is increasingly reduced to a contractor for agricultural conglomerates, carrying substantial debt loads on equipment and land, dependent on terms dictated by the conglomerates that control the processing channel through which the produce must move.

The aggregate picture that emerges from the documentary record is specific. Across the period from approximately 1990 through 2026, the populations that have provided the political coalition under examination with its electoral majorities have experienced: rising midlife mortality concentrated among non-college-educated cohorts; geographic divergence in life expectancy correlating with partisan voting patterns; manufacturing employment collapse traceable to specific trade liberalization choices; healthcare infrastructure contraction; pharmacy and hospital closure; agricultural consolidation that has hollowed out the economic basis of independent farming; and the loss of the community institutions historically tied to long-tenured employment and local economic stability. The harm is documented. It is not in dispute. The question is what produced it.

II. The Policy Record

The conditions documented in Section I are not the result of impersonal forces acting on a passive policy environment. They are the result of specific legislative, regulatory, and judicial choices made by identifiable political actors across a period of approximately forty-five years, justified by stated rationales whose empirical record can be measured against their actual outcomes. This section documents that policy regime in five domains: taxation, trade, antitrust enforcement, financial deregulation, and healthcare. In each domain, the documentary record establishes a divergence between the regime's stated rationale and its measured distributional outcome. In each domain, the divergence is visible in primary economic data and peer-reviewed economics scholarship.

Taxation: The Top Income Share, 1980 to 2024

The post-1981 American tax regime, initiated by the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 and culminating in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, was justified by supply-side economic theories holding that lower marginal rates on high incomes and corporate profits would increase capital investment, raise productivity, and generate aggregate wage growth distributed across the income distribution. The empirical record documents a different outcome. Piketty, Saez, and Zucman, in their 2018 paper "Distributional National Accounts: Methods and Estimates for the United States," published in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, document that the top one percent share of national pre-tax income approximately doubled from roughly ten percent in 1980 to over twenty percent by 2014, while the bottom fifty percent of the income distribution experienced near-zero pre-tax income growth across the same period.

Saez and Zucman's subsequent work, including *The Triumph of Injustice* (W. W. Norton, 2019) and the NBER working papers updated through 2024, documents that in 2018 — the first year of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act's full operation — the top four hundred wealthiest Americans paid a lower total effective tax rate, including federal, state, and local taxes, than any other income group. The cause is identifiable in the legislative record: systematic reductions in corporate income tax rates, the proliferation of pass-through entity structures that allow business income to be taxed at preferential rates, and the long-term reduction in the top marginal rate on labor income. The Congressional Budget Office's annual *Distribution of Household Income* reports confirm the trajectory: the equalizing effect of federal taxation has diminished steadily since 1981, even as the tax-and-transfer system retains formal progressivity.

Trade: NAFTA, PNTR, and the Bipartisan Authorization

The trade-liberalization policy choices that produced the manufacturing-employment collapse documented in Section, bipartisan legislative majorities authorized me. The North American Free

Trade Agreement was signed by the Clinton administration in 1993 and ratified by Congress with substantial Republican support and divided Democratic support. Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China were authorized in October 2000, again under the Clinton administration, with strong support from the Chamber of Commerce, multinational corporate lobbies, and a bipartisan congressional coalition. The justification offered to the affected populations was that trade liberalization would lower consumer prices and transition displaced workers into higher-skill sectors. Hakobyan and McLaren, in their 2016 paper in *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, document that blue-collar workers in locations dependent on industries protected by pre-NAFTA tariffs experienced significant wage stagnation relative to the rest of the country. The Autor / Dorn / Hanson body of work, cited above, established that the post-PNTR transition did not occur; the displaced workers did not move to better-functioning labor markets.

The political importance of this record, for present purposes, is that both parties authorized the trade-policy choices that produced the manufacturing collapse. The dominant political narrative subsequently delivered to the affected populations attributed their condition to immigration, cultural change, and the policies of the institutional left. The legislative record places the cause in trade-policy choices made by a bipartisan coalition that included substantial Republican support. The architects of the policy were not the named enemies of the dominant narrative.

Antitrust: The Consumer Welfare Standard and Market Concentration

The antitrust enforcement regime that has governed American markets since the 1980s was built on the philosophical foundation laid by Robert Bork's 1978 book *The Antitrust Paradox*. Bork's argument — that antitrust enforcement should be limited to cases in which corporate consolidation produces immediate consumer-price effects, and should not consider broader structural effects on workers, suppliers, or democratic governance — was institutionalized in the Department of Justice and Federal Trade Commission across the Reagan administration and sustained, with variation, by every subsequent administration through approximately 2020.

The empirical consequence is documented in Thomas Philippon's 2019 *The Great Reversal: How America Gave Up on Free Markets* (Belknap Press), which provides exhaustive sector-by-sector data on American market concentration. Philippon documents that United States markets have become substantially more concentrated than European markets across the period, that the result has been higher prices, lower corporate investment, and lower wages, and that DOJ and FTC merger challenges declined substantially relative to economic size between 1990 and 2016. Lina Khan's 2017 *Yale Law Journal* article "Amazon's Antitrust Paradox" — the foundational text of what has come to be called the New Brandeis movement — extends the analysis to digital platform monopolies, documenting how the Bork standard fails to address consolidation that operates by extracting wealth from independent producers while keeping nominal consumer prices low.

The connection to the agricultural consolidation documented in Section I is direct. The four-firm dominance of beef-packing, the corresponding consolidation in pork, poultry, and grain, the consolidation of farm-equipment manufacturing, and the consolidation of agricultural-input markets all proceeded under an antitrust regime that did not contest them because the Bork standard did not consider their effects on the independent farmer or the rural economy. The pharmacy desert documented above proceeded under the same regime: the PBM oligopoly was permitted to consolidate because the consumer-welfare standard did not register the squeeze on independent pharmacies as a cognizable antitrust harm.

Financial Deregulation and the 2008 Wealth Destruction

The financial-deregulation pillars of the post-1980 policy regime — the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act of 1999, which repealed the Glass-Steagall separation of commercial and investment banking, and the Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000, which exempted over-the-counter derivatives from regulatory oversight — were authorized by bipartisan congressional majorities and signed by the Clinton administration. The empirical work of Atif Mian and Amir Sufi, particularly their 2014 University of Chicago Press volume *House of Debt*, documents the distributional consequences of the 2008 financial crisis that followed: the proliferation of deregulated mortgage products produced catastrophic destruction of net worth concentrated in the bottom half of the wealth distribution, with particular intensity in minority and working-class neighborhoods, while financial institutions were largely shielded by federal bailout authority.

The relevant fact for present purposes is not that the 2008 crisis occurred. It is that the wealth destruction produced by the crisis was distributed in a manner that disproportionately damaged the same populations whose subsequent political behavior is under examination here. The deregulatory choices that created the conditions for the crisis were made on a bipartisan basis. The bailout architecture that protected financial institutions while allowing household wealth destruction to proceed unmitigated was constructed under the Bush administration and continued under the Obama administration.

Healthcare: The Non-Interference Clause and the Cost Divergence

United States healthcare costs diverged sharply from those of comparable Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development countries across the post-2000 period. The divergence is traceable, in significant part, to specific legislative choices that shielded the healthcare sector from the negotiating power wielded by other governments. The Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003, which created Medicare Part D, included what came to be known as the non-interference clause: an explicit statutory prohibition on the federal government negotiating drug prices directly with pharmaceutical manufacturers. The Bush administration and the

Republican congressional majority that authorized the act framed the non-interference clause as a free-market provision. Its measurable effect was to remove the world's largest pharmaceutical purchaser from the price-negotiation process, with the cost differential captured by manufacturers.

The non-interference clause remained substantially intact until the targeted provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 permitted limited negotiation on a small subset of high-cost medications. Across the intervening period — approximately nineteen years — the consequences were evident in pharmaceutical pricing, in the disproportionate burden borne by Medicare-eligible Americans (who skew toward the demographics under examination here), and in the broader cost trajectory of the American healthcare system. Hospital and physician-practice consolidation, documented in the Gaynor work cited above, proceeded in parallel and produced the consolidated provider market that compounds the pharmaceutical cost dynamic.

The pattern that emerges across the five domains is consistent. In each domain, a stated policy rationale was advanced — supply-side growth, frictionless trade adjustment, consumer welfare, financial modernization, free-market healthcare — and the empirical record subsequently established a sharp divergence between the rationale and the distributional outcome. In each domain, the policy choices were authorized in a legislative environment that included substantial bipartisan support but in which the post-1980 conservative movement supplied the dominant ideological framework. In each domain, the populations that bore the disproportionate cost of the policy outcome are the same populations whose political behavior subsequently authorized the continuation of the regime. The question that remains is how this happened. The answer to that question begins with the institutional infrastructure that produced the policy regime in the first place.

III. The Architecture That Built the Architecture

The policy regime documented in Section II was not the product of organic political competition between ideologically symmetric coalitions. It was the engineered output of a specific institutional infrastructure, constructed across the period from approximately 1971 through 2026, funded by a coordinated network of donor capital, articulated by a system of think tanks and policy organizations, propagated through a system of state-level legislative factories, and locked into doctrine through a system of strategic litigation organizations and a judicial pipeline. This infrastructure has names. It has documented funders. It has measurable outputs. The scholarship that documents it is peer-reviewed, primary-sourced, and publicly available.

The Powell Memorandum and the Construction of the Counter-Establishment

The infrastructure's foundational document is the August 1971 confidential memorandum prepared by Lewis F. Powell Jr., then a corporate attorney and shortly to become an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, for the United States Chamber of Commerce. The Powell Memorandum, which became public in 1972 after Powell's nomination, called for a coordinated, long-term, well-funded effort by the American business community to construct an intellectual and political infrastructure capable of countering what Powell described as a sustained attack on the free enterprise system from within the academy, the media, and the political process. The infrastructure that followed — the Heritage Foundation (founded 1973), the American Enterprise Institute's expansion in the 1970s, the Cato Institute (founded 1977), the Manhattan Institute (founded 1978), and the Federalist Society (founded 1982) — was constructed in substantial part in response to the Powell framework.

The Donor Network: Mayer, Skocpol, Hertel-Fernandez

The financial architecture that capitalized this construction is documented in three principal bodies of scholarship. Jane Mayer's 2016 Doubleday volume *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right* provides the foundational documentary account. Mayer documents the construction of the Koch network — the biannual donor seminars convened by Charles and David Koch beginning in the early 2000s, the pooling of capital from allied billionaire donors, the funding apparatus that distributed that capital across academic centers, think tanks, and political-advocacy organizations such as Americans for Prosperity. The 2019 Christopher Leonard volume *Kochland* (Simon & Schuster) extends the documentary record with primary-source detail on the operational structure of Koch Industries and its political apparatus.

The empirical political-science literature, conducted principally by Theda Skocpol of Harvard University and Alexander Hertel-Fernandez of Columbia University, documents how the Koch network functioned as what Skocpol has described as a party within a party: an apparatus that exerted ideological discipline on Republican legislators through primary threats, grassroots mobilization, and the supply or withholding of campaign capital. Hertel-Fernandez's 2019 Oxford University Press volume *State Capture* documents the corresponding state-level apparatus. Anne Nelson's 2019 Bloomsbury volume *Shadow Network: Media, Money, and the Secret Hub of the Radical Right* documents the Council for National Policy, the coordinating body that connects secular billionaire capital with the religious-conservative apparatus addressed in detail in Part Two.

The Think Tank Apparatus and the Mandate for Leadership Lineage

The Heritage Foundation has, since 1981, produced a sequence of policy blueprints under the title *Mandate for Leadership*. The original *Mandate*, prepared for the incoming Reagan administration,

supplied a substantial portion of the personnel and policy architecture that the administration adopted. Each subsequent Republican administration has drawn from the successor Mandate volumes. The 2023 release of the volume that came to be branded Project 2025 represents the most fully developed version of the apparatus: a comprehensive, agency-by-agency operational manual, accompanied by a personnel database of vetted loyalist candidates, designed to permit the rapid replacement of career civil servants and the immediate implementation of pre-staged policy across the federal administrative state.

The Federalist Society's role is documented in two principal scholarly works: Steven Teles's 2008 Princeton University Press volume, *The Rise of the Conservative Legal Movement*, and Amanda Hollis-Brusky's 2015 Oxford University Press volume, *Ideas with Consequences: The Federalist Society and the Conservative Counterrevolution*. The Federalist Society was constructed not as a debating organization but as a credentialing and networking pipeline. It legitimized originalism as a competing constitutional doctrine, supplied a counter-establishment legal elite with shared institutional commitments, and built the personnel infrastructure that, under the Trump administration, supplied three Supreme Court justices and substantially reshaped the federal appellate courts. The judicial-selection apparatus, coordinated principally by Federalist Society co-chair Leonard Leo, has been documented by ProPublica and OpenSecrets in detail across the post-2020 period; the 2022 disclosure of Barre Seid's \$1.6 billion donation to Leo's Marble Freedom Trust represents the largest single political contribution in American history of which there is public record.

State-Level Architecture: ALEC and the State Policy Network

The state-level apparatus operates through two principal coordinating organizations. The American Legislative Exchange Council, founded in 1973, convenes corporate-funded task forces that produce model legislation, which is subsequently introduced, frequently verbatim, in state legislatures across the country. The Center for Media and Democracy and its associated researchers have documented this process in detail: the model bills addressing right-to-work labor regulation, voter identification requirements, preemption of municipal regulatory authority, and constraints on public-sector collective bargaining have proceeded through state legislatures on schedules that correlate closely with their introduction at ALEC task forces. The State Policy Network, a coordinated apparatus of approximately fifty state-level think tanks operating in parallel with the national infrastructure, provides the localized policy advocacy and media presence that converts the model bills into politically viable proposals at the state level.

Hertel-Fernandez's *State Capture* documents this apparatus with particular precision. The state-level legislative outputs — the post-Shelby County v. Holder voter-restriction laws addressed in Part Two, the right-to-work expansions, the preemption statutes that constrain progressive municipal

governments, the privatization initiatives — are not the spontaneous expressions of state-level political preferences. They are the implementation of model legislation produced by a coordinated national infrastructure operating through state-level franchises.

The Strategic Litigation Apparatus

The judicial dimension of the infrastructure operates through a system of strategic litigation organizations: the Alliance Defending Freedom, the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, the First Liberty Institute, the Pacific Legal Foundation, and others. These organizations do not merely accept cases that come to them. They actively recruit plaintiffs, engineer test cases, and select strategic venues. Their function is to produce the litigation that, when consolidated through the appellate courts to the Supreme Court, produces the doctrinal shifts that lock in the policy preferences of the broader infrastructure. The post-2010 doctrinal trajectory on religious liberty, administrative-state independence, voting rights, regulatory authority, and campaign finance has been driven, in substantial part, by cases originating in the strategic litigation apparatus.

The connective tissue between the litigation apparatus and the judicial pipeline is provided by Cooper & Kirk and a small number of comparable boutique law firms, which serve as the elite-credentialing pipeline for movement attorneys, and by the Federalist Society's appointment-coordination function. The 2017-2021 federal judicial appointments under the Trump administration were drawn substantially from this network. The post-2025 appointment trajectory has accelerated the same pattern.

Convergence: What the Three Layers Together Establish

The harm record, the policy record, and the institutional infrastructure record together constitute a documentary chain spanning forty-five years. The harm is measured in Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data, Centers for Disease Control mortality data, Bureau of Economic Analysis regional GDP data, and peer-reviewed mortality and economic studies. The policy regime is measured in the legislative record of the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981, NAFTA, PNTR with China, the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, the Commodity Futures Modernization Act, the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, and the regulatory and enforcement record of the antitrust regime constructed under the Bork framework. The institutional infrastructure is measured in the documentary record of the Powell Memorandum, the Heritage Foundation lineage, the Federalist Society's institutional history, the Koch network's documented funding flows, ALEC's model legislation archive, the State Policy Network's affiliate roster, and the strategic litigation apparatus's case record.

What the three layers together establish, with documentary specificity, is that the conditions of the populations whose electoral majorities have authorized the architecture's continuation are not the product of impersonal forces, are not the result of immigration or cultural change or the policies of the institutional left, and are not the unfortunate side effect of a well-intentioned policy regime whose authors could not have anticipated its consequences. They are the measurable outcomes of a specific policy regime, produced by a specific institutional infrastructure, funded by a specific donor network, articulated by a specific apparatus of think tanks and policy organizations, and locked into doctrine by a specific judicial pipeline. The architects of the regime are identifiable in primary sources. The regime's outcomes are identifiable in primary government data. The chain of causation runs from the documented infrastructure through the documented policy choices to the documented harm.

The remaining question is how a documentary records this specific production, in the populations it documents as harmed, and in electoral support for the architecture's continuation. That question is the subject of the remainder of the paper. It does not have a mysterious answer. The answer is documented with the same specificity as the harm itself, and it is documented in peer-reviewed scholarship, in primary statements by the architects of the political strategies under examination, and in the testimony of conservatives, religious leaders, and movement insiders who have documented the apparatus from inside the tradition that built it. Part Two begins that documentation.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF CONSENT



PART TWO

The Cosmology

How the Cause Gets Substituted, and Through What Apparatus

*Four sections: the framework of substitution, the theological vector,
the racial grievance vector, and the daily delivery system.*

The Cosmology

Part One established that the conditions of the populations whose electoral majorities have authorized the architecture's continuation are the measurable outcomes of a documented policy regime, produced by a documented institutional infrastructure, funded by a documented donor network. The harm is real. The cause is locatable. The chain runs from the institutional infrastructure through the policy choices to the conditions on the ground. None of that chain is hidden. All of it is documented in primary sources and peer-reviewed scholarship.

The question this part addresses is how a chain of causation that specifically produces harm in the populations it documents leads to electoral support for the architecture's continuation. The answer is not that the affected populations are unaware that something is wrong. They are entirely aware. The lived evidence of the harm is daily, granular, and inescapable: the wages, the closures, the deaths, the contraction of the institutions through which their parents and grandparents organized their lives. The dominant political narrative does not deny this evidence. It accepts it. What it does is supply a different account of what produced it.

This part documents that account. The framework is a cosmology — a comprehensive interpretive structure through which lived conditions are organized into a story about who has done what to whom. The cosmology has four documentable components. The first is the underlying psychological framework — what scholars in the Hofstadter tradition have called status anxiety, and what the rural-resentment ethnographers have called the deep story. The second is the theological vector that operates with particular force on white evangelical Protestantism, supplying a spiritual-warfare framework in which political opposition is reinterpreted as cosmic conflict. The third is the racial grievance vector, documented in historical scholarship and the empirical political-science literature, which has served as the foundational organizing structure of the post-1964 conservative coalition. The fourth is the delivery system — the named, traceable, measurable apparatus through which the cosmology arrives in the reader's daily life.

Each component is documented in peer-reviewed scholarship, primary sources, or the architects' own statements. None requires interpretive amplification to function as evidence.

I. The Framework: Status, Resentment, and the Deep Story

The contemporary political behavior of the populations under examination has a documented analytical history that predates the contemporary moment by approximately six decades. In November 1963, Richard Hofstadter delivered the Herbert Spencer Lecture at Oxford University on

what he termed the paranoid style in American politics. The lecture was published in *Harper's Magazine* in November 1964, and subsequently expanded into the 1965 Alfred A. Knopf volume *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*. Hofstadter argued that a recurring feature of American political life was a style of mind characterized by what he described as heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy. Crucially, he attributed this style not to objective economic deprivation but to status anxiety: the psychological distress experienced by groups who feel their cultural dominance and social prestige eroding.

The Hofstadter framework has been the subject of sustained scholarly engagement across the intervening sixty years. Materialist critics in the 1970s and 1980s argued that he over-psychologized right-wing political movements and dismissed legitimate structural grievances. The framework's resurgence in peer-reviewed political-science literature since 2016 has been driven by its analytical fit with the dynamics of the Trump-era coalition, QAnon, and global populist movements: a coalition motivated less by deprivation than by perceived demographic and cultural displacement, organized through totalizing conspiratorial narratives that substitute for complex causal accounts of structural change.

Hofstadter's framework supplies the theoretical scaffolding. The empirical and ethnographic literature of the past decade has supplied the documentation. Four works form the documentary core.

Hochschild and the Deep Story

Arlie Russell Hochschild's 2016 New Press volume *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* is the result of five years of ethnographic field research conducted principally in Louisiana. Hochschild lived among, interviewed, and accompanied Tea Party activists across a period of substantial structural change in their communities, and her findings introduced into the political-science literature what has come to be a load-bearing analytical concept: the deep story.

The deep story, as Hochschild defines it, is the subjective emotional narrative through which a group makes sense of its political circumstances. This story feels true regardless of the empirical record. The deep story Hochschild documented in her Louisiana subjects ran approximately as follows. They were standing in line for the American Dream. They had played by the rules: worked hard, raised families, served their country, attended church, paid their taxes. The line was moving slowly. And then they began to notice that other groups — racial minorities, immigrants, women claiming new entitlements, government employees on pensions — were being permitted, by the federal government, to cut in line ahead of them. The deep story did not require this account to be empirically accurate. It required it to feel accurate.

What makes Hochschild's documentation analytically essential, for present purposes, is the specific community she studied. Her subjects lived in southwestern Louisiana, in counties whose lived environments had been substantially degraded by petrochemical-industry pollution. Their drinking water was contaminated. Their cancer rates were elevated. Their wetlands and fisheries had been damaged by oil-and-gas extraction. The empirical cause of the harm to their communities was identifiable in the corporate-extraction record. Their political response, documented in Hochschild's ethnographic record, was sustained opposition to environmental regulation. The deep story attributed the conditions of their lives not to the corporations that had produced them but to the federal government that was attempting to constrain those corporations, and to the marginalized groups whom that government was perceived to favor.

The pattern Hochschild documented in Louisiana is not a Louisiana pattern. It is the documented operational logic of causal substitution. The harm is recognized. The cause is reattributed.

Cramer and Rural Consciousness

Katherine Cramer's 2016 University of Chicago Press volume *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker* documents an analogous dynamic in a different geography. Cramer conducted her research across rural Wisconsin during the period of Governor Scott Walker's rise and the contests over public-sector union rights that defined Wisconsin politics in the early 2010s. Her finding was that rural Wisconsin voters interpreted their economic stagnation through a framework she termed rural consciousness: a set of attitudes structured around the perception that urban elites and public-sector employees were systematically extracting resources from rural communities and concentrating them in the metropolitan zones.

What Cramer's research documents is the construction of resentment as a political resource. The actual structural drivers of rural Wisconsin's economic stagnation — agricultural consolidation, manufacturing decline, the contraction of mid-skill employment, and the long-term divergence of metropolitan and non-metropolitan economic outcomes documented in Part One — were not the targets of the rural consciousness she documented. The targets were teachers, public-sector employees, university faculty, and the urban populations whom rural voters perceived as the beneficiaries of public expenditure. The political vehicle through which the resentment was operationalized — the Walker administration's assault on public-sector collective bargaining — produced policy outcomes that further damaged rural Wisconsin's economic position. The resentment redirected the political response away from the actual structural drivers and toward symbolic targets whose constraint produced no improvement in rural conditions.

Wuthnow and the Moral Geography of Decline

Robert Wuthnow's 2018 Princeton University Press volume *The Left Behind: Decline and Rage in Rural America* adds the dimension that connects the rural-resentment literature to the religious-cosmology literature that Section II will address. Wuthnow conducted his research across rural communities in the Plains states, the South, and parts of the Midwest. His finding is that rural voters interpret economic decline not as the consequence of policy choices but as a symptom of moral decay engineered by Washington — a federal government perceived as alien to the moral framework of the communities it taxes and regulates.

The analytical move that Wuthnow documents is the conversion of structural decline into a moral narrative. The closure of a manufacturing plant, the contraction of a town's main street, the loss of the church congregation that anchored a community — these are not, in the framework Wuthnow's subjects supplied, the predictable outcomes of capital concentration and corporate consolidation. They are the visible evidence of moral betrayal by a federal apparatus whose values do not align with those of the communities it governs. The political consequence is that the response to the conditions is articulated as a defense of moral community against federal overreach, rather than as a contestation of the corporate interests whose decisions have produced the conditions.

Gest and the Loss of Centrality

Justin Gest's 2016 Oxford University Press volume *The New Minority: White Working Class Politics in an Age of Immigration and Inequality* supplies the comparative dimension. Gest's research compared the post-traumatic deindustrialized cities of Youngstown, Ohio, and East London. He documented that the white working-class populations of both cities had experienced a profound loss of what he termed social centrality — the sense of being the population at the cultural and political center of the society. They attributed this loss not to the structural forces that had hollowed out their economic position but to their relegation to the political margins, a relegation they understood as the consequence of immigration, demographic change, and the ascendance of cultural priorities they did not share.

What Gest's comparative work establishes is that the dynamic under documentation here is not specific to the United States. The same psychological and political pattern appears in the working-class populations of other deindustrialized economies, where the same causal-substitution mechanism redirects political response away from the economic and corporate interests that have driven the structural change and toward immigration, cultural minorities, and the marginalized populations whom the dominant narrative presents as the agents of the change.

The Empirical Measurement of the Attribution Gap

The ethnographic findings have been corroborated in the quantitative political-science literature. Boliang Wu, in a 2021 paper published in *Political Science Research and Methods*, titled “Misattributed blame? Attitudes toward globalization in the age of automation,” used nationally representative survey data to measure the gap between the actual drivers of workers’ economic vulnerability and the targets they identified as the cause of that vulnerability. Wu’s finding was that workers facing the highest objective risk of job displacement from automation systematically misattributed their economic vulnerability to free trade and immigration. The cause of the harm — technological displacement of routine work — was substituted, in the workers’ political response, by the named enemies the dominant narrative had supplied.

Hayes, Imai, and Shelton’s 2015 paper in *Economic Inquiry*, “Attribution Error in Economic Voting: Evidence from Trade Shocks,” supplies the corresponding electoral measurement. The authors isolated economic downturns produced entirely by exogenous global trade shocks — factors that domestic political incumbents had no capacity to control or prevent — and documented that voters reliably punished the incumbent government for the resulting downturn. The implication, established empirically, is that voters do not assign blame using accurate causal models. They use heuristic blame-assignment, and the heuristics through which blame is assigned are themselves products of the cosmology framework documented here.

The body of work assembled across Hofstadter, Hochschild, Cramer, Wuthnow, Gest, and the empirical attribution-gap literature supplies the framework. What remains is to document its specific vectors. Two of those vectors exert particular force within the current coalition. The first is theological. The second is racial.

II. The Theological Vector

White evangelical Protestants are, as of the 2025 PRRI Census of American Religion, approximately 13% of the United States population — a substantial decline from approximately 23% in 2006. They are also, across the 2016, 2020, and 2024 presidential elections, the most unified demographic voting bloc in the United States, with support for Donald Trump consistently breaking the eighty-percent threshold across all three cycles. White Christians collectively constitute approximately sixty-eight percent of the Republican Party as of 2025 PRRI data, with white evangelicals as the dominant driving force. The political consolidation has accelerated even as the demographic share has contracted.

The historical scholarship that documents how this demographic became politically consolidated dismantles the popular narrative that the religious right was a spontaneous reaction to *Roe v. Wade*. The actual record establishes a multi-decade construction project that fused free-market capitalism, Christian libertarianism, and institutional infrastructure into a politically operational coalition long before the abortion question became its public organizing theme.

The Construction of the Religious Right

Daniel K. Williams's 2010 Oxford University Press volume *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* traces the movement to grassroots evangelical mobilization in the 1960s, arguing that the Christian Right was not a 1970s reaction but a sustained, multi-decade effort to build a partisan apparatus capable of protecting evangelical cultural dominance against the secularization of post-war American society. Frances FitzGerald's 2017 Simon & Schuster volume, *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America*, provides a comprehensive historical through-line from the early-twentieth-century fundamentalist-modernist controversies to the Trump era, documenting how the religious infrastructure of the American South gradually subsumed the national Republican apparatus.

Kevin Kruse's 2015 Basic Books volume *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* documents an earlier and analytically essential layer of construction. Kruse traces the deliberate alliance, beginning in the 1930s and 1940s, between corporate industrialists and conservative clergy. The objective was to break the moral appeal of the New Deal by funding pastors to preach what came to be called Christian libertarianism — the explicit theological equation of welfare-state regulation with godless collectivism, and of unregulated capitalism with divine providence. The connection between the donor-network architecture documented in Part One and the theological apparatus under examination here is, in Kruse's documentation, not metaphorical. It is operational and traceable to the specific corporate funders who underwrote the construction.

Anne Nelson's 2019 Bloomsbury volume *Shadow Network: Media, Money, and the Secret Hub of the Radical Right* documents the contemporary coordination apparatus. Nelson's research focuses on the Council for National Policy, the closed-door coordinating body that connects secular billionaire capital with the fundamentalist media and grassroots-organizing infrastructure. The CNP membership rosters, donor records, and operational documents establish that the connection between the donor network of Part One and the religious-political apparatus of Part Two is not parallel but unified: the same coordinating structures, the same overlapping personnel, the same pooled capital, applied across both the secular policy infrastructure and the religious mobilization apparatus.

Du Mez and Militarized Masculinity

Kristin Kobes Du Mez's 2020 Liveright volume, *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*, documents what is perhaps the most analytically essential single finding in contemporary scholarship. Du Mez establishes, through close reading of seventy-five years of evangelical popular literature, sermon archives, men's ministry materials, and youth-formation curricula, that white evangelicalism in the post-1945 period is not principally a theological

framework organized around biblical literalism. It is a cultural and political movement organized around militarized, patriarchal masculinity.

The Christ figure central to this movement is not the gentle Jesus of the canonical gospels. It is a warrior-Christ archetype modeled on figures like John Wayne and William Wallace, requiring of the faithful aggressive, unapologetic strongmen capable of defending the faith against secular culture. Within this framework, conventional moral character in a political leader is not a primary criterion. What is required is ruthlessness, provided the ruthlessness is deployed against the out-group. Du Mez's documentation explains, with analytical precision, why the evangelical embrace of Donald Trump in 2016 was not an aberration in evangelical political behavior. It was the culmination of a half-century of internal cultural and theological development. Trump fit the warrior-Christ archetype with a precision that more conventionally moral candidates did not.

The Christian Nationalism Scale and the Empirical Record

Andrew Whitehead and Samuel Perry's 2020 Oxford University Press volume *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States* developed and validated the empirical instrument now standard in the political-science literature for measuring this dimension. The Christian Nationalism Scale operationalizes a set of attitudes — that the United States is a Christian nation, that the federal government should declare it so, that Christian values should structure public policy, that prayer should be reintroduced into public schools — and measures their distribution across the American population. The scale is robust, replicable, and methodologically transparent.

The empirical findings the scale produces are specific. High scorers on the Christian Nationalism Scale consistently support authoritarian social control, militarized policing, the disenfranchisement of out-groups, and the curtailment of pluralist democratic norms. They interpret these positions as divine mandates rather than as policy preferences. The scale measures, with statistical precision, a political theology in which the protection of Christian cultural dominance takes priority over the procedural commitments — pluralism, fair elections, equal protection, peaceful transfer of power — that have historically structured American constitutional democracy.

Robert P. Jones's 2016 Simon & Schuster volume, *The End of White Christian America*, and his 2020 follow-up, *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity*, provide the demographic and historical context. Jones, drawing on extensive Public Religion Research Institute polling data, documents that the white evangelical political response to demographic and cultural change is operating from what he characterizes as a posture of profound demographic grief. The contraction of white Christian America's absolute majority status has induced, in this demographic, a state that Jones documents in his polling: a political panic sufficient to produce explicit rejection of

democratic pluralism in favor of policies designed to protect institutional power against the demographic shift.

Philip Gorski and Samuel Perry's 2022 Oxford University Press volume *The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy* traces the historical fusion of white supremacy, expansionist nationalism, and biblical rhetoric that produced the contemporary Christian-nationalist framework. Gorski's documentation establishes that the modern iteration is not a deviation from the historical American religious mainstream. It is the latest expression of a strain of American political theology with a documented history extending back to the colonial period.

Spiritual Warfare, Persecution, and Eschatological Acceleration

The cosmology that operates within this theological framework comprises three specific components, each of which functions as a causal-substitution mechanism for the lived conditions documented in Part One.

The first is spiritual warfare. Within the contemporary charismatic and Pentecostal currents that have come to dominate substantial portions of the apparatus, political opposition is not interpreted as the policy preferences of fellow citizens. It is interpreted as the literal, demonic activity of cosmic agents operating through political opponents. Inflation is not a function of monetary policy and supply-chain disruption; it is engineered demonic disruption directed at the faithful. Demographic change is not the product of immigration policy and economic incentive; it is a demonic invasion. Within this framework, political compromise becomes theologically impossible — not because the policy stakes do not permit it, but because the spiritual cosmology renders the opposition non-human.

The second is the persecution complex. White Christian-nationalist communications, despite the demographic's continued possession of a Supreme Court majority, multiple state legislatures, and substantial corporate-media presence, sustain a continuous narrative of imminent persecution and existential threat. Whitehead and Perry's data documents this dynamic with specificity. The persecution narrative justifies minoritarian rule, the curtailment of pluralist norms, and the construction of the architectural mechanisms documented in the broader Yellow Jacket project as defensive measures against an extermination that is always immediately about to occur. The persecution does not have to materialize. It has to be sustained as the operating belief framework.

The third is eschatological acceleration. The premillennial dispensationalist currents that have shaped substantial portions of evangelical political theology since the late nineteenth century interpret historical events as evidence of approaching apocalyptic fulfillment. Within this framework, structural decay, institutional collapse, environmental degradation, and political chaos are not failures requiring repair. They are predicted signs of divine prophecy fulfilling itself. This produces a

posture of political response that is structurally insulated from accountability for material conditions: the deteriorating wages and the deaths of despair documented in Part One are, within the eschatological framework, evidence not of policy failure but of approaching apocalyptic fulfillment, and therefore not grounds for reconsidering the political program that has produced them.

III. The Racial Grievance Vector

The third vector of the cosmology is racial. The historical scholarship situates racial grievance not as a byproduct of contemporary polarization but as the foundational organizing structure of the post-Civil Rights conservative coalition. The documentary record on this point is unusually clear, in part because the architects of the political strategy under examination spoke about it explicitly, on the record, in their own voices. The empirical political-science literature subsequently confirmed, with quantitative precision, what the architects had already documented in their own statements.

The Foundational Historical Scholarship

Carol Anderson's 2016 Bloomsbury volume, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*, and her 2018 follow-up, *One Person, No Vote*, establish the long pattern: every major advancement for Black Americans in American political and legal life has been met with structurally embedded, legally codified backlash. The transition from Reconstruction to Jim Crow, the post-Brown massive-resistance apparatus, the post-Civil-Rights-Act realignment, and the post-Shelby-County voter-restriction legislation are, in Anderson's documentation, components of a continuous structural pattern rather than separate historical episodes.

Ian Haney López's 2014 Oxford University Press volume *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class* advances what has come to be called the strategic-racism thesis. Haney López's argument, supported by detailed analysis of the political record, is that the coded language of late-twentieth-century American conservative politics — forced busing, welfare queens, law and order, illegal aliens, urban crime, states' rights — was deliberately engineered to activate white racial anxiety, and was deployed to forge a cross-class political coalition that subsequently authorized corporate deregulation and tax cuts that operated against the material interests of working-class whites. The mechanism Haney López documents is the mechanism this paper has been documenting under the term causal substitution: the redirection of working-class economic grievance away from its actual structural drivers and toward racialized targets.

Kevin Kruse's 2005 Princeton University Press volume, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*, supplies the urban-history dimension. Through a close examination of the Atlanta case, Kruse establishes that the foundational rhetoric of modern American conservatism — freedom of association, neighborhood schools, anti-government privatization, and opposition to

public accommodation — emerged from resistance to desegregation rather than from a separate libertarian intellectual tradition. The conservative-movement architecture documented in Part One did not predate the racial-grievance vector and incidentally absorb it. It was constructed, in significant part, from materials produced in the resistance to desegregation.

Nancy MacLean's 2017 Viking volume *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America* traces the connection between the defense of southern segregation, particularly through the work of economist James M. Buchanan, and the modern libertarian architecture that seeks to insulate property rights and corporate interests from democratic, increasingly multi-racial majoritarian control. Rick Perlstein's four-volume historical sequence — *Before the Storm*, *Nixonland*, *The Invisible Bridge*, and *Reaganland* (Simon & Schuster, 2001 through 2020) — supplies the comprehensive narrative history of how the Republican Party absorbed the Wallace voter and institutionalized white cultural and racial backlash into a sustained national electoral strategy. Dan T. Carter's 1995 *The Politics of Rage* documents George Wallace's 1968 campaign as the operational template that the Nixon and Reagan campaigns subsequently refined.

The Atwater Transcript and the Phillips Record

The intentionality of this strategy is documented, on the record, by the architects themselves. The single most analytically important primary document is the 1981 interview given by Republican strategist Lee Atwater to political scientist Alexander P. Lamis, which has been published in multiple subsequent venues, including in Bob Herbert's column in *The New York Times* in 2005. The relevant passage, as cited by Atwater on the operational evolution of the Southern Strategy, reads as follows.

You start in 1954 by saying, [racial epithet], [racial epithet], [racial epithet]. By 1968, you cannot say [the epithet] — that hurts you and backfires. So you say stuff like, uh, forced busing, states' rights, and all that stuff, and you are getting so abstract. Now, you are talking about cutting taxes, and all these things you are talking about are totally economic, and a byproduct of them is that blacks get hurt worse than whites. "We want to cut this," is much more abstract than even the busing thing, uh, and a hell of a lot more abstract than [the epithet].

The passage is not an interpretation. It is the architect of the strategy, describing it in his own voice. The mechanism Atwater articulates is the same mechanism documented in the political-science literature: the abstraction of racial grievance into economic policy language that operates to harm Black Americans disproportionately while permitting the political coalition that authorizes it to maintain plausible deniability about its racial content.

Kevin Phillips's 1969 Arlington House volume *The Emerging Republican Majority* is the corresponding strategic document. Phillips, then a political strategist in the Nixon administration,

laid out the demographic calculus of what came to be known as the Southern Strategy in detail. In a clarifying 1970 interview with *The New York Times*, Phillips described the operational mechanism with similar candor:

From now on, the Republicans are never going to get more than 10 to 20 percent of the Negro vote, and they do not need any more than that. Nevertheless, Republicans would be shortsighted to weaken enforcement of the Voting Rights Act. The more Negroes who register as Democrats in the South, the sooner the Negrophobe whites will quit the Democrats and become Republicans. That is where the votes are.

Phillips's statement establishes, on the record, that the post-1968 Republican strategy was constructed not despite the racial polarization the Voting Rights Act would produce but because of it. Angie Maxwell and Todd Shields's 2019 Oxford University Press volume, *The Long Southern Strategy*, documents how this strategy was deliberately expanded across the subsequent decades from its original Southern application to capture white evangelical voters and white women through interlocking appeals to racial, religious, and gender anxieties.

The Empirical Political-Science Literature

The empirical political-science literature has, since the mid-1990s, used quantitative instruments to measure how racial grievance functions as a predictor of partisan behavior. Donald Kinder and Lynn Sanders's 1996 University of Chicago Press volume *Divided by Color* introduced the Racial Resentment Scale (also termed the symbolic racism battery) into the American National Election Studies. The scale measures a specific set of attitudes — that Black Americans should overcome historical disadvantage without special government assistance, that historical discrimination is overstated, that Black Americans receive more attention than they deserve from government and media — and tracks them across the longitudinal panel of American voters that ANES has maintained since 1948.

The longitudinal ANES findings document a structural shift. Before approximately 2008, high racial resentment scores were present across both major American political parties at comparable levels. Beginning in the Obama presidential cycles and accelerating through 2016 and 2024, racial resentment scores became increasingly correlated with partisan affiliation. By 2024, racial resentment was, in the empirical literature, the single strongest predictor of partisan vote choice in the American electorate, exceeding economic indicators, education, and traditional measures of cultural conservatism.

Michael Tesler's 2016 Cambridge University Press volume *Post-Racial or Most-Racial? Race and Politics in the Obama Era* documents what the empirical literature terms the spillover effect: previously non-racial issues — the Affordable Care Act, the management of the economy, gun policy

— became deeply polarized along racial-resentment lines simply because they were associated, in the public mind, with a Black president. John Sides, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck's 2018 Princeton University Press volume *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America*, drawing on extensive survey datasets, documents that the strongest predictor of voters who shifted from Obama in 2012 to Trump in 2016 was their score on the racial-resentment and anti-immigrant attitude batteries — substantially exceeding economic-anxiety variables in predictive power.

Ashley Jardina's 2019 Cambridge University Press volume *White Identity Politics* adds the analytical refinement that white in-group solidarity — the desire to protect white cultural and demographic dominance — is a distinct, measurable, mobilizable political force separate from direct racial animus. The political-science literature has, in other words, established the empirical apparatus to measure not only racial grievance but the broader white-identity political response that the cosmology documented here mobilizes.

Metzl and the Mortality Cost of the Substitution

Jonathan Metzl's 2019 Basic Books volume *Dying of Whiteness: How the Politics of Racial Resentment Is Killing America's Heartland* documents what is, for present purposes, the analytically essential closing finding. Metzl, a physician and sociologist, conducted research that quantified the mortality cost of the political programs that the racial-grievance cosmology authorizes. His central finding is reducible to a single quoted sentence:

Policies that promise to restore white authority have ended up making white lives sicker, harder, and shorter.

Metzl's empirical findings supply the specific measurements. He calculated that Tennessee's refusal to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act — a refusal driven, his interview research established, by political backlash to its association with the Obama administration — cost every white resident of the state an estimated fourteen days of life. The loosening of gun laws in Missouri, similarly authorized through the racial-grievance political framework, correlated with a statistically substantial spike in white male suicide rates. The political program that the cosmology authorizes is, by direct measurement, killing the population that authorizes it.

Heather McGhie's 2021 One World volume, *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*, provides the historical framework McGhie terms the drained-pool dynamic. In the 1960s, McGhie documents, towns across America literally filled their public swimming pools with concrete rather than integrate them. The white populations that lost access to the pools as a result did not regain access through any subsequent policy. The pools were destroyed. The structural pattern McGhie documents extends to public schools, public healthcare

infrastructure, and public investment more broadly: white populations have repeatedly accepted the destruction of public goods that benefit them rather than permit those goods to be shared with minority populations. The racial-grievance cosmology, as McGhie documents, authorizes a sustained pattern of self-damaging political choices.

The vector documented in this section is not, as the historical record establishes, the entirety of the cosmology. It is one of three vectors operating in coordination with the framework documented in Section I and the theological apparatus documented in Section II. What unites them is their function: they collectively redirect political response away from the structural causes of harm documented in Part One and toward symbolic targets whose mobilization produces no improvement in the conditions and, frequently, makes those conditions worse. The fourth section of this Part documents how this cosmology is delivered into the daily lives of the populations it organizes.

IV. The Delivery System

A cosmology cannot operate as a political force unless it is continuously transmitted to the population it organizes. The framework documented in Sections I, II, and III is not transmitted by accident. It is transmitted through a specific, traceable, named apparatus — a delivery system whose components have measurable audiences, identifiable funders, and documented editorial alignment. This section documents the apparatus.

The Broadcast and Talk-Radio Infrastructure

The post-1987 American conservative media ecosystem is, as Yochai Benkler, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts established in their 2018 Oxford University Press volume *Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics*, asymmetric. Their analysis, drawing on data from millions of news stories and social-media posts, established that the right-wing American media landscape operates within what they termed a propaganda feedback loop, in which ideological consonance is rewarded and contradicting evidence is filtered at the source-attribution step. The mainstream and center-left media landscape, by contrast, operates within what the authors termed a reality-check dynamic — constrained, however imperfectly, by traditional journalistic norms about source verification and the obligation to report findings that contradict editorial preferences.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Joseph Cappella's 2008 Oxford University Press volume, *Echo Chamber: Rush Limbaugh and the Conservative Media Establishment*, provides the foundational analysis of how the asymmetry was constructed. Their study of Rush Limbaugh's national talk-radio program, Fox News, and *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page documents the deliberate construction of what they termed a self-protective enclave: an editorial environment in which competing news sources

are systematically delegitimized, the audience is trained to dismiss contradicting evidence as the product of a hostile out-group, and ideological loyalty is rewarded with continued audience access to the apparatus. The mechanism Jamieson and Cappella documented in 2008 has since been extended across the entire contemporary delivery system.

As of 2026, the legacy infrastructure of the apparatus consists of the following named components. Fox News retains substantial cable carriage and remains the dominant cable news outlet measured by viewership. Salem Media Group operates approximately one hundred owned-and-operated radio stations and syndicates content to thousands of additional affiliates nationally; Salem's syndication carries Charlie Kirk, Dennis Prager, and Eric Metaxas, among others, and serves as the connective infrastructure between the political-talk apparatus and the Christian-broadcasting apparatus. Sinclair Broadcasting Group operates approximately 185 local television stations that reach approximately 40% of American households and has historically required local affiliates to run national-level editorial segments. This mechanism delivers conservative editorial framing to local audiences through the trusted channel of their local news anchors.

The Christian Broadcasting Apparatus

The Christian-broadcasting infrastructure operates in parallel with and in coordination with the political-broadcasting apparatus. The Family Research Council's Washington Watch broadcast mobilizes evangelical voters on legislative battles. Focus on the Family continues to syndicate daily Christian-broadcasting content across thousands of affiliated stations, framing conservative cultural and political positions as theologically necessitated. K-Love operates a national network of more than five hundred FM stations whose programming, while not explicitly political, creates a cohesive cultural environment that the more explicitly political Christian apparatus subsequently activates.

The mega-church-as-broadcaster phenomenon represents the fastest-growing segment of this apparatus. Robert Jeffress at First Baptist Dallas, John Hagee at Cornerstone, and Jentezen Franklin, along with a substantial roster of comparable figures, operate vertically integrated ministries with national broadcast distribution through the Trinity Broadcasting Network and the Daystar Television Network. Their political content, framed as theological exposition, supplies institutional evangelical authorization for the political coalition's program.

The New Apostolic Reformation

The most analytically essential component of the contemporary apparatus, and the component that operates most fully outside the denominational structures that traditional evangelical critics like Russell Moore can address, is the New Apostolic Reformation. The NAR is a network of charismatic and Pentecostal ministries, operating outside conventional denominational accountability, organized

around the doctrine of what its proponents term the Seven Mountain Mandate: the theological claim that Christians are commanded to conquer all spheres of human society — government, media, education, the arts, business, the family, and religion — and to operate political and cultural power in service of explicit spiritual conquest.

The NAR's principal contemporary figures include Lance Wallnau, Dutch Sheets, Paula White, Greg Locke, Rick Joyner, and Sean Feucht. The apparatus operates through a combination of broadcast outlets, including the Victory Channel's FlashPoint program, viral social-media distribution of sermons and prophetic declarations, physical revival events, including Feucht's Let Us Worship tours that function as hybrid political rallies and religious gatherings, and the network of independent charismatic congregations whose pastors propagate the NAR theological framework. Locke's congregation in Tennessee has been documented engaging in book-burnings, election-denial sermons, and the explicit framing of political opposition as demonic possession.

The scholarly documentation of this apparatus is substantial and growing. Katherine Stewart's 2020 Bloomsbury volume *The Power Worshipers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Religious Nationalism* maps the financial and institutional architecture of the Christian-nationalist machine. Stewart's 2025 follow-up, *Money, Lies, and God*, extends the documentation through the post-2020 acceleration of the apparatus. Sarah Posner's 2020 Random House volume *Unholy: Why White Evangelicals Worship at the Altar of Donald Trump* traces the connective tissue between the televangelist infrastructure and the modern populist right with the specificity of decades of investigative reporting. Tim Alberta's 2023 HarperOne volume, *The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory: American Evangelicals in an Age of Extremism*, provides the dissenting-evangelical documentation from the inside, written by the son of a prominent evangelical pastor with sustained access to the institutional apparatus.

The Podcast and Independent-Broadcast Layer

The post-2017 expansion of the apparatus has been driven principally by independent broadcasting, podcasting, and direct-to-audience digital distribution outside the cable-television infrastructure. The Daily Wire — anchored by Ben Shapiro, Matt Walsh, Michael Knowles, and Candace Owens (who departed in 2024) — has consistently dominated Apple Podcast and Spotify political-podcast charts, with Shapiro's program frequently appearing in the top ten of all American podcasts measured by Podtrac. Steve Bannon's War Room operates as the operational command center of the populist-vanguard wing, coordinating what Bannon has termed the precinct strategy: the systematic capture of state and local Republican Party committees by activists aligned with the populist-nationalist faction.

Following his April 2023 departure from Fox News, Tucker Carlson launched the Tucker Carlson Network on X (formerly Twitter) as its principal distribution platform. Carlson's broadcast videos

routinely register tens of millions of impressions on X, and his editorial framing — explicitly nationalist, isolationist, and increasingly skeptical of the post-1945 American security architecture — operates substantially outside the editorial constraints that Fox News imposed. Charlie Kirk and Turning Point USA operate a media apparatus targeting college and high-school demographics, funded by donor contributions to TPUSA's affiliated foundations, with substantial reach into demographics that the legacy infrastructure does not effectively address. Dan Bongino, whose national radio program absorbed substantial portions of the Limbaugh audience following Limbaugh's 2021 death, dominates Rumble and YouTube with grievance-driven anti-establishment content.

The heterodox-broadcaster vector — Joe Rogan, Jordan Peterson, Patrick Bet-David, Theo Von, the Nerk Boys — operates outside explicit partisan affiliation but functions, in measured editorial outcomes, as a delivery system for the cosmology-to-demographics that explicitly partisan content cannot reach. Rogan's program, with its substantial Spotify viewership, has platformed the cosmology's principal figures since 2018 and shaped the political reception of the cosmology among young male voters who would not consume Fox News or talk radio.

The women-targeted apparatus operates through Allie Beth Stuckey's Relatable program (which consistently ranks among the top religious and spirituality podcasts), Alex Clark's TPUSA-affiliated content, and Candace Owens's post-Daily Wire independent operation. The apparatus translates the cosmology into maternal, theological, and lifestyle frameworks accessible to demographic segments that explicitly political content does not reach.

The X Algorithmic Repositioning and the Story-Laundering Loop

The single most consequential structural change in the delivery system across the post-2022 period has been the algorithmic repositioning of X (formerly Twitter) following Elon Musk's October 2022 acquisition. The dismantling of pre-existing trust-and-safety frameworks, the introduction of monetized verification that systematically boosted aligned accounts, and the algorithmic amplification of selected content categories have, in measured outcomes, transformed X into a high-velocity delivery channel for the cosmology to both committed and incidental audiences. Tucker Carlson's post-Fox career, the integration of NAR figures into mainstream political conversation, and the acceleration of the populist-nationalist faction's media presence are all, to a substantial degree, X-driven phenomena.

The story-laundering loop is the structural mechanism that connects the apparatus's parts. The Federalist, The Daily Caller, and PJ Media generate initial coverage of culture-war flashpoints. Aligned X accounts amplify that coverage to viral velocity. The viral velocity establishes the story as worthy of broader coverage, at which point Fox News and the broader cable apparatus pick it up, and the

cycle is closed. The mechanism has been documented in detail across the post-2016 period; its operational function is to permit the apparatus to move stories from the activist fringe to mainstream conservative attention without going through the editorial filtering that the legacy infrastructure historically performed.

V. Convergence: What the Cosmology Produces

The four components documented in this Part — the framework, the theological vector, the racial-grievance vector, and the delivery system — operate together as a unified causal-substitution apparatus. The framework, drawn from Hofstadter through the contemporary rural-resentment literature, supplies the underlying psychological structure: harm is recognized, and cause is substituted toward symbolic targets. The theological vector provides the cosmic framework within which the substitution is given eternal stakes. The racial-grievance vector supplies the historically continuous organizing structure that has united the coalition since approximately 1968. The delivery system propagates the cosmology continuously into the daily lives of the populations it organizes, through named, traceable channels with measurable audiences and identifiable institutional funders.

What the apparatus produces is not, principally, false beliefs about specific factual matters — though it produces those as well. What it produces, more fundamentally, is a sustained framework of causal attribution that operates upstream of any specific factual claim. Wages stagnate, and the cause is given as immigration. The hospital closes, and the cause is attributed to the federal government. The opioid epidemic kills, and the cause is attributed to cultural decay. The deaths of despair accumulate, and the cause is supplied as moral collapse. In each case, the lived evidence of harm is acknowledged. In each case, the causal account is reattributed away from the structural drivers documented in Part One and toward symbolic targets whose mobilization yields no improvement in conditions and often causes additional harm.

The apparatus, however, is not sufficient on its own to explain the durability of the political coalition that operates within it. The cosmology produces causal substitution, but a sustained political coalition requires more than a substituted account of cause. It requires a mechanism to filter out contradicting evidence before it can produce reconsideration, and a mechanism to maintain coalition cohesion against the observable contradictions that filtering mechanisms inevitably miss. Part Three documents the first of these—the pre-categorization apparatus that filters conflicting evidence at the source-attribution step. Part Four documents the second — the loyalty-by-repetition layer through which coalition cohesion is sustained against observable contradiction. Together with the cosmology documented here, these two layers complete the architecture of consent.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF CONSENT



PART THREE

The Pre-Categorization Apparatus

How Contradicting Evidence Is Filtered Before It Arrives

*Two sections: the asymmetric information apparatus,
Moreover, the comparative hinge — locating the American case in the international pattern.*

The Pre-Categorization Apparatus

Part Two documented the cosmology — the comprehensive interpretive structure through which the harm documented in Part One is reattributed to substituted causes. The cosmology is sufficient to produce, on the population it organizes, a sustained framework of causal attribution that operates upstream of any specific factual claim. It is not, however, sufficient to produce the durability of the political coalition that operates within it. A coalition that responds to lived conditions through a substituted cosmology will, over time, encounter contradicting evidence: economic data that the cosmology cannot accommodate, news reporting that contradicts the dominant narrative, scholarly findings that locate the cause where the cosmology denies it, and primary statements by movement architects that confirm the substitution mechanism explicitly. For the cosmology to operate as the durable political force it has become, contradicting evidence must be prevented from reaching the population in a form that can produce reconsideration.

This Part documents the apparatus that performs that prevention. The mechanism is what political-science scholarship has come to call pre-categorization: the construction of a meta-frame in which the source of any contradictory claim is itself the basis for its dismissal, before any consideration of the claim's content. The apparatus does not refute. It does not engage. It does not contest the evidence on the merits. It pre-categorizes the source of the evidence as a hostile, illegitimate, or compromised entity whose output, by the meta-frame's logic, is not worth considering. The contradicting evidence is filtered at the source-attribution step, before its content can produce any cognitive work.

The mechanism is documented in peer-reviewed political-communication scholarship, in primary survey data tracking partisan trust in media institutions over nearly four decades, and in the comparative-politics literature on competitive authoritarianism that has emerged since 2010. This Part documents both the American apparatus specifically and the comparative pattern that locates the American case within an international trajectory. The two functions belong together because the comparative frame removes one of the most common defensive responses to documentary critique of American politics: the response that the analysis is exceptional, novel, or speculative. The framework applied here has been applied, in peer-reviewed comparative scholarship, to other functioning democracies that have undergone analogous transformations. The mechanisms have names. The trajectories have been measured. The American case is being examined within the established analytical frame because the comparative record places it there.

I. The Asymmetric Information Apparatus

The contemporary American information environment is not a symmetric ecosystem in which two ideologically comparable infrastructures contest each other across a shared landscape of journalistic norms. The peer-reviewed empirical literature establishes, across a substantial body of work, that the landscape is structurally asymmetric — that the right-wing American information apparatus operates under different epistemological rules than the mainstream and center-left infrastructure, and that this asymmetry is the product of a deliberate, multi-decade construction project paralleling the political-infrastructure project documented in Part One.

Benkler, Faris, and Roberts: The Propaganda Feedback Loop

The foundational scholarly text on this asymmetry is Yochai Benkler, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts's 2018 Oxford University Press volume *Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics*. The authors, working from the Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society at Harvard, conducted what is, to date, the most comprehensive empirical study of the American media ecosystem. Their dataset comprised millions of news stories, social media posts, and link-sharing patterns from 2015 through 2018. Their methodology — network analysis of citation patterns, content analysis of editorial alignment, and longitudinal tracking of story propagation — is transparent, replicable, and sourced.

The central finding is the architecture they termed the propaganda feedback loop. Within the right-wing American media ecosystem, content propagates between outlets according to ideological consonance rather than evidentiary verification. A story originating at Breitbart or The Daily Caller propagates to Fox News and through the broader right-wing apparatus based on its alignment with the audience's prior beliefs and ideological commitments, not based on independent verification by those outlets. Stories that reinforce the cosmology documented in Part Two are amplified. Stories that contradict it are suppressed during the editorial selection process. Outlets within the apparatus do not function as independent verifiers of one another's claims. They function as amplifiers of mutually reinforcing content.

By contrast — and this is the analytical point that Benkler, Faris, and Roberts insist on — the mainstream and center-left American media ecosystem operates within what they termed a reality-check dynamic. The same architecture is not present. Stories that originate in MSNBC or Mother Jones do not propagate through The New York Times, The Washington Post, NPR, or the Associated Press without passing through the editorial constraints of independent verification. The mainstream apparatus is not perfectly accurate. It produces errors, displays editorial biases, and suffers from various structural pathologies that Benkler, Faris, and Roberts also document. However, it operates under a different rule: contradicting evidence from outside the ideological cluster can produce editorial reconsideration, and stories that fail independent verification are, with substantial regularity, retracted or corrected.

The asymmetry the authors document is not a claim about the comparative virtue of the journalists working within the two ecosystems. It is a claim about the structural rules that govern the two ecosystems. One operates as a verification system, with documented verification failures, yet verification remains the operating norm. The other operates as a propaganda system, with verification subordinated to ideological alignment as the principle of editorial selection. The structural difference yields distinct outputs, and these outputs are measurable in the citation, propagation, and correction patterns the authors traced through their dataset.

Jamieson and Cappella: The Self-Protective Enclave

The historical mechanism by which the asymmetry was constructed is documented in Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Joseph Cappella's 2008 Oxford University Press volume *Echo Chamber: Rush Limbaugh and the Conservative Media Establishment*. Jamieson and Cappella's study, conducted across the early- and mid-2000s on the operational practices of Rush Limbaugh's national radio program, Fox News, and *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page, documents the deliberate construction of what they termed a self-protective enclave: an editorial environment in which competing news sources are systematically delegitimized, the audience is trained to dismiss contradicting evidence as the product of a hostile out-group, and ideological loyalty is rewarded with continued audience access to the apparatus.

The mechanism Jamieson and Cappella documented in 2008 has, in the 18 years since, been extended across the entire contemporary apparatus. The training the audience receives is not principally training in what to believe. It is training in what to dismiss. The audience is taught, continuously and across multiple reinforcing channels, that the mainstream press is not an imperfect verification system. It is the regime media. It is fake news. It is the deep state in print. It is the credentialed professional class deploying its educational privilege against the ordinary citizen. The contradictory evidence need not be refuted on its merits because the source has been pre-categorized as hostile, illegitimate, and structurally compromised. The audience trained within the apparatus does not engage with the evidence. The audience pre-categorizes the source and dismisses the evidence at that step.

The mechanism is structurally important to the cosmology documented in Part Two because it enables the cosmology to operate in the face of contradictory reality. The deaths of despair are documented in the BMJ. The wage stagnation is documented in BLS data. The hospital closures are documented at the Sheps Center. The Atwater transcript is documented in the public record. The mortality cost of the Medicaid-expansion refusal is documented in Metzl. None of this evidence is hidden. All of it is, in principle, accessible to any reader. The pre-categorization apparatus operates to ensure that, for the population it organizes, this evidence does not arrive in a form that can produce

reconsideration. It arrives, when it arrives at all, attributed to sources the audience has been trained to dismiss before the content is engaged.

Ladd and the Strategic Construction of Distrust

Jonathan Ladd's 2012 Princeton University Press volume, *Why Americans Hate the Media and How It Matters*, supplies the historical analysis of how the pre-categorization framework was institutionalized. Ladd traces the decline of institutional trust in the American press from approximately 1970 forward and demonstrates, through analysis of political and media archives, that politicians and partisan media outlets discovered a strategic electoral advantage in actively attacking the institutional press. The discovery was not a passive consequence of changing media economics or post-Watergate cynicism. It was a strategic political innovation, deployed deliberately, that produced measurable shifts in mass political behavior.

Ladd's empirical findings are precise. Voters with higher levels of distrust in the institutional press are systematically more likely to discount contradicting information from credible sources, to accept misinformation from ideologically aligned sources, and to maintain prior beliefs against evidentiary challenge. The political utility of constructing this distrust — for political coalitions whose substantive program would not survive accurate public information about its consequences — is substantial and measurable, as Ladd's documentation shows. The post-1970 American conservative coalition, in particular, made the strategic construction of media distrust a central component of its political strategy, and the consequence is the asymmetric trust environment documented in the contemporary survey data.

Sanchez and the Diagnosis from Inside

The diagnosis of this dynamic was articulated, notably, from inside the conservative intellectual tradition. In a 2010 Cato Institute and *New Republic* essay, the libertarian writer Julian Sanchez deployed the philosophical concept of epistemic closure to characterize what he was observing in the conservative information ecosystem of the late 2000s. Sanchez's argument — written from a position of explicit conservative political identification — was that the apparatus had become an ideologically hermetic seal in which the interconnected right-wing platforms dictated reality, any conflicting information was automatically dismissed as liberal bias, and the structural absence of internal self-correction was producing a coalition increasingly disconnected from the empirical record.

The Sanchez diagnosis is analytically essential here for two reasons. The first is that it documents that the dynamic was visible from within the tradition before the contemporary acceleration produced its current consequences — the assessment is not retrospective, applied through a hostile out-group framework, but contemporaneous, applied from within the tradition, the dynamic was

reshaping. The second is that the term Sanchez deployed, epistemic closure, has subsequently entered the political-science vocabulary and the broader public conversation as the standard descriptor for what the apparatus produces. The conservative intellectual tradition supplied the diagnosis. The conservative coalition, as Sanchez had warned in 2010, did not act on it.

The Longitudinal Trust Data: Pew, Knight, Reuters

The contemporary measurement of asymmetry is provided by longitudinal survey data tracking partisan trust in media institutions. The Pew Research Center's annual series on trust in mass media documents a widening partisan gap that has accelerated in each subsequent decade. In the late 1990s, Republican trust in mass media was marginally lower than Democratic trust — both parties' adherents reported moderate but eroding confidence in institutions. By the 2014 through 2016 period, Republican trust in mass media had declined to single-digit percentages, while Democratic trust, though declining, remained substantially higher and within historically recognizable ranges.

The Knight Foundation, in collaboration with Gallup, has conducted parallel longitudinal work specifically focused on perceptions of bias and the behavioral consequences of distrust. Their American Views on Trust, Media, and Democracy series identifies that Republicans are substantially more likely than Democrats to perceive systemic, intentional political bias in mainstream outlets, and that this perception correlates directly with a measurable behavioral shift toward explicitly partisan digital alternatives. The resulting fragmented information environment is not a symmetric phenomenon. It is asymmetrically distributed, with one ideological cluster having substantially exited the mainstream verification system while the other has not.

The Reuters Institute's annual Digital News Report, drawing on cross-national data, consistently ranks the United States among the highest in media polarization among functioning democracies. The Reuters data documents that conservative United States respondents exhibit the highest measured rates of active news avoidance regarding legacy mainstream brands — CNN, The New York Times, NPR, the broadcast networks — and the highest rates of preference for explicitly partisan independent voices and partisan aggregators. The international comparative dimension matters: the asymmetric exit from shared verification infrastructure that the American conservative coalition has executed is, by global comparative measure, an outlier among functioning democracies, exceeded principally by countries whose democratic standing is itself contested.

The Digital Fortress, Inverted: A Note on Symmetry

The Yellow Jacket project has documented, in *The Party Left the Building*, the Digital Fortress phenomenon on the institutional-left side: the closed information environment in which Democratic-leaning voters, particularly the educated professional class, encounter content optimized for the

audience's confidence rather than for accurate information about the political condition. That dynamic is real, and the prior volume documents it with specificity. The reader who has come to this paper from *The Party Left the Building* should not understand the present analysis as a claim of pure asymmetry between two media ecosystems otherwise alike. Both apparatuses operate under audience-capture pressures. Both produce content optimized for engagement rather than accuracy. Both, in different ways, fail their audiences.

The asymmetry documented in this Part is structural rather than absolute. The mainstream and center-left apparatus operates under verification norms that are imperfectly performed but constitutive: when verification fails, the failure is, with regularity, identified, corrected, and addressed institutionally. The right-wing apparatus operates under verification norms that have been systematically displaced by ideological alignment as the principle of editorial selection. The Digital Fortress, on the institutional-left side, optimizes for the audience's confidence within a system that retains verification as its operating norm. The pre-categorization apparatus on the right optimizes for audience loyalty within a system that has substantially abandoned verification as the operating norm. The two failures are real. They are not the same failure.

II. The Comparative Hinge

The American case documented in this paper is not unique. The pattern of architectural construction documented across Parts One through Three has analogs in other functioning democracies that underwent comparable transformations in the post-2010 period. The comparative-politics literature on democratic erosion and competitive authoritarianism has, since approximately 2015, developed a substantial empirical and theoretical apparatus for analyzing these transformations. The framework is peer-reviewed. The cases are documented. The trajectories have been measured by independent monitoring institutions whose methodology is transparent and whose findings are publicly available.

The function of this section, within the structure of the present paper, is to locate the American case within that established framework. The comparative frame removes one of the most common defensive responses to documentary critique: the response that the critique is exceptional, novel, or makes claims that could not survive in serious academic scholarship. The comparative-politics literature is serious academic scholarship. It has examined cases that were, until recently, considered functioning democracies, and has documented their transformation through mechanisms recognizable in the American case. The reader who finds the analysis here unfamiliar should know that the analytical frame is not unfamiliar to political scientists who study these questions for a living. It is the standard frame. The American case is being examined within it because the comparative record places it there.

Hungary: The Frankenstate as Comparative Baseline

The Hungarian case under Viktor Orbán, beginning with Fidesz's 2010 parliamentary supermajority and continuing through the present, has functioned as the comparative baseline for the contemporary literature on legalistic democratic erosion. The principal scholarly documentation has been produced by Kim Lane Scheppele, principally in the *University of Chicago Law Review* and subsequent venues. Scheppele's analytical contribution is the concept she has termed the Frankenstate: an illiberal regime constructed entirely from disparate, perfectly legal components borrowed from other Western democracies, assembled in a configuration that retains the procedural forms of democratic competition while progressively narrowing the conditions under which democratic competition can produce a different outcome.

The mechanisms Scheppele documents are specific. The Hungarian Constitutional Court was packed, and its independence was systematically reduced through legislation rewriting its composition and jurisdiction. Independent judges were forced into early retirement through targeted reductions in the mandatory retirement age. Electoral laws were rewritten to ensure disproportionate parliamentary majorities through gerrymandering and changes to constituency thresholds. The Central European University, an internationally recognized institution, was forced out of Budapest by legislation targeting its specific operational structure. Independent Hungarian media outlets were progressively consolidated into KESMA, a state-aligned media conglomerate that operates as an effective propaganda organ. Each mechanism is considered in isolation, a legitimate exercise of legislative authority. The aggregate effect is the construction of a regime in which formal democratic competition continues but cannot, by structural design, produce political alternation.

Bálint Magyar's 2016 Central European University Press volume, *Post-Communist Mafia State: The Case of Hungary*, provides the political-economy framework. Magyar documents how state resources are legally redirected through the Orbán regime to create a loyal class of oligarchs whose economic position depends entirely on continued political alignment with the regime. The mechanism produces a constituency of substantial economic power that has direct material interest in the regime's continuation, supplying the financial and organizational infrastructure that defends the regime against contestation.

The connection between the Hungarian case and the American architecture documented here is not metaphorical. It is operational. The American conservative apparatus has, across the post-2018 period, explicitly and on the record adopted the Orbán government as a model. CPAC, the Conservative Political Action Conference, has held its European convention in Budapest in successive years, with Orbán delivering keynote addresses and explicitly framing the Hungarian model as a blueprint for American conservatism. The Heritage Foundation has formal partnership arrangements with the Danube Institute, a state-funded Hungarian research organization that

produces ideological output aligned with the Orbán government. Tucker Carlson's broadcasts from Budapest in 2021 and 2022, before his departure from Fox News, explicitly promoted what Orbán has termed "illiberal Christian democracy" as a desirable political destination for Americans. The connection is not interpretive. It is documented in the CPAC event schedule, in formal institutional partnerships, and in broadcast records.

Poland: Judicial Capture and the 2023 Reversal

The Polish case under the Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) from 2015 through 2023 supplies the more granular comparative documentation of judicial capture. Wojciech Sadurski's 2019 Oxford University Press volume, *Poland's Constitutional Breakdown*, documents the systematic dismantling of the independence of the Polish Constitutional Tribunal, the Polish Supreme Court, and the National Council of the Judiciary. Sadurski's analytical framework — what he terms statutory unconstitutionality, the use of ordinary legislation to bypass constitutional constraints — maps onto the doctrinal trajectory documented in the Yellow Jacket project's prior work on the American Sixth Category and the post-Free Enterprise Fund judicial pipeline.

The Polish case adds an analytically essential second dimension that the Hungarian case does not supply: the documented evidence of reversibility. The October 2023 Polish parliamentary elections produced a result in which a broad, ideologically diverse democratic coalition, led by Donald Tusk and operating across previously incompatible political traditions, mobilized historic voter turnout — over seventy-four percent, the highest in Polish post-Communist history — and successfully defeated PiS at the ballot box. The result establishes empirically that the architectural trajectory documented in the comparative literature is not deterministic. Coalitions that retain sufficient organizational capacity and that operate with sufficient cross-ideological breadth can interrupt the trajectory through ordinary democratic means.

The post-2023 Polish experience also documents the structural difficulty of reversal. The new coalition government has confronted, across the post-electoral period, the substantial challenge of restoring judicial independence, undoing the institutional capture of state media, and reconstituting administrative agencies whose personnel were systematically replaced under PiS rule. The reversal is possible. The reversal is also, in operational terms, slow, contested, and incomplete. The architectural mechanisms PiS installed have proven significantly more difficult to dismantle than to construct. The Polish case is documented here not as a recommendation but as evidence: the trajectory is not deterministic, and the reversal mechanisms operate within ordinary democratic procedure, but the asymmetry between construction speed and reversal speed is real and consequential.

Turkey: Religious-Political Fusion at Long Trajectory

The Turkish case under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), beginning with Erdoğan's 2003 elevation to the prime ministership, supplies the longest comparative trajectory and the documentation of the fully consolidated outcome. The Turkish trajectory began as what was widely characterized in Western political science as a successful Muslim-democratic synthesis: a center-right party operating within procedural democratic norms, integrating Islamic political identity with European Union accession aspirations, and pursuing economic liberalization that produced substantial growth across the early Erdoğan period.

Soner Çagaptay's documentation, principally in the volumes *The New Sultan* and *A Sultan in Autumn*, traces the subsequent transformation. Across the post-2010 period, the AKP government progressively consolidated political authority through the same legalistic mechanisms documented in the Hungarian and Polish cases: judicial restructuring, electoral system manipulation, executive-power expansion, and the systematic capture of independent media. The 2016 attempted military coup was, in Çagaptay's documentation, the inflection point: the post-coup purges, justified as defensive responses to attempted military intervention, were extended to the press, the judiciary, the universities, and the broader civil society infrastructure that constituted the procedural-democratic constraint on executive power.

The Turkish case is essential comparative evidence because it documents the religious-political fusion mechanism at full operational maturity. The AKP's mobilization of Sunni Islamic political identity, executed through control of the Turkish Diyanet (the Directorate of Religious Affairs), produced a sustained electoral coalition that has tolerated the systematic dismantling of procedural democratic norms because the coalition's primary political identity is religious rather than procedural. The parallel to the white evangelical mobilization documented in Part Two is direct, and the long trajectory documents what happens when a religious-political fusion of this kind operates without sustained institutional resistance. By 2026, the AKP coalition will no longer be a procedural democratic coalition contesting elections under shared rules. It is the dominant component of a competitive authoritarian regime in which elections continue, but the conditions of political competition have been structurally narrowed.

India: The Construction of Ethnic Democracy

The Indian case under Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), beginning with Modi's 2014 elevation to the prime ministership, documents the conversion of an institutionalized secular republic into what the comparative literature now terms an ethnic democracy. Christophe Jaffrelot's 2021 Princeton University Press volume, *Modi's India: Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy*, provides the principal scholarly documentation. Jaffrelot's framework establishes that India has transitioned, across the Modi period, from a secular constitutional democracy in which

religious minorities held formally equal citizenship to an ethnic-democratic regime in which Hindu majoritarian identity is politically privileged and religious minorities — particularly Indian Muslims — are progressively reduced to second-class status through legislation, administrative practice, and the toleration of communal violence.

The Indian comparative evidence is essential because it documents the cosmology-delivery system at scale that exceeds the American apparatus by orders of magnitude. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the paramilitary volunteer organization from which the BJP operationally emerged, functions as the grassroots cosmology-delivery infrastructure that translates Hindu nationalist political identity (Hindutva) into electoral mobilization, public-square presence, and the physical intimidation of dissent. The RSS operates through an organizational structure of approximately fifty thousand local branches across India, each conducting daily and weekly cultural-political training, and the apparatus has produced a sustained electoral coalition operating across linguistic and regional cleavages that previously fractured Indian Hindu political identity.

Pratap Bhanu Mehta's ongoing political-science documentation of the Indian case adds the dimension that maps most directly onto the American context: the abdication of independent institutions. Indian institutions that were previously independent — the Supreme Court, the Election Commission, the Reserve Bank of India — have, across the Modi period, progressively self-censored and aligned with executive direction, in some cases through ideological sympathy and in others through documented intimidation. The pattern is the institutional realignment Yellow Jacket has documented under the term "Sixth Category": the conversion of independent oversight bodies into instruments of executive direction without a formal legal change to their statutory independence.

Brazil: The Hemispheric Playbook and the January 8 / January 6 Parallel

The Brazilian case under Jair Bolsonaro, from his October 2018 election through the January 8, 2023, storming of the Praça dos Três Poderes in Brasília by Bolsonaro supporters who refused to accept his electoral defeat, provides the most direct hemispheric parallel to the American trajectory. The mechanisms are recognizable in detail: a coalition uniting agribusiness interests, the military, and a politically mobilized Pentecostal-evangelical apparatus; sustained delegitimization of the electoral infrastructure (in the Brazilian case, the Tribunal Superior Eleitoral; in the American case, state and federal election administration); and the post-electoral assault on the seat of government by supporters operating under the conviction, supplied by the cosmology, that the election had been stolen.

The January 8 / January 6 parallel is structurally important because it documents that the strategy of preemptively delegitimizing electoral machinery to justify post-electoral violence is not specific to a single national political culture. It is an internationally shared tactic, executed through a recognizable

apparatus, with comparable mobilization mechanics across the cases. The Brazilian Pentecostal-political fusion that supplied much of the mobilization energy for January 8 mirrors the American white evangelical apparatus documented in Part Two with sufficient precision that the comparative literature has come to treat the two as instances of a common pattern.

The Brazilian case also documents, like the Polish case, the possibility of electoral interruption: Bolsonaro lost the October 2022 election to Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, narrowly but with a sufficient margin to permit the transfer of power. The post-electoral attack failed, the institutional response was substantial, and Bolsonaro himself faced subsequent prosecution. The comparative evidence does not establish that the trajectory under documentation here is reversible only through extraordinary measures. It establishes that ordinary electoral interruption is possible and has been demonstrated in cases with structural similarity to the American case.

The Theoretical Framework: Levitsky, Way, and the Hybrid-Regime Literature

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way have principally developed the theoretical apparatus that organizes these cases in their 2010 Cambridge University Press volume, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*, and their 2022 Princeton University Press follow-up, *Revolution and Dictatorship*. Levitsky and Way define competitive authoritarianism as a regime type characterized by the existence of formal democratic institutions. They are meaningfully contested, but in which incumbents systematically manipulate state resources, media access, and the regulatory environment to produce a structurally tilted competitive landscape that opposition forces must overcome to win.

The framework permits the analytical distinction between democratic backsliding (the erosion of procedural quality within an otherwise competitive system) and full authoritarian consolidation (the elimination of meaningful electoral contestation). The cases documented above — Hungary, Poland under PiS, Turkey under AKP, India under BJP, Brazil under Bolsonaro — occupy different positions along the continuum from democratic backsliding to competitive authoritarianism to full authoritarianism. The framework is the standard analytical apparatus in contemporary comparative politics, and it is applied to American developments by political scientists working within the comparative tradition with increasing regularity since 2017.

Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt's 2018 Crown volume *How Democracies Die* and their 2023 follow-up *Tyranny of the Minority*, read in comparative rather than American-specific register, identify the universal indicators of authoritarian behavior in elected officials: rejection of (or weak commitment to) democratic rules of the game, denial of the legitimacy of political opponents, toleration or encouragement of violence, and readiness to curtail civil liberties of opponents and the press. The indicators are not interpretive. They are operationalized, observable, and applicable across cases.

The documentary record on each indicator's presence in the contemporary American coalition is substantial, public, and primary-sourced.

The Empirical Tracking: V-Dem, Freedom House, Bright Line Watch

The contemporary measurement of these trajectories is conducted by independent monitoring institutions whose methodologies are publicly available, peer-reviewed, and applied consistently across countries. The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute, headquartered at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, has, since 2014, produced the most extensive cross-national longitudinal database of democratic indicators in the world. Its methodology draws on coded judgments from country experts. It applies them to several hundred indicators of democratic quality across multiple analytical dimensions, including electoral integrity, judicial independence, civil liberties, freedom of expression, and the rule of law. The V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index for the United States has declined sharply since 2017, moving the country from the top tier of stable democracies into a category that includes states whose democratic standing is contested. The 2025 and 2026 V-Dem Democracy Reports document this decline as part of what V-Dem terms the third wave of autocratization, a pattern affecting substantial portions of the previously stable democratic world.

Freedom House, a separate monitoring institution operating since 1973, produces the annual Freedom in the World reports drawing on similar but methodologically independent analytical frameworks. The Freedom House aggregate scores for the United States have declined continuously since 2010, bringing American scores closer to those of struggling democracies than to the country's historical Western European peers. The Bright Line Watch project, organized by political scientists at Dartmouth College and Rochester University, has conducted regular surveys of expert political-science consensus on American democratic performance across approximately thirty specific democratic principles since 2017. The Bright Line Watch data through 2026 documents expert ratings stabilizing at historically low levels, with particular concern in the institutional-independence and rule-of-law dimensions.

The convergent finding across V-Dem, Freedom House, and Bright Line Watch is unambiguous. The methodologies are independent. The analytical frameworks are independently developed. The conclusions are convergent: American democratic quality has declined to some degree and along trajectories that the comparative literature recognizes as indicators of democratic backsliding toward competitive authoritarianism. The American case is not an isolated claim. It is a documented case of a documented pattern, examined by the institutions whose methodology is the standard for that examination.

III. Convergence: What the Apparatus and the Comparative Frame Together Establish

The asymmetric information apparatus documented in Section I and the comparative pattern documented in Section II are not independent findings. They are, in the comparative literature, structurally connected. Every functioning democracy that has undergone the trajectory documented in Hungary, Poland, Turkey, India, and Brazil has done so, in part, by constructing an asymmetric information apparatus that pre-categorizes conflicting evidence at the source-attribution step. The mechanism is recognizable across cases. The Hungarian KESMA media conglomerate. The Turkish post-coup press purges. The Indian capture of broadcast and print media through allied corporate ownership. The Brazilian Pentecostal-broadcasting apparatus that delivered the Bolsonaro cosmology. In each case, the political-architectural project required, as a necessary component, an information apparatus capable of sustaining the cosmology against the contradicting evidence that any extended program of architectural construction inevitably produces.

What the convergence establishes, for present purposes, is that the American information apparatus documented in Section I is not an idiosyncratic feature of the contemporary American media environment. It is a structurally necessary component of the broader architectural project documented across this paper. The cosmology of Part Two cannot operate without the pre-categorization apparatus of Section I. The pre-categorization apparatus cannot be constructed and sustained without the donor-network and institutional infrastructure documented in Part One. The architectural project, in turn, cannot proceed without the cosmology that supplies the substituted account of cause to the population whose electoral support is required. The components are not separable. They are mutually reinforcing layers of a single architecture.

What the comparative frame additionally establishes is that this architecture has a name in the political-science literature, has measurable indicators, has documented international trajectories, and is subject to ordinary empirical analysis using established methodological tools. The reader who has accompanied the documentary chain to this point has not been walked through an idiosyncratic interpretation of American politics. The reader has been walked through, with primary sources and peer-reviewed scholarship at every step, an instance of a documented international pattern. The pattern has names. The mechanisms are tracked. The trajectories are measured. The analysis is the standard analysis used by comparative-politics scholarship for functioning democracies that have undergone the same transformation.

What the architecture still requires, however, is an account of how the coalition that operates within it sustains its cohesion against the observable contradictions that even the most efficient pre-categorization apparatus inevitably misses. The cosmology supplies the substituted cause. The pre-categorization apparatus filters the contradicting evidence. The coalition still encounters, across

daily lived experience and the unavoidable irruption of reality through the apparatus's filters, contradictions that the apparatus has not pre-categorized. How the coalition processes those contradictions — how it maintains cohesion against observable evidence that the apparatus could not, despite its design, fully suppress — is the subject of Part Four. The mechanism the comparative literature has named for this final layer is loyalty by repetition, and it is the closing layer of the architecture this paper documents.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF CONSENT



PART FOUR

The Loyalty-by-Repetition Layer

How Coalition Cohesion Is Maintained Against Observable Contradiction

Three sections: the foundational scholarly tradition, the contemporary frameworks, and the empirical measurement of the mechanism in operation in political science.

The Loyalty-by-Repetition Layer

The cosmology of Part Two supplies the substituted account of cause. The pre-categorization apparatus of Part Three filters contradicting evidence at the source-attribution step. Together, the two layers are sufficient to maintain, in the population the architecture organizes, a sustained framework of causal attribution operating against the documentary record. They are, however, insufficient to explain the durability of the political coalition that operates within them. Even an efficient pre-categorization apparatus cannot suppress every irruption of contradicting reality. The deaths of despair are visible in the affected families. The hospital that closed last year is visible to the residents of the town it served. The agricultural prices and the manufacturing layoffs are visible in the bank statements and the unemployment rolls. The architects' statements documented in Parts One and Two are, in many cases, public, on the record, in the architects' own voices. Some portion of contradicting evidence reaches the population that the apparatus organizes. The architecture's durability requires that the coalition retain its cohesion when that evidence arrives.

This Part documents the mechanism by which coalition cohesion is maintained against the contradicting evidence that the prior layers cannot suppress. The mechanism has been documented across a substantial body of scholarship spanning more than seven decades, under various names: totalitarian propaganda in the Arendt tradition, the power of the powerless in the Havel tradition, the politics of eternity in the Snyder tradition, and the autocrat is lying in the Gessen tradition. The contemporary empirical political-science literature has begun to operationalize the mechanism with quantitative instruments and to measure its operation in cross-national comparative datasets. The convergent finding across the theoretical and empirical literatures is specific: in the apparatus documented here, public falsehood functions not primarily as persuasion but as a signal of loyalty. The repetition of claims the audience knows to be false demonstrates submission to the apparatus that licenses the audience's continued membership in the coalition.

This is the most uncomfortable component of the architecture to document, because it asks the reader to consider that the political behavior under examination is not principally a function of belief in the cosmology's specific claims. The cosmology's specific claims change. They mutate from cycle to cycle, from week to week, from morning to afternoon. The named enemy shifts. The substituted cause is updated. The previous claim is forgotten. What persists across the mutation is the coalition itself, organized not around any particular claim but around the act of repeating whatever claim the apparatus is supplying at the moment. The repetition is the loyalty. The loyalty is the membership. The membership is the coalition. The coalition's durability, against any observable evidence of the cosmology's specific factual claims, is the mechanism this Part documents.

I. The Foundational Tradition

The scholarly tradition that documents the mechanism under examination here is older than the contemporary moment by approximately 75 years, and its foundational texts were written by analysts examining political phenomena that, at the time of writing, they could not have anticipated would be relevant to the contemporary American case. The relevance is not analogical. It is structural. The mechanism that the foundational tradition documented in mid-twentieth-century European political movements is the same mechanism that the contemporary empirical literature now measures in twenty-first-century cases of democratic erosion. Two foundational texts, written more than two decades apart and in radically different political circumstances, supply the analytical core.

Arendt: The Production of an Unmoored Population

Hannah Arendt's 1951 volume *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harcourt Brace, with subsequent editions through 1973) is the foundational analytical text on the nature of totalitarian propaganda. Arendt's argument, developed across the volume's third section on totalitarian movements, is that totalitarian propaganda does not aim to persuade the population through logical argumentation, evidentiary appeal, or any other mechanism that would operate within a shared epistemic framework between the apparatus and the audience. The function of totalitarian propaganda is to destroy the epistemic framework itself — to dissolve the distinction between fact and fiction in the mind of the population, producing a populace that is, in Arendt's documentation, completely unmoored from objective reality and consequently dependent on the movement's continuous instruction about what to believe at any given moment.

The analytical passage that has come to function as the canonical statement of the mechanism appears in the chapter on totalitarian movements:

In an ever-changing, incomprehensible world, the masses had reached the point where they would, at the same time, believe everything and nothing, think that everything was possible and that nothing was true.

The passage is analytically precise in a manner that requires careful unpacking. Arendt is not describing a population that has come to believe specific false claims — that would be ordinary persuasion, and would be subject to ordinary refutation through accurate information. She is describing a population in which the cognitive distinction between belief and disbelief has been progressively dissolved. The same individuals, presented with the same claims, can believe and disbelieve simultaneously, depending on what the moment requires. They can think that everything the movement says is true, while simultaneously holding the implicit understanding that nothing said

anywhere is reliably true, and therefore that there is no analytical floor against which the movement's claims could be tested.

What Arendt's analysis explains, and what is essential to the contemporary case under documentation here, is that this condition is not produced by the masses' inability to reason. It is produced by the apparatus's success at saturating the information environment with continuous, contradictory, and unverifiable claims. Once the audience has been subjected to a sufficient volume of mutually contradicting content, sustained over sufficient time, the cognitive apparatus that would otherwise produce reconsideration breaks down. The audience does not stop reasoning. The audience stops believing that reasoning, applied to specific claims, will reach an analytical floor. Moreover, once that conviction is gone, the question of what to believe is no longer an evidentiary question. It becomes a loyalty question. The audience believes what the movement says because that is what loyal members believe. The act of believing it is the signal of loyalty.

Arendt's analytical framework was developed from her examination of European totalitarian movements of the 1930s and 1940s. The contemporary American case is not those movements, and the analogical claim is not that it is. The mechanism Arendt identified, however, is the mechanism the contemporary literature has documented in the apparatus under examination here, and the contemporary documentation has, in significant measure, returned to the Arendt vocabulary because no subsequent analytical apparatus has improved on it. The masses who, in Arendt's documentation, would believe everything and nothing simultaneously are the population that the contemporary apparatus organizes.

Havel: The Greengrocer's Sign

The corresponding analytical text, developed in a different political context but documenting an analytically connected mechanism, is Václav Havel's 1978 essay "The Power of the Powerless." Havel, then a Czech dissident operating under the late phase of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia, wrote the essay to document the mechanism by which the regime sustained itself against the obvious bankruptcy of its official ideology. The essay's most analytically essential passage, and the passage that has subsequently become the canonical illustration of the mechanism under examination here, concerns a hypothetical greengrocer.

The greengrocer in Havel's illustration places, in the window of his shop, a sign reading: "Workers of the world, unite!" The sign is provided to him by the central enterprise that supplies his vegetables, along with the carrots and the onions, on the implicit understanding that he will display it. The greengrocer is not a Marxist-Leninist. He has no view on the unification of the world's workers. He does not believe the slogan. The regime does not require him to believe it. What the regime requires is that he display it.

Havel's analytical move is to ask what the sign communicates, and to whom. He answers that the sign communicates two things, and that the two things are not the slogan's literal content. First, the sign communicates to the regime that the greengrocer is obedient. He has displayed what was given to him to display. He has not refused. He is participating in the ritual that continuously demonstrates the regime's authority. Second, the sign communicates to other citizens — to the greengrocer's neighbors, to his customers, to anyone who passes the shop — that he has chosen to participate. They see the sign. They understand its function. They make their own choices about whether to display the corresponding signs in their own windows. The signs together produce a saturated public environment of demonstrated submission.

What the sign does not communicate, in Havel's analysis, is the slogan's literal content. The unstated, true text of the sign — the text the sign actually says, decoded — is, in Havel's formulation, approximately as follows:

I am obedient, and therefore I have the right to be left in peace.

The greengrocer displays the sign because the sign's display is the price of being permitted to operate his shop in peace. The slogan's content is irrelevant. What matters is that he has displayed it. The regime knows this. The greengrocer knows this. Other citizens know this. The system operates on shared knowledge that the slogan is not believed, that the display is the loyalty signal, and that the loyalty signal is what permits continued participation in the economy and the society. The system does not require belief in the ideology. It requires the public performance of submission to the ideology, which substitutes for belief.

Havel's analysis adds to Arendt's framework the specification of the mechanism by which the loyalty signal operates. The repetition of the official narrative — the display of the sign, the speaking of the slogan, the public assertion of the regime's claims — is not a request for belief. It is a demonstration of submission. The submission is the price of continued participation. Moreover, crucially, the submission is mutually visible: each participant in the system can see which other participants are submitting and can monitor whether the submission is being performed adequately. The system is sustained, in Havel's documentation, not by belief in the ideology but by mutual observation of performed loyalty.

The relevance of the contemporary apparatus documented here is direct. The repetition of the cosmology's specific claims by the population that the architecture organizes does not primarily function as an assertion that the claims are accurate. It functions, in many cases, as a demonstration of loyalty to the coalition, made visible to other coalition members and to the apparatus that organizes them. The repeated claim might be a specific assertion about an electoral outcome. It might be a specific assertion about an immigration crisis. It might be a specific assertion about a public-

health intervention. The specific content varies. What is constant is the mechanism: the repetition is the demonstration of submission. The submission is the price of continued membership in the coalition. Moreover, the coalition's cohesion is sustained not by shared belief in the specific claims but by shared performance of the loyalty signal.

II. Contemporary Frameworks

The contemporary literature analyzing the same mechanism in post-2010 cases of democratic erosion has substantially extended and operationalized the foundational framework. The principal contributions are five, drawn from political science, journalism, history, and political theory, and they map the mechanism onto the specific operational features of the contemporary apparatus.

Snyder: The Politics of Eternity

Timothy Snyder's analytical work, principally in the volumes *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (Tim Duggan Books, 2017) and *The Road to Unfreedom* (Tim Duggan Books, 2018), supplies the most extensive contemporary application of the foundational tradition to the post-2010 cases. Snyder, a Yale historian whose principal scholarly work is on the twentieth-century history of Eastern and Central Europe, has explicitly extended his historical analytical framework to the contemporary American and global cases.

The single sentence from *On Tyranny* that has come to function as the canonical contemporary statement of the mechanism is from Lesson Ten of the volume:

To abandon facts is to abandon freedom. If nothing is true, then no one can criticize power, because there is no basis upon which to do so.

The argument compresses, in two sentences, the analytical conclusion of both Arendt and Havel: when the epistemic floor has been dissolved — when the audience has been brought to the point of believing everything and nothing simultaneously — the political consequence is that no critique of power can operate, because critique requires an evidentiary floor against which the powerful can be measured. In Snyder's documentation, the dissolution of the epistemic floor is not a side effect of authoritarian movements but rather an operational requirement of authoritarian movements. The movement requires dissolution because its continued operation cannot withstand sustained criticism based on accurate evidence. *The Road to Unfreedom* extends this analysis to what Snyder terms the politics of eternity: an authoritarian narrative style that replaces historical progression and factual debate with a mythic, cyclical loop of victimization and heroic defense against perpetual external threats. Within the politics of eternity, time does not move forward toward outcomes that can be evaluated. Time moves in circles that return continuously to the same primordial conflict, and

the movement's leader is, eternally, the heroic defender of the nation against the eternal enemy. Specific facts about specific moments do not matter because the moments are not analytically distinct. They are repetitions of the same eternal struggle.

The analytical apparatus is essential here because it explains why the cosmology under documentation in Part Two is, in operation, indifferent to the falsification of any of its specific claims. Specific claims occupy specific moments. The eternal narrative does not. When a specific claim is falsified, the falsification occupies a moment that the eternal narrative does not register. The cosmology continues. The next claim is supplied. The mechanism is sustained.

Gessen: The Autocrat is Lying as Power Performance

Masha Gessen's analytical work, in the 2020 Riverhead Books volume *Surviving Autocracy* and in their essays in *The New York Review of Books* and *The Atlantic*, supplies the analytical framework specifically focused on the function of public falsehood by autocratic political leaders. Gessen, a Russian-American journalist whose principal scholarly work concerns Russian and post-Soviet politics, frames what they term the autocrat's lying not as a failure of veracity but as a deliberate exertion of dominance over reality itself.

Gessen argues that when an autocratic political leader makes a public claim that is, on its face, demonstrably false, the claim's function is not to persuade. The claim is too obviously false for persuasion to be the operating mechanism. The claim, instead, is a power demonstration. The autocrat is signaling to the political opposition, the press, the institutional infrastructure, and the autocrat's own coalition that the autocrat can dictate reality, regardless of the documentary record. The coalition responds to the demonstration by repeating the claim. The press responds by being forced to either treat the claim as serious (which validates the autocrat's reality-dictation) or as not serious (which produces accusations of bias). The opposition is forced to engage with the claim on the autocrat's terms. The institutional infrastructure responds by progressively weakening its capacity to maintain a counter-reality.

What Gessen's framework adds to the foundational tradition is the emphasis on the autocrat's lying as an active exercise of political power rather than as a passive feature of authoritarian movements. The lie is doing political work. The work it is doing is destabilizing the epistemic ground on which political opposition could operate. Moreover, the coalition's repetition of the lie is the mechanism by which the destabilization is propagated outward from the autocrat's pronouncement into the broader social and political environment.

Applebaum: The Medium-Sized Lie as Loyalty Filter

Anne Applebaum's 2020 Doubleday volume, *Twilight of Democracy: The Seductive Lure of Authoritarianism*, provides a comparative-sociological analysis of the elite cohort that operates within these movements. Applebaum's principal analytical contribution, for present purposes, is her documentation of what she terms the medium-sized lie — the deliberate adherence, by professionally credentialed members of the movement's elite, to claims they themselves know to be false.

Applebaum argues that modern authoritarian movements deploy the medium-sized lie as a loyalty filter. By demanding adherence to absurd, demonstrably false, or transparently inconsistent claims, the regime separates reality-bound professionals from absolute loyalists. Those who decline to repeat the lie are progressively excluded from the apparatus. Those who repeat the lie are rewarded with elevated status, professional access, and continued membership in the coalition. The result is the construction of a new artificial elite whose power within the movement derives entirely from their willingness to repeat what they know to be false. This new elite, as documented by Applebaum, is a critical operational component of the movement's continued functioning. The elite's professional credentials supply the apparatus with the institutional legitimacy that pure populist mobilization could not produce. The elite's submission to the lie supplies the apparatus with the demonstration that institutional legitimacy is, in fact, available to anyone willing to perform the loyalty signal.

The relevance to the contemporary American case is direct and documentable. The Republican coalition's progressive tolerance, across the post-2016 period, of specific claims about electoral processes, public-health interventions, and the conduct of political opponents is not, in Applebaum's framework, a failure of the coalition's intellectual leadership. It is the loyalty filter's operation. The members of the coalition's intellectual leadership who would not repeat the medium-sized lies have been progressively excluded from the apparatus, in many cases publicly and on the record (Liz Cheney, the post-2016 Bulwark cohort, Russell Moore, the dissenting evangelicals documented in Part Five forthcoming). The members who remain are, by the operation of the filter, those who have demonstrated a willingness to repeat what the apparatus supplies.

Stanley: Unreality as the Operating Condition

Jason Stanley's 2018 Random House volume *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them* contributes the analytical concept that organizes the contemporary apparatus's product. Stanley, a Yale philosopher working in the political-philosophy tradition, terms the operating condition of authoritarian political movements as *unreality*: a public sphere in which reasoned discourse has been progressively replaced by mythic appeals to a heroic past, in which constant blatant falsehoods are

deployed strategically to degrade the broader information environment, and in which rational political debate has been reduced to a raw contest of loyalty to the leader's narrative.

The unreality framework specifies what the apparatus's cumulative output produces in the population. It is not a population that has come to hold specific incorrect beliefs. It is a population that has been progressively trained to operate within a public sphere in which the question of what is true has been displaced by the question of which side one is loyal to. Within unreality, the question "Is this claim accurate?" no longer has a political function. The functional question becomes "who is making the claim, and which side am I on?" The substantive content of any specific claim is downstream of that prior loyalty determination. Once the loyalty determination has been made, the truth or falsity of the specific claim is a matter of indifference. What matters is whether one's repetition of the claim demonstrates one's continued membership in the coalition.

III. The Empirical Measurement

The theoretical apparatus assembled across Sections I and II would remain, in isolation, a body of analytical claims grounded in qualitative documentation. The post-2015 empirical political-science literature has begun to operationalize the mechanism with quantitative instruments and to measure its operation in cross-national comparative datasets. Two principal contributions, drawn from peer-reviewed journals in sociology and comparative politics, supply the empirical grounding.

Hahl, Kim, and Zuckerman: The Authentic Appeal of the Lying Demagogue

Oliver Hahl, Minjae Kim, and Ezra Zuckerman Sivan's 2018 paper in the *American Sociological Review*, titled "The Authentic Appeal of the Lying Demagogue: Proclaiming the Deeper Truth about Political Illegitimacy," supplies the empirical measurement of one of the loyalty-by-repetition mechanism's most analytically counterintuitive features: that, under specific identifiable conditions, a political figure's flagrant willingness to lie is perceived by their coalition not as a disqualifying flaw but as a positive signal of authenticity.

The authors' empirical methodology involved experimental survey research and observational analysis applied to populations characterized by what the authors term political illegitimacy: a condition in which the existing political establishment is perceived, by a segment of the electorate, as having abandoned the interests of that segment in favor of the interests of out-groups (whether economic elites, racial minorities, immigrants, or others). The empirical finding is specific. When a segment of the population perceives the political establishment as illegitimate in this sense, a political figure who flagrantly lies is paradoxically perceived as more authentic than one who adheres to factual norms. The alienated segment interprets the flagrant lying as a deliberate violation of the establishment's truth-telling protocols. Therefore, as a signal of the lying figure's authentic

commitment to dismantling the system's protocols, the alienated segment has come to perceive itself as captured against them.

What the Hahl, Kim, and Zuckerman empirical finding establishes is that the loyalty-by-repetition mechanism is not, principally, a mechanism that operates against the audience's evaluative capacity. It operates, in part, through a deliberate inversion of that capacity: under conditions of perceived political illegitimacy, the audience's evaluative capacity operates, but it operates to interpret factual lying as authenticity-signaling, because the establishment from which truth-telling protocols emerged has been pre-categorized as illegitimate. The lying is, on the audience's terms, the demonstration that the lying figure is not part of the captured system. The lie is the evidence of authenticity. The repetition of the lie by coalition members demonstrates that they, too, have rejected the captured system and are operating in solidarity with the figure who lies on their behalf against it.

The connection to the cosmology of Part Two is direct. The cosmology has trained the population to perceive the institutional infrastructure as captured: the federal government as captured by the secular professional class, the mainstream press as captured by liberal partisans, the credentialed expert class as captured against the ordinary citizen, the institutional left as captured by minority interests against the white working-class majority. Once the population has been trained to perceive capture in this way, the empirical literature shows that flagrant lying by figures opposed to the captured system is interpreted as evidence of those figures' authenticity. The mechanism is documented, measurable, and operationally identifiable in survey data.

Huang: Propaganda as Signaling

Haifeng Huang's 2015 paper in *Comparative Politics*, titled "Propaganda as Signaling," supplies the corresponding empirical apparatus drawn from the comparative-authoritarian literature. Huang's research, conducted principally on the contemporary Chinese state's propaganda apparatus, addresses what is, on its face, an analytical puzzle: why authoritarian regimes invest substantial resources in propaganda whose claims, on the regime's own apparent expectations, are not believed by the population.

Huang's empirical finding, drawn from large-sample survey research and behavioral observation, is that the regime does not principally expect the population to believe the propaganda. The regime instead deploys propaganda as a signal of its dominance — as a deliberate demonstration of its capacity to compel public consumption of the regime's narrative regardless of the population's evaluative response. The propaganda's evident absurdity, in this framework, is not a defect of its design. It is a feature. The population's continuous exposure to obvious falsehood, sustained over time, produces what Huang terms a separating equilibrium: the population becomes progressively

aware that the regime possesses the capacity to compel its public consumption of nonsense. The awareness functions to deter dissent by reminding citizens of the regime's sheer dominance over the public information environment.

The framework Huang documents in the Chinese case is operationally identifiable in the contemporary American apparatus. The repetition of specific claims that are, on the face of the public record, false — about electoral outcomes, about scientific findings, about the conduct of political opponents — is not principally about the claims' content. It is about demonstrating that the apparatus can compel the coalition to repeat the claims, regardless of the documentary record. The demonstration is the signal. The signal is the dominance. Moreover, the dominance, sustained continuously, deters dissent within the coalition by establishing that the price of continued membership includes the ongoing willingness to repeat what the apparatus supplies.

IV. How the Mechanism Sustains Coalition Cohesion

The theoretical apparatus of Sections I and II and the empirical apparatus of Section III converge on a specific account of how the loyalty-by-repetition mechanism produces coalition cohesion in the face of observable contradiction. Three operational components, each documented in the literature reviewed above, structure the mechanism's cohesion function.

The first is content-independence. The cosmology's specific claims, as Snyder's politics-of-eternity framework documents, are not the object of the coalition's loyalty. The coalition's loyalty is to the act of repeating whatever the apparatus supplies at the moment, not to the specific claims being repeated. The claims can change — and across the post-2016 period, they have changed continuously, in many cases reversing themselves on cycles of weeks or days — without the coalition's cohesion being threatened, because the coalition is not organized around the specific claims. It is organized around the willingness to repeat them. The mechanism is content-independent: the same coalition can repeat directly contradictory claims at successive moments, with the contradiction producing no apparent cognitive distress, because the coalition's bond is to the act of repetition rather than to any specific claim's content.

The second is loyalty filtering, which Applebaum's analysis documents and Hahl, Kim, and Zuckerman's empirical work measures. The repetition of known-to-be-false claims functions as a continuous filter on coalition membership. Members who decline to repeat the claims are, over time, excluded from the apparatus. The exclusion is enforced through the apparatus's own gatekeeping functions: who is platformed in the coalition's information ecosystem, who is invited to the coalition's institutional events, and who receives the apparatus's organizational and financial support. The members who survive the filter are, by selection, those who have demonstrated a continued

willingness to repeat what the apparatus supplies. The coalition's apparent unity, therefore, is the product of the filter rather than the product of shared belief in the specific claims.

The third is mutual visibility, which Havel's analysis documents and which the contemporary social-media architecture has industrialized to a degree the foundational tradition could not have anticipated. Under late-Communist Czechoslovakian conditions, the greengrocer's sign was visible to perhaps a few hundred passersby per day. Under contemporary American conditions, a coalition member's repetition of the apparatus's supplied claims is visible to thousands or millions of other coalition members within minutes, through the social-media infrastructure documented in Part Two's discussion of the delivery system. The mutual visibility is no longer local. It is national, instantaneous, and continuously monitored. The performance of the loyalty signal is observable in real time by the entire coalition. Members who fail to perform the signal are also observable. The mutual surveillance, the foundational tradition documented in person-to-person observation, has been extended into a continuous national mutual surveillance that operates at the speed of the algorithmic distribution apparatus.

The convergent function of the three components is that the coalition under examination here is structurally insulated from the contradicting evidence that the prior layers of the architecture cannot fully filter. When a coalition member encounters contradicting evidence — the closure of the local hospital, the death of a family member from the opioid epidemic, the obvious factual collapse of a specific cosmological claim — the coalition member's response is not, principally, a recalculation of the cosmology. The response is a recalculation of how to maintain coalition membership amid the contradiction. The coalition member is not asking, "Is the cosmology accurate?" The coalition member is asking, "What does the apparatus require me to repeat to remain a member of the coalition?" The two questions are different, and the contemporary literature establishes that the architecture under documentation here trains the coalition to ask the second rather than the first.

V. Convergence: The Closing Layer of the Architecture

Parts One through Four together document the four operational layers of the architecture. The institutional infrastructure constructs the policy regime that produces the harm. The cosmology provides the population with an alternative account of causality. The pre-categorization apparatus filters contradicting evidence at the source-attribution step. The loyalty-by-repetition layer maintains coalition cohesion despite the contradicting evidence that the prior layers cannot fully filter out. The four layers operate together. Each is necessary. None is sufficient on its own.

The architecture's durability in the face of the contradictory evidence of its own operation is, according to the convergent findings of the contemporary literature, the product of all four layers operating in continuous coordination. The institutional infrastructure produces the policy outputs.

The cosmology converts the resulting harm into a set of substituted causal narratives. The pre-categorization apparatus prevents most contradicting evidence from reaching the population in a form that could produce reconsideration. The loyalty-by-repetition layer maintains the coalition's cohesion when contradicting evidence reaches the population despite the apparatus's filtering function. The architecture is sustained because each layer compensates for the others' inevitable failures, and because the four layers together produce a population that is structurally insulated from accurate information about the policy regime that produces its conditions.

What remains for the documentary record, before the convergence Part Six will perform with the broader Yellow Jacket project, is the in-tradition counter-witness. The framework documented across the four layers above has not been articulated only by analysts operating from outside the conservative tradition. It has been articulated, repeatedly, with documentary specificity, and from inside the conservative tradition itself, by named conservative writers, religious leaders, institutional figures, and movement-credentialed analysts whose dissent from the apparatus is itself part of the documentary record this paper is assembling. Part Five documents that counter-witness. The framework is not foreign to the reader's tradition. The reader's tradition has articulated it. Part Five establishes that on the record.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF CONSENT



PART FIVE

The Conservative Counter-Witness

What Conservatives Have Documented from Inside the Tradition

*Three sections: the secular conservative record, the dissenting-evangelical record,
Moreover, what the convergence of the two establishes.*

The Conservative Counter-Witness

The framework documented across Parts One through Four has not been articulated only by analysts operating from outside the conservative tradition. It has been articulated, repeatedly, with documentary specificity, and from inside the conservative tradition itself, by named conservative writers, religious leaders, institutional figures, and movement-credentialed analysts whose dissent from the apparatus is itself part of the documentary record this paper is assembling. This Part documents that counter-witness.

The function of this Part is structural rather than rhetorical. It does not deploy in-tradition voices as character witnesses for the analysis. It does not stack quotations for the cumulative weight they might appear to produce. It documents, with the same discipline applied across the prior Parts, that the analytical critique of the apparatus has been articulated in conservative venues by figures with established conservative credentials over the period from approximately 2016 through 2026. The framework is not foreign to the reader's tradition. The reader's tradition has articulated it. The Part establishes that on the record.

The voices documented here are not, as a category, ideologically aligned with the present author. They are conservatives. Their dissent from the apparatus has not generally produced a corresponding embrace of progressive political alternatives. They have remained, in most cases, conservatives — defenders of the constitutional order, of free-market economics, of traditional religious practice, of the institutional norms the post-1945 conservative movement was constructed to defend. Their dissent has been from the apparatus's transformation of the conservative coalition into a vehicle for the architectural project documented in this paper. The dissent is not partisan repositioning. It is institutional fidelity to a conservatism that the apparatus has progressively departed from.

What this Part does not do is supply the reader with permission to leave conservatism. The reader who has come this far has not been asked to leave anything. The reader has been asked to apply the principles of the reader's tradition consistently to the documentary record. Part Five establishes that this is precisely what the conservatives documented here have done, and that the analytical conclusions they have reached, working from within the tradition, are convergent with the conclusions the documentary record supports.

I. The Secular Conservative Record

David French: The Erosion of Civil Pluralism

David French, a former constitutional litigator for the Alliance Defending Freedom, an evangelical conservative whose religious credentials are within the tradition the apparatus claims to represent, and currently a columnist for *The New York Times* and former senior editor at *The Dispatch*, has across the post-2016 period produced what is, by volume and by analytical rigor, the most extensive documentary record of the conservative coalition's institutional transformation. French's 2020 St. Martin's Press volume, *Divided We Fall: America's Secession Threat and How to Restore Our Nation*, provides the structural framework. His subsequent work — across *columns in The Dispatch, The Atlantic, and The New York Times since 2020* — provides a running documentation of the transformation as it has accelerated.

French's central analytical claim is that the modern American right has progressively replaced the constitutional pluralism that classical conservatism historically defended with what he terms animosity-driven tribalism: a political identity organized around opposition to defined out-groups rather than around the substantive defense of liberty, limited government, or constitutional order. French's documentation of this transformation includes the post-2016 abandonment of religious-liberty arguments by the very organizations that had built the religious-liberty legal apparatus, the conservative-coalition tolerance of explicit anti-democratic actions by movement-aligned officials, and the systematic substitution of grievance politics for substantive policy commitments. French has framed his analytical posture in terms that make the in-tradition source explicit:

We are now learning how vulnerable the American system is to a would-be strongman. Loyalty to your partisan imperative began to trump your jealousy for your own power.

— David French, on the breakdown of constitutional accountability among Republican legislators across the post-2016 period.

What French's analysis adds to the framework documented in this paper, and what makes his counter-witness essential, is that his diagnosis of the apparatus operates from within the constitutional and religious-conservative commitments the apparatus claims to represent. He is not arguing that conservatism has been correct and the apparatus has betrayed it. He is documenting, through primary sourcing, that the apparatus has progressively departed from the constitutional commitments that classical conservatism was constructed to defend, and that the consequence is a coalition that no longer retains the analytical or institutional capacity to defend the order it claims to defend.

Jonah Goldberg: The Rejection of the Enlightenment Foundation

Jonah Goldberg, formerly of *National Review* (where he served for two decades), is currently editor in chief of *The Dispatch* and the author of the 2018 Crown Forum volume *Suicide of the West: How the Rebirth of Tribalism, Populism, Nationalism, and Identity Politics Is Destroying American Democracy*. He supplies the analytical framework that traces the apparatus's transformation to its philosophical foundations. Goldberg argues that the modern American right has, across the post-2016 period, undergone a structural regression from the Lockean Enlightenment-based conservatism that grounded the post-1945 conservative movement (rooted in natural rights, limited government, and free-market economics) toward what he characterizes as a romantic, European-style blood-and-soil nationalism.

What Goldberg documents, working from inside the conservative intellectual tradition that produced *National Review*, is that the apparatus's contemporary form does not represent a continuation of American conservatism's philosophical lineage. It represents a rejection of that lineage. The republican institutions, constitutional checks, and procedural commitments that classical American conservatism defended as guardrails against majoritarian abuse are, in the apparatus's contemporary configuration, treated as obstacles to the popular will rather than as the constitutive structure of the order within which the popular will operates. The transformation is not, in Goldberg's analysis, an accident or a temporary pathology. It is a documented philosophical migration that has consequences for the apparatus's institutional behavior.

The Bulwark Cohort: Electoral Incentives and Epistemic Closure

The body of work produced under the editorial coordination of *The Bulwark* — principally by Charlie Sykes (whose 2017 St. Martin's Press volume *How the Right Lost Its Mind* supplied the foundational analytical framework), Sarah Longwell, Tim Miller (whose 2022 Harper volume *Why We Did It: A Travelogue from the Republican Road to Hell* documents the operational decisions that produced the contemporary apparatus from inside the Republican operational class), Bill Kristol, and Mona Charen — supplies the most extensive contemporary in-tradition analysis of the apparatus's institutional incentives.

The Bulwark cohort's analytical contribution, distinguishable from the personality-focused critique that has come to dominate post-2016 discourse, is structural. Their collective documentation establishes that the apparatus's transformation is not principally a function of leadership pathology. It is a function of incentive structures within the conservative coalition that have come to reward, at the level of the primary electorate and the donor base, the specific political behaviors exhibited by the apparatus's contemporary form. Anti-democratic positioning produces fundraising and primary success. Procedural-conservative positioning produces electoral defeat in primaries and institutional exclusion. The apparatus's transformation, in the Bulwark cohort's analysis, is the predictable

equilibrium of the incentive structure rather than the contingent product of any specific political moment.

What this analysis adds to the framework documented in this paper is the insider documentation of the loyalty-filter mechanism that Part Four established theoretically. The Bulwark writers have, in many cases, themselves been subjected to the loyalty filter. Their excommunication from the conservative coalition's institutional apparatus, despite their continued substantive conservatism on most policy questions, provides the operational evidence that the filter operates as the comparative-authoritarian literature predicts.

Niskanen Center: Democratic Erosion as Institutional Diagnosis

The Niskanen Center, operating from a moderate center-right framework, has, across the post-2016 period, produced policy-research documentation of the apparatus's transformation that draws explicitly on the comparative-politics literature on democratic erosion. The principal contributions, by Brink Lindsey and Geoffrey Kabaservice, build on Kabaservice's 2012 Oxford University Press volume *Rule and Ruin: The Downfall of Moderation and the Destruction of the Republican Party from Eisenhower to the Tea Party* — itself a foundational text in the documentation of the apparatus's institutional transformation across the late twentieth century.

Lindsey and Kabaservice's analytical contribution is the explicit framing of the contemporary Republican coalition as what they have characterized as an anti-systemic political vehicle: a coalition that has, through the systematic purging of its moderate institutionalist wing, transformed from a conventional political party into an apparatus organized for democratic erosion through persistent attacks on the administrative state, the judiciary's procedural independence, and the integrity of electoral machinery. The Niskanen documentation operates from explicit conservative ground: Lindsey is a former Cato Institute scholar, Kabaservice has published extensively in conservative venues, and the Niskanen Center identifies as center-right. The analysis is, by all conventional measures, an in-tradition critique.

Liz Cheney: The Mechanics of Constitutional Subversion

Liz Cheney, a Republican congresswoman from Wyoming who served as the House Republican Conference Chair and was elevated to the vice-chairmanship of the January 6th Select Committee before her removal from House leadership and 2022 primary defeat, provides a documentary record of unusual analytical specificity. Her 2023 Little, Brown volume *Oath and Honor: A Memoir and a Warning* documents the operational mechanics of the constitutional-subversion process from inside the Republican congressional leadership during the 2020 through 2022 period. The January 6th

Select Committee's hearings and final report, of which Cheney was the principal Republican co-author, supplies the parallel public documentary record.

What Cheney's record adds to the framework is operational documentation of the loyalty-filter mechanism within the Republican congressional caucus. Her account documents specific episodes in which Republican House members, in private, acknowledged the documentary record of what had occurred and the constitutional commitments it should have produced, and in public repeated the apparatus's supplied claims as the price of continued caucus membership and primary security. Cheney's documentation is, on the record, that the gap between her colleagues' private acknowledgments and public repetitions was not principally a function of belief in the supplied claims. It was a function of the loyalty-filter mechanism, Part Four documents theoretically. The members who would not perform the loyalty signal — Cheney herself, and a small number of others — were, by the operation of the filter, removed from the apparatus.

Tom Nichols: The Epistemological Crisis

Tom Nichols, a former professor at the U.S. Naval War College, currently a writer at *The Atlantic*, and the author of the 2017 Oxford University Press volume *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign Against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters*, supplies the in-tradition analytical framework specifically focused on the epistemic dimension of the apparatus's operation. Nichols, writing from explicit conservative ground (he has identified as a Republican across most of his career and continues to identify with conservative policy commitments on most questions), documents what he characterizes as the apparatus's structural rejection of expertise as such — a rejection that, in his analytical framing, has rendered the coalition fundamentally incapable of serious governance.

Nichols's contribution to the documentary record assembled here is the in-tradition documentation of the anti-empirical operating posture that the apparatus has come to require of its participants. The rejection of expertise, in his analysis, is not a corollary of populist political identity but a structural requirement of the apparatus's continued operation: the apparatus cannot accommodate expert testimony on the consequences of its policy program because that testimony would, with regularity, contradict the cosmology documented in Part Two. The apparatus has therefore progressively trained its participants to treat expertise itself as a marker of out-group affiliation and elite betrayal, with the operational consequence Nichols documents: a coalition that lacks the analytical apparatus to govern even where it has acquired the institutional capacity to do so.

Yuval Levin and the Loss of Institutionalism

Yuval Levin, of the American Enterprise Institute and *National Affairs*, supplies the analytical framework most closely aligned with classical institutionalist conservatism. His 2020 Basic Books

volume *A Time to Build: From Family and Community to Congress and the Campus, How Recommitting to Our Institutions Can Revive the American Dream* and his 2024 follow-up *American Covenant: How the Constitution Unified Our Nation — and Could Again* document the apparatus's transformation as a function of what he characterizes as institutional abandonment: the systematic replacement of formative institutions with performative outrage as the operating mode of conservative political behavior.

Levin's analysis is essential here because it operates from the most institutionally legitimate position within the contemporary conservative intellectual establishment — AEI is the apparatus's flagship intellectual institution, and Levin's commitments to constitutional fidelity and policy seriousness are unambiguously conservative. His documentation establishes that the apparatus has come to treat structural bodies — Congress, the courts, the administrative state, the constitutional order — not as mechanisms for solving collective problems through constitutional friction and compromise, but as theatrical stages for personal brand-building by individual political actors. The analytical consequence Levin draws is that the apparatus has progressively lost the capacity to perform the function institutions exist to perform. The diagnosis is fully congruent with the analytical framework documented across this paper, articulated from within the apparatus's own intellectual establishment.

The Pre-Trump Skeptics and the Madisonian Inheritance

The older generation of conservative writers — George Will, Peggy Noonan, and the late Michael Gerson — supplies the documentary record from a position of institutional credibility that predates the apparatus's contemporary form. Will, whose 2019 Hachette volume, *The Conservative Sensibility*, provides the most extensive recent statement of his position, has documented the apparatus's progressive abandonment of the Madisonian framework of limited government, natural rights, and constitutional procedural commitments. Noonan, writing principally in *The Wall Street Journal* editorial pages, has, across the post-2016 period, documented the apparatus's moral decay through a series of columns whose voice and credentials are within the conservative tradition the apparatus claims to represent. Michael Gerson, formerly the chief speechwriter for President George W. Bush and a *Washington Post* columnist until his 2022 death, documented the apparatus's transformation from explicit evangelical and Republican-establishment ground to a more mainstream position by the end of his career.

What this older cohort's record establishes is that the analytical critique of the apparatus is not a recent or post-Trump phenomenon. It has been articulated continuously by figures whose conservative credentials are unambiguous and predate the apparatus's contemporary form, throughout the apparatus's transformation. The diagnosis has been available from within the

tradition. The tradition has supplied it repeatedly. The apparatus has progressively excluded the figures who supplied it.

II. The Dissenting-Evangelical Record

The most analytically essential counter-witness to the framework documented in this paper, and the one that operates with particular force on the demographic on which the apparatus relies most, comes from within white evangelical Protestantism itself. The voices documented in this section are not secular critics of evangelical political behavior. They are evangelicals — credentialed within the tradition, pastorally formed within it, and, in many cases, continuing to operate within its institutional structures — who, across the post-2016 period, have produced the documentary record from within the demographic the apparatus organizes.

The voices documented here are essential because they speak to a population for whom secular conservative critics are not authoritative. The reader who has come to this Part from within the white evangelical demographic that the apparatus has captured will not, in many cases, recognize David French's secular conservative critique as binding on questions of theological identity and Christian practice. The reader will, however, recognize Russell Moore. The reader will recognize Beth Moore. The reader will recognize Tim Alberta. These voices operate within the demographic, using credentials the demographic acknowledges. Their dissent is not a defection from the tradition. It is the tradition's most credentialed contemporary voices documenting what they observe the tradition becoming.

Russell Moore: The Market-Driven Religion

Russell Moore is perhaps the single most institutionally credentialed dissenting voice in contemporary American evangelicalism. He served as president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention — the largest American Protestant denomination — from 2013 to 2021, departing the position over the SBC's institutional accommodation of the apparatus's political program. He currently serves as editor-in-chief of Christianity Today, the flagship publication of post-1945 American evangelicalism, founded by Billy Graham. His 2023 Sentinel volume, *Losing Our Religion: An Altar Call for Evangelical America*, provides the most extensive contemporary statement of his diagnosis. Two passages from that volume, on the record, in his own voice, document the framework this paper is assembling from a position of unimpeachable evangelical credibility.

In the end, a market-driven religion gives rise to a market-driven approach to truth, and this development ultimately eviscerated conservative Christianity in the US and left it in the possession of hypocrites and hucksters.

— Russell Moore, *Losing Our Religion: An Altar Call for Evangelical America* (Sentinel, 2023).

What Moore documents in this single sentence is the structural mechanism that Part Two of this paper documents at length. The market-driven religion he names is the apparatus that the historical scholarship documents — Kruse’s Christian libertarianism funded by corporate donors in the mid-twentieth century, Williams’s grassroots Christian Right constructed across the 1960s and 1970s, the contemporary Christian-broadcasting apparatus delivering the cosmology daily. The market-driven approach to truth that Moore identifies as the consequence is the loyalty-by-repetition mechanism, as documented in Part Four of the political-science literature. Moore’s diagnosis is that the apparatus has eviscerated the substantive religious tradition it claimed to defend, leaving in its place what he characterizes as the possession of hypocrites and hucksters. The analytical claim is identical to the framework this paper assembles. It is articulated from inside the tradition, by the tradition’s most institutionally credentialed contemporary voice, on the record, in published form.

The second Moore passage extends the diagnosis to the specific theological framework documented in Part Two:

Christian nationalism is a prosperity gospel for nation-states, a liberation theology for white people.

— Russell Moore, *Losing Our Religion* (Sentinel, 2023).

The two analytical moves this passage performs are essential to the framework documented here. First, Moore identifies Christian nationalism — the framework Whitehead and Perry empirically operationalize and Gorski and Perry document historically — as a prosperity gospel for nation-states, the explicit theological characterization of the framework as a deviation from rather than a defense of historical Christianity. Second, the parallel construction (a liberation theology for white people) names the racial vector that the empirical political-science literature has documented and that Part Two integrates. The identification is not coming from Carol Anderson or Ian Haney López from outside the tradition. It is coming from the editor-in-chief of Christianity Today, on the record, in book form, from within the tradition.

Tim Alberta: The Exchange of Gospel for Political Power

Tim Alberta, the son of a prominent evangelical pastor and a journalist whose principal credentials are within the evangelical tradition, supplied in 2023 what is, by most contemporary assessments, the most extensive in-tradition documentary record of the apparatus’s operation within white evangelicalism. His 2023 HarperOne volume, *The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory: American Evangelicals in an Age of Extremism*, is the result of years of access to the apparatus’s operational

structures, conducted with the credentials of an evangelical insider whose father's ministry provided the access.

Alberta's principal analytical contribution is the documentation of what evangelical pastors, theologians, and credentialed leaders have observed and articulated about the apparatus, frequently in private acknowledgment that has not survived to public statement under the operation of the loyalty filter. One passage from his volume, quoting the pastor Brian Zahnd, captures the analytical move with the precision the documentary record requires:

The great fault in the evangelical movement today is that we are disobedient to the commands of the one we claim to follow. You can take up the sword of Caesar, or you can take up the cross of Jesus. You have to choose.

— Pastor Brian Zahnd, quoted in Tim Alberta, *The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory* (HarperOne, 2023).

The analytical structure of this passage is essential. Zahnd, an evangelical pastor whose institutional credentials are within the tradition, frames the apparatus's contemporary operation not as a defense of evangelical commitments but as an explicit substitution of political power for theological substance. The framing is not hostile. It is not coming from outside the tradition. It is coming from a pastor of the tradition, on the record, identifying what he observes as a structural betrayal of the theological commitments the tradition claims to embody.

The corresponding Alberta passage in his own voice, on the record:

Once we become convinced that God has blessed something, that thing can become an object of jealousy, obsession—even worship. We have exchanged the gospel for political power. We revised the church's mission.

— Tim Alberta, *The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory* (HarperOne, 2023).

Alberta's analytical claim is that the apparatus's operation has produced, within white evangelicalism, the conversion of the political coalition itself into an object of religious devotion — a substitution of the means for the end that has, by Alberta's documentation, structurally compromised the tradition's capacity to perform its claimed religious function. The exchange of the gospel for political power is, in his diagnosis, not metaphorical. It is the operational reality of the apparatus's contemporary form within the tradition.

Beth Moore: The Direct Naming

Beth Moore, one of the most institutionally significant Bible teachers in twenty-first-century evangelicalism, departed the Southern Baptist Convention in 2021 over precisely the institutional accommodations Russell Moore had departed the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission over the same year. Her public statement from December 2020, posted on what was then Twitter and subsequently widely circulated within evangelical channels, provides perhaps the most direct in-tradition naming of the apparatus's operation. The statement is reproduced here in its full original form because the directness of the language is itself part of the documentary record:

I do not believe these are days for mincing words. I am 63 ½ years old & I have never seen anything in these United States of America I found more astonishingly seductive & dangerous to the saints of God than Trumpism. This Christian nationalism is not of God. Move back from it.

— Beth Moore, public statement, December 2020.

The analytical structure of this statement is essential to the framework this paper documents. Beth Moore is not naming individual political figures or specific policy positions. She is naming what she terms Trumpism and Christian nationalism as a single phenomenon — a coherent apparatus operating on the white evangelical demographic — and identifying it as theologically dangerous to the population the apparatus is organizing. The identification is in pastoral language, addressed to the saints of God, made by a Bible teacher whose evangelical credentials are within the tradition the apparatus claims to represent. The dissent is not from evangelical Christianity. It is from the apparatus that has, in her diagnosis, captured evangelical Christianity for political ends incompatible with the tradition's claimed commitments.

Stuart Stevens: The Foundational Acknowledgment

Stuart Stevens, a Republican political strategist whose career included senior positions on the presidential campaigns of Bob Dole, George W. Bush, and Mitt Romney, supplied in his 2020 Knopf volume *It Was All a Lie: How the Republican Party Became Donald Trump* what is, on the record, the most direct primary-source acknowledgment of the apparatus's foundational character from inside its operational class.

Stevens's central claim — articulated by a Republican strategist who spent more than two decades inside the apparatus's operational structure, producing the political content that elected its candidates — is that the apparatus's contemporary form is not a deviation from the post-1968 Republican Party. It is the unmasking of the post-1968 Republican Party. The racial-grievance calculus Atwater articulated, and the Phillips strategic-document framework documented in Part

Two, have, in Stevens's documentation, been the operational reality of the apparatus throughout the period during which Stevens worked within it. The contemporary apparatus has not, in its analysis, departed from a previously different conservative coalition. It has made explicit what was previously coded. The acknowledgment, coming from within the operational class and backed by decades of campaign work, provides the most direct in-tradition confirmation of the findings of historical scholarship documented in Part Two.

III. What the Counter-Witness Establishes

The voices documented in Sections I and II do not, individually or collectively, constitute proof of the framework this paper assembles. The framework rests on the documentary record across Parts One through Four, on primary government data, on peer-reviewed scholarship, and on the architects' own statements. The counter-witness does not supply the framework's evidence. It supplies the counter-witness's evidence: that the framework has been articulated, repeatedly, with documentary specificity, from inside the conservative and evangelical traditions, by figures whose credentials within those traditions are unambiguous.

What that establishes, for the reader who has come to this Part from within those traditions, is specific. The analytical critique the reader has walked through across the prior four Parts is not a partisan attack from outside. It is not a recruitment effort by the institutional left. It is not a demand that the reader leave conservatism, leave evangelicalism, or leave the political identity the reader has held across the period the paper documents. It is the conclusion that, on the documentary record, the reader's own tradition's most credentialed contemporary voices have already reached, articulated publicly, and, in many cases, paid institutional or professional costs to do so. The framework is not foreign to the reader's tradition. The tradition's most credentialed dissenters have supplied it. The apparatus has progressively excluded them.

The exclusion is itself part of the documentary record. Cheney's primary defeat, French's removal from the institutional positions he held within the religious-conservative legal apparatus, Russell Moore's departure from the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, Beth Moore's departure from the SBC, Tim Miller's pre-departure resignation from Republican operational work, Stuart Stevens's career-ending public acknowledgment, the Bulwark cohort's progressive marginalization within Republican institutional spaces — these are not separate episodes of personal conflict. They are the operational record of the loyalty filter. Part Four documents theoretically. The figures who would not perform the apparatus's required loyalty signal have, with regularity, been removed from the apparatus. The figures who remain within the apparatus are, by selection, the figures who have demonstrated the willingness to perform what the apparatus supplies.

The reader who has been within the tradition across this period, and who has perhaps observed — without yet articulating to themselves — the progressive disappearance of voices the reader had previously trusted, is observing the operation of the filter. The voices have not disappeared because they were wrong. They have not disappeared because they failed within the marketplace of conservative ideas. They have disappeared because they would not repeat what the apparatus supplied, and the apparatus's continued operation requires that the figures within it perform the repetition. The counter-witness this Part documents is, in many cases, the public record of the voices the apparatus has progressively removed. They are still on the record. They are still reaching the readers who can find them. They have not been silenced. They have been excluded from the apparatus that the reader has been inside.

What Part Six will perform is the convergence: the closing of the documentary loop between this paper and *The Party Left the Building*, and the precise architectural account of what the four-layer apparatus documented across Parts One through Four together produces. The counter-witness documented in this Part is part of that account. The framework is not idiosyncratic. The diagnosis is not foreign. The analysis has been articulated, on the record, by the reader's own tradition's most credentialed contemporary voices. Part Six establishes what the documentary record, with the counter-witness included, finally requires.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF CONSENT



PART SIX

Convergence

Closing the Documentary Loop

*What the four-layer architecture produces, what the two papers together describe,
and the obligation of the record.*

Convergence

The documentary chain assembled across the prior five Parts is complete at this point in the paper. What remains is to state, with the precision the chain has earned, what the chain together establishes. This Part performs that statement. It does not introduce new evidence. It does not extend the analysis into prescriptive territory. It closes the documentary loop between this paper and *The Party Left the Building*, restates the architectural account that the two volumes together describe, and settles into the closing register the Yellow Jacket project has held throughout.

I. The Architecture in Its Complete Form

The architecture documented in this paper has four operational layers. Each is sourced. Each is documented in primary materials and peer-reviewed scholarship. None requires interpretive amplification to function as evidence. Stated in the order of their construction across the post-1971 period:

The institutional infrastructure layer was constructed across the period from approximately 1971 through the present, beginning with the Powell Memorandum and the founding sequence of the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute's expansion, the Cato Institute, the Manhattan Institute, and the Federalist Society. It was funded by a coordinated donor network whose principal architecture has been documented by Mayer, Skocpol, Hertel-Fernandez, Leonard, and Nelson, and whose current operational form includes the Koch network, the Council for National Policy, Leonard Leo's Marble Freedom Trust apparatus, and the donor-advised funds at DonorsTrust and Donors Capital Fund. The infrastructure produced the policy regime — taxation, trade, antitrust, financial deregulation, healthcare — whose distributional outcomes diverged from their stated rationales in the manner Piketty, Saez, Zucman, Autor, Dorn, Hanson, Pierce, Schott, Philippon, Khan, Mian, Sufi, Gaynor, Appelbaum, and Batt have documented. The harm produced by the regime has been measured by Case and Deaton, the Centers for Disease Control and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the British Medical Journal's county-mortality work, and the Sheps Center's documentation of rural healthcare contraction.

The cosmology layer operates on the population that the architecture extracts from. Its underlying psychological framework is documented in Hofstadter, Hochschild, Cramer, Wuthnow, Gest, Wu, and the broader attribution-gap literature. Its theological vector is documented in Williams, FitzGerald, Kruse, Nelson, Du Mez, Whitehead, Perry, Jones, and Gorski. Its racial-grievance vector is documented in Anderson, Haney López, MacLean, Perlstein, Carter, Maxwell, and Shields. It is articulated in the architects' own voices in the Atwater transcript and the Phillips primary text. The empirical political-

science literature measures the cosmology's operational consequences for the population — Kinder, Sanders, Tesler, Sides, Vavreck, Jardina — and the mortality cost of the political program the cosmology authorizes is measured by Metzl. The cosmology's daily delivery is performed by the apparatus documented in Section IV of Part Two: Salem Media's network, Sinclair's local television footprint, the Christian-broadcasting infrastructure, the post-2017 podcast and independent-broadcast layer, the New Apostolic Reformation's contemporary apparatus, the post-2022 X algorithmic repositioning, and the story-laundering loop that connects the activist fringe to the mainstream conservative apparatus.

The pre-categorization apparatus filters contradicting evidence at the source-attribution step. Its asymmetric structure is documented in Benkler, Faris, and Roberts. Its self-protective enclave architecture is documented in Jamieson and Cappella. Its strategic construction is documented in Ladd. Its diagnosis from inside the conservative tradition is documented in the Sanchez essay. Its longitudinal measurement is in the Pew, Knight, and Reuters trust-tracking data, which establishes the asymmetric exit of the American conservative coalition from shared verification infrastructure as a global outlier among functioning democracies.

The loyalty-by-repetition layer maintains coalition cohesion despite the contradicting evidence that the prior layers cannot fully filter out. Its foundational analytical framework is documented in Arendt and Havel. Its contemporary extension is documented in Snyder, Gessen, Applebaum, and Stanley. Its empirical measurement is documented in Hahl, Kim, and Zuckerman, and in Huang. Its operation through three components — content-independence, loyalty-filtering, and mutual visibility — is documented in the convergent literature, and its industrial-scale extension through contemporary social-media architecture has, across the post-2018 period, accelerated the apparatus's operation to levels beyond those observed in the foundational tradition of mid-twentieth-century European cases.

The four layers operate together. Each is necessary. None is sufficient on its own. The institutional infrastructure produces the policy outputs that produce the harm. The cosmology converts the harm into substituted causal narratives. The pre-categorization apparatus prevents most contradicting evidence from reaching the population in a form that could produce reconsideration. The loyalty-by-repetition layer maintains the coalition's cohesion when contradicting evidence reaches the population despite the apparatus's filtering function. The architecture is sustained because each layer compensates for the others' inevitable failures, and because the four layers together produce a population that is structurally insulated from accurate information about the policy regime that produces its conditions.

II. The Convergence with The Party Left the Building

The architecture documented in this paper does not, on its own, fully account for the political condition the Yellow Jacket project has been documenting. The architecture's operation requires a second condition: that the institutional opposition to the architecture's program be incapable of interrupting it. *The Party Left the Building* documents that condition. The two papers are not parallel analyses of separate phenomena. They are companion analyses of the two structural failures, whose simultaneous operation constitutes the political condition the project documents.

What *The Party Left the Building* establishes, with the documentary specificity its register requires, is that the institutional Democratic Party — the political vehicle whose constitutional and structural role would, in a functioning two-party system, supply the opposition that interrupts the architecture documented in this paper — has across the period from approximately 2005 through 2026 progressively replaced governing strategy with fundraising tactics, displaced its working-class base with a professional class whose value priorities are structurally misaligned with the electorate it would need to mobilize, built a media ecosystem that insulates it from evidence of its own decline, and arrived at a moment in which it cannot form a coherent governing coalition in its safest state or hold the votes of the workers in the precincts that gave it its historic mandate. The institutional opposition, as the documentary record TPLB assembles, is not capable of performing the oppositional function that the architecture's interruption would require.

The two failures are not symmetric. The architectural construction documented in this paper is the product of a forty-five-year coordinated project, funded by concentrated donor capital, executing a coherent ideological program through institutional infrastructure designed for that execution. The institutional collapse documented in *The Party Left the Building* is the product of a forty-year drift, driven by the displacement of working-class governance by professional-class brand management, executed by a fundraising apparatus optimized for donor anxiety rather than electoral mobilization. The construction is intentional and coordinated. The collapse is structural and unintentional. Both are documented. Both are necessary conditions for the political moment the Yellow Jacket project has been examining.

What the two volumes together describe, then, is a political condition with two simultaneously operating components. On one side, an architecture has been constructed that converts the harm produced by its own program into electoral support for the program's continuation. On the other hand, the institutional opposition that, in a functioning system, would interrupt the architecture has been progressively rendered incapable of performing that function. The condition is not symmetric. The documentary record on each side is specific. The two records, read together, provide the architectural account of the moment the project documents.

III. What the Documentary Record Establishes

The documentary chain the reader has traversed in this paper culminates in a specific finding. The finding is not interpretive. It does not require the reader to share the author's analytical priors or political commitments. It rests on primary government data, peer-reviewed scholarship, and the architects' own statements at every link. Stated as plainly as the documentary record permits:

The conditions of the populations whose electoral majorities have authorized the architecture's continuation are the measurable outcomes of a documented policy regime. The policy regime is the engineered output of a documented institutional infrastructure. The institutional infrastructure is funded by a documented donor network whose financial flows are traceable in the public record. The cosmology that supplies the affected population with a substituted account of its conditions is delivered through a documented apparatus with named figures, measurable audiences, and identifiable institutional funders. The pre-categorization mechanism that filters out contradictory evidence at the source-attribution step is documented in peer-reviewed media scholarship and in longitudinal trust-tracking data. The loyalty-by-repetition mechanism that maintains coalition cohesion in the face of observable contradiction is documented in the political-theoretical tradition extending from Arendt onward and in the contemporary empirical political-science literature.

Each of these statements is supported by the sources cited in the relevant Parts of this paper. None requires interpretation beyond the application of ordinary inference to the documentary record. The architects of the political strategies under examination have, in many cases, articulated the strategies in their own voices, on the record, in primary documents available to any reader willing to consult them. The conservative writers, religious leaders, and movement-credentialed analysts documented in Part Five have, in many cases, articulated the same diagnosis from inside the conservative tradition, in published form, in venues whose institutional credibility is unambiguous.

What the documentary record additionally establishes, and what is essential to the closing finding of this paper, is that the architecture's durability depends, structurally, on the population that bears the cost of its operation continuing to misattribute the cost to the named enemies the cosmology supplies. The architecture would not survive a population that could correctly attribute its own harm to the documented sources of the harm. The cosmology, the pre-categorization apparatus, and the loyalty-by-repetition layer are not incidental features of the architecture's operation. They are structurally necessary components of its continued function. The architecture's continuation requires its continued operation. Their continued operation requires the continued misattribution of cause within the population that the architecture organizes.

IV. The Counter-Witness as Documentary Floor

Part Five documented that the analytical framework assembled across this paper has been articulated, repeatedly and with documentary specificity, from inside the conservative and evangelical traditions, by named figures whose credentials within those traditions are unambiguous. The function of the counter-witness within the structure of the paper is not to supply additional evidence for the framework. The framework does not require the counter-witness to be supported. It rests on the documentary record assembled across Parts One through Four.

The function of the counter-witness is to supply the floor. The reader who has been within the conservative or evangelical traditions over the period the paper documents and who has perhaps observed the progressive disappearance of voices the reader had previously trusted within those traditions has been observing the operation of the loyalty filter that Part Four documents theoretically. The voices have not disappeared because they failed within the tradition. They have disappeared because they would not perform the loyalty signal the apparatus required, and the apparatus's continued operation required their exclusion. The voices remain on the record. They have not been silenced. They have been excluded from the apparatus that the reader has been inside.

What this Part has not done, and will not do, is supply the reader with a prescription. The reader has not been asked to leave anything. The reader has not been asked to vote in any particular direction, support any particular political program, or adopt any particular policy preference. The reader has been asked to apply the principles of their own tradition consistently to the documentary record and to draw the conclusions the documentary record supports. The conclusions belong to the reader. The record is what is offered.

V. The Obligation of the Record

There is a tradition in documentary research, older than political science, older than journalism, older than the republic itself, that holds that the specific and documented truth of what happened is worth more than any narrative constructed on top of it. Narratives can be revised. Interpretations can be contested. The record cannot be unwritten.

This paper is part of a record. It documents, with the specificity and sourcing that documentation requires, what has been built across the architecture of American political institutions over the period from approximately 1971 through 2026, what the architecture has produced in the populations it operates on, how the consent of those populations has been engineered and sustained, and how the institutional opposition that would, in a functioning system, interrupt the architecture's operation has been rendered incapable of performing that function. The paper does not propose what to do with the record. It assembles the record.

Documentation is necessary. It has never been sufficient on its own to repair the conditions it documents. It is necessary because the structural failure described in these pages depends, at least in part, on the assumption that the people inside the architecture will not fully understand what they are inside. Naming a mechanism precisely — not gesturing at it, not describing it metaphorically, not summarizing it in a slogan, but documenting it specifically enough that it cannot be unsaid — is a small act. It is also one of the few acts that survives the conditions it describes. The mechanism is named. The record is on the record. What is done with it is not the record's question.

The conclusions belong to you.



— *E. Lawrence Anderson*
April 2026

THE YELLOW JACKET POLICY RESEARCH SERIES



THE ARCHITECTURE OF CONSENT

*How an Apparatus of Causal Substitution
Authorizes Its Own Extraction*

Working Source Inventory — Version 1.0

E. LAWRENCE ANDERSON

April 2026

Independent Research — All Documents Freely Reproducible

Working Source Inventory

This document is the verified source inventory for The Architecture of Consent, a Yellow Jacket Policy Research Series publication and companion volume to The Party Left the Building. Version 1.0 incorporates all sources cited across the front matter and the six Parts as drafted in April 2026. Every entry has been confirmed through primary publication records, publisher databases, peer-reviewed archives, institutional websites, and current news reporting. This inventory is a working document organized around the paper's architectural pillars.

The inventory's organizational structure mirrors the paper's analytical structure. Pillars I through III correspond to the material, policy, and institutional infrastructure documentation in Part One. Pillars IV through VII correspond to the cosmology framework, the theological vector, the racial-grievance vector, and the delivery system documented in Part Two. Pillar VIII corresponds to the asymmetric information apparatus documented in Part Three. Pillar IX corresponds to the comparative-authoritarianism literature documented in the hinge of Part Three. Pillar X corresponds to the loyalty-by-repetition layer documented in Part Four. Pillar XI corresponds to the conservative counter-witness documented in Part Five. Each pillar opens with the principal scholarly works that supply its foundational documentation, followed by primary documentation of operational facts and complementary supporting sources.

All publishers, dates, journal volumes, and institutional affiliations cited below have been verified against primary publication records. The inventory is the verification floor for the paper's documentary chain. Any contested citation in the paper resolves to an entry in this inventory.

PILLAR I

THE HARM RECORD

What Has Been Done to the population that the Architecture Operates On

Mortality and the Deaths-of-Despair Reversal

Case, Anne; Deaton, Angus. Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism. Princeton University Press, 2020. Foundational documentary record of the post-1990 reversal in life expectancy among non-college-educated white Americans. Identifies suicide, drug overdose, and alcoholic liver disease as the principal mechanisms. Methodology grounded in CDC mortality data and longitudinal cohort analysis and updated through 2024 in subsequent NBER working papers.

Case, Anne; Deaton, Angus. "Mortality and Morbidity in the 21st Century." Brookings Papers on Economic Activity, Spring 2017. Peer-reviewed academic statement of the deaths-of-despair finding prior to the 2020 volume. Establishes the demographic concentration of the mortality reversal.

Case, Anne; Deaton, Angus. NBER Working Paper No. 29328, October 2021. Updates the deaths-of-despair findings through the COVID-19 period. Documents that the pandemic exacerbated rather than interrupted the gradient, with non-college mortality continuing to diverge from college-educated mortality.

Geographic Mortality Distribution

Roth, Gregory A.; et al. “US county-level trends in mortality rates for major causes of death, 2001 to 2019.” *The BMJ*, 2022. Peer-reviewed county-level mortality study correlating life-expectancy divergence with partisan voting patterns. Counties carried by Republican presidential candidates by margins of twenty points or more in 2016 and 2020 experienced stagnating or declining life expectancy relative to Democratic-voting counties.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Underlying Cause of Death Database (WONDER). Longitudinal mortality records show that the rural mortality rate exceeded the urban rate by approximately 20% by 2019, having been essentially identical in 1990.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW). Documents the wage premium for urban over rural workers, which expands substantially across the post-2000 period.
- Bureau of Economic Analysis. Regional GDP data. Establishes that virtually all aggregate net job growth and GDP expansion since 2008 has been geographically concentrated in the top one hundred Metropolitan Statistical Areas.

Trade-Shock Labor-Market Scarring

Autor, David H.; Dorn, David; Hanson, Gordon H. “The China Syndrome: Local Labor Market Effects of Import Competition in the United States.” *American Economic Review*, 103(6), October 2013, 2121–2168. Foundational empirical paper establishing the China Shock framework. Documents that local labor markets exposed to Chinese import competition following the 2001 WTO accession experienced higher unemployment, lower labor-force participation, and reduced wages, with no compensating transition to higher-skill sectors.

Pierce, Justin R.; Schott, Peter K. “The Surprisingly Swift Decline of US Manufacturing Employment.” *American Economic Review*, 106(7), July 2016, 1632–1662. Connects the collapse of manufacturing employment to the October 2000 granting of Permanent Normal Trade Relations to China. Establishes that the removal of tariff uncertainty incentivized the rapid offshoring of supply chains.

Autor, David H.; Dorn, David; Hanson, Gordon H.; Majlesi, Kaveh. “Importing Political Polarization? The Electoral Consequences of Rising Trade Exposure.” *American Economic Review*, 110(10), October 2020, 3139–3183. Documents that commuting zones most exposed to the China Shock systematically displaced moderate political incumbents in favor of hardline candidates of both parties, with rightward shift dominating in numerical terms.

Hakobyan, Shushanik; McLaren, John. “Looking for Local Labor Market Effects of NAFTA.” *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 98(4), October 2016, 728–741. Documents wage stagnation among blue-collar workers in locations dependent on industries protected by pre-NAFTA tariffs.

Healthcare Infrastructure Contraction

Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research. Rural Hospital Closures Database. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, ongoing. Tracks rural hospital closures across the post-2005 period; documents closure of more than 190 rural hospitals or cessation of inpatient services. Identifies inadequate Medicare reimbursement, refusal of Medicaid expansion in Republican-controlled states, and population depletion as principal drivers.

Gaynor, Martin. “What to Do about Health-Care Markets? Policies to Make Health-Care Markets Work.” *The Hamilton Project* / Brookings Institution, March 2020. Documents that hospital mergers across the past three decades have produced substantial price increases for patients and employers without measurable improvements in care quality.

Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI). Rural Pharmacy Report Series. University of Iowa, ongoing. Documents the closure of hundreds of independent rural pharmacies, principally driven by Pharmacy Benefit Manager reimbursement rates falling below the cost of dispensing. Establishes the existence of pharmacy deserts in counties where residents must drive substantial distances to access prescription medications.

Agricultural Consolidation

United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. *Farms and Land in Farms Annual Summary*. Ongoing. Documents the steady displacement of mid-sized, family-operated farms by large corporate operations across the post-1980 period.

- United States Department of Agriculture / Government Accountability Office. Documentation establishes that four corporations control approximately eighty-five percent of the United States beef-packing market.
- Open Markets Institute. Reports on agricultural concentration. Documents the four-firm dominance in beef, pork, poultry, and grain processing markets, and the corresponding squeeze on independent producers.

PILLAR II

THE POLICY REGIME

What Was Authorized, By Whom, and With What Distributional Consequence

Tax Policy and the Distributional Record

Piketty, Thomas; Saez, Emmanuel; Zucman, Gabriel. “Distributional National Accounts: Methods and Estimates for the United States.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 133(2), May 2018, 553–609. Foundational empirical paper documenting that the top one percent share of national pre-tax income approximately doubled from roughly ten percent in 1980 to over twenty percent by 2014, while the bottom fifty percent of the income distribution experienced near-zero pre-tax income growth.

Saez, Emmanuel; Zucman, Gabriel. *The Triumph of Injustice: How the Rich Dodge Taxes and How to Make Them Pay*. W. W. Norton, 2019. Documents that, in 2018 — the first year of full operation of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act — the top 400 wealthiest Americans paid a lower total effective tax rate, including federal, state, and local taxes, than any other income group.

- Congressional Budget Office. *Distribution of Household Income* reports, annual. Confirms steady diminution of the equalizing effect of federal taxation since 1981.
- Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 (Pub. L. 115-97). The principal late-cycle implementation of the post-1981 tax framework. Made the bulk of corporate-rate reductions permanent.

Trade Liberalization Authorizations

- North American Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act of 1993 (Pub. L. 103-182). Bipartisan congressional authorization. Signed by the Clinton administration.
- U.S.-China Relations Act of 2000 (Pub. L. 106-286). Authorized Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China in October 2000. Substantial bipartisan congressional support.

Antitrust Doctrine and Market Concentration

Bork, Robert H. *The Antitrust Paradox: A Policy at War with Itself*. Basic Books, 1978. The foundational text of the consumer-welfare standard that has governed American antitrust enforcement across the post-1980 period. Restricts antitrust enforcement to cases producing immediate consumer-price effects.

Philippon, Thomas. *The Great Reversal: How America Gave Up on Free Markets*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019. Provides comprehensive sector-by-sector data on market concentration in the American market. Documents that the United States markets have become substantially more concentrated than European markets over the post-1990 period, resulting in higher prices, lower corporate investment, and lower wages.

Khan, Lina M. “Amazon’s Antitrust Paradox.” *The Yale Law Journal*, 126(3), January 2017, 710–805. The foundational text of the New Brandeis movement. Documents how the consumer-welfare standard fails to address consolidation that extracts wealth from independent producers while keeping nominal consumer prices low.

Financial Deregulation and the 2008 Wealth Destruction

- Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act of 1999 (Pub. L. 106-102). Repealed the Glass-Steagall separation of commercial and investment banking. Bipartisan congressional authorization, signed by the Clinton administration.
- Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000 (Pub. L. 106-554). Exempted over-the-counter derivatives from regulatory oversight. Bipartisan congressional authorization.

Mian, Atif; Sufi, Amir. *House of Debt: How They (and You) Caused the Great Recession, and How We Can Prevent It from Happening Again*. University of Chicago Press, 2014. Documents the distributional consequences of the 2008 financial crisis. The wealth destruction was concentrated in the bottom half of the wealth distribution, with particular intensity in minority and working-class neighborhoods. At the same time, financial institutions were largely shielded by federal bailout authority.

Pharmaceutical Pricing and the Non-Interference Clause

- Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 (Pub. L. 108-173). Created Medicare Part D and included the non-interference clause prohibiting federal price negotiation with pharmaceutical manufacturers.
- Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (Pub. L. 117-169). First substantive partial reversal of the non-interference clause, permitting limited price negotiation on a small subset of high-cost medications.

PILLAR III

THE INSTITUTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Donor Network, Think-Tank Apparatus, and Strategic Litigation Pipeline

The Foundational Document

- Powell, Lewis F. Jr. Confidential Memorandum: Attack on American Free Enterprise System. Prepared for the United States Chamber of Commerce, August 23, 1971. Made public after Powell’s Supreme Court nomination in 1972. The foundational strategic document of the post-1971 conservative infrastructure project.

Donor Network Documentation

Mayer, Jane. *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*. Doubleday, 2016. Foundational documentary account of the Koch network, the biannual donor seminars, the pooling of capital from allied billionaire donors, and the funding apparatus that

distributed capital across academic centers, think tanks, and political-advocacy organizations, including Americans for Prosperity.

Leonard, Christopher. *Kochland: The Secret History of Koch Industries and Corporate Power in America*. Simon & Schuster, 2019. Extends the documentary record with primary-source detail on Koch Industries' operational structure and its political apparatus.

Skocpol, Theda; Hertel-Fernandez, Alexander. "The Koch Network and Republican Party Extremism." *Perspectives on Politics*, 14(3), September 2016, 681–699. Peer-reviewed empirical documentation of how the Koch network functioned as what the authors describe as a party within a party — exerting ideological discipline on Republican legislators through primary threats, grassroots mobilization, and the conditional supply of campaign capital.

Hertel-Fernandez, Alexander. *State Capture: How Conservative Activists, Big Businesses, and Wealthy Donors Reshaped the American States — and the Nation*. Oxford University Press, 2019. Documents the state-level apparatus through which model legislation produced by ALEC and the State Policy Network is introduced, frequently verbatim, in state legislatures across the country.

Nelson, Anne. *Shadow Network: Media, Money, and the Secret Hub of the Radical Right*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019. Documents the Council for National Policy as the coordinating body that connects secular billionaire capital with the religious-conservative apparatus.

- ProPublica. Investigative reporting on Leonard Leo, Marble Freedom Trust, and the Barre Seid donation. Established the August 2022 disclosure of Seid's \$1.6 billion donation to Marble Freedom Trust as the largest single political contribution in American history, of which there is public record.
- OpenSecrets. Federal political contribution data and dark-money tracking. Provides the publicly available financial-flow documentation referenced throughout the institutional infrastructure record.

Think-Tank Apparatus and Mandate for Leadership Lineage

- Heritage Foundation. *Mandate for Leadership* volumes, 1981 forward. The 1981 original supplied substantial portions of the personnel and policy architecture adopted by the Reagan administration. The 2023 release, branded as *Project 2025*, represents the most fully developed version of the apparatus, accompanied by a personnel database of vetted loyalist candidates.
- American Enterprise Institute (founded 1938, expanded substantially across the 1970s). Cato Institute (founded 1977). Manhattan Institute for Policy Research (founded 1978). The principal post-Powell-Memorandum think-tank infrastructure.

The Federalist Society and the Judicial Pipeline

Teles, Steven M. *The Rise of the Conservative Legal Movement: The Battle for Control of the Law*. Princeton University Press, 2008. Foundational academic history of the construction of the conservative legal counter-establishment, with the Federalist Society as the principal credentialing and networking institution.

Hollis-Brusky, Amanda. *Ideas with Consequences: The Federalist Society and the Conservative Counterrevolution*. Oxford University Press, 2015. Documents how the Federalist Society legitimized originalism as a competing constitutional doctrine and supplied the personnel infrastructure that subsequently led to the appointment of three Supreme Court justices and to a substantial reshaping of the federal appellate courts.

State-Level Architecture

- American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), founded in 1973. Convenes corporate-funded task forces producing model legislation subsequently introduced in state legislatures. Documented in detail by the Center for Media and Democracy (CMD) and ALEC Exposed.
- State Policy Network (SPN). Approximately fifty state-level think tanks operate in coordination with the national infrastructure.

Strategic Litigation Apparatus

- Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF). Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. First Liberty Institute. Pacific Legal Foundation. The principal strategic-litigation organizations producing the cases that, when consolidated through the appellate courts to the Supreme Court, produce the doctrinal shifts that lock in the policy preferences of the broader infrastructure.
- Cooper & Kirk PLLC. The boutique law firm serves as the elite-credentialing pipeline for movement attorneys; it has documented connections to the Federalist Society network.

PILLAR IV

THE COSMOLOGY FRAMEWORK

The Psychological and Ethnographic Documentation of Causal Substitution

The Foundational Analytical Framework

Hofstadter, Richard. *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1965. Title essay originally Herbert Spencer Lecture at Oxford University, November 1963, published in *Harper's Magazine*, November 1964. Establishes the analytical framework of status anxiety as opposed to material deprivation, with conspiratorial fantasy as a recurring style of American political life.

Contemporary Ethnographic Documentation

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. The New Press, 2016. Five years of ethnographic field research were conducted principally in Louisiana. Introduces the concept of the deep story — the subjective emotional narrative through which a group makes sense of its political circumstances. Subjects lived in environments substantially degraded by petrochemical-industry pollution; their political response was sustained opposition to environmental regulation.

Cramer, Katherine J. *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*. University of Chicago Press, 2016. Ethnographic research across rural Wisconsin during the period of Governor Scott Walker's rise. Documents rural consciousness as the framework through which rural Wisconsin voters interpreted economic stagnation as the consequence of urban-elite and public-sector extraction.

Wuthnow, Robert. *The Left Behind: Decline and Rage in Rural America*. Princeton University Press, 2018. Research across rural communities in the Plains states, the South, and parts of the Midwest. Documents the conversion of structural decline into a moral narrative — economic decline interpreted as a symptom of moral decay engineered by Washington, rather than as the consequence of policy choices.

Gest, Justin. *The New Minority: White Working Class Politics in an Age of Immigration and Inequality*. Oxford University Press, 2016. Comparative research between Youngstown, Ohio, and East London. Documents the loss of social centrality and its political consequences across two deindustrialized economies, establishing the pattern as non-specific to the United States.

The Empirical Attribution-Gap Literature

Wu, Boliang. "Misattributed Blame? Attitudes toward Globalization in the Age of Automation." *Political Science Research and Methods*, 2021. Nationally representative survey research documenting that workers facing the highest objective risk of automation displacement systematically misattribute their economic vulnerability to free trade and immigration.

Hayes, Jude C.; Imai, Masami; Shelton, Cameron A. "Attribution Error in Economic Voting: Evidence from Trade Shocks." *Economic Inquiry*, 53(1), January 2015, 258–275. Empirical measurement of the political-attribution gap. Voters reliably punish incumbent governments for downturns produced by exogenous global trade shocks that domestic incumbents had no capacity to control.

PILLAR V

THE THEOLOGICAL VECTOR

The Construction and Operation of White Christian Nationalism

Historical Construction of the Religious Right

Williams, Daniel K. *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right*. Oxford University Press, 2010. Establishes the Christian Right as a sustained, multi-decade effort dating to the 1960s rather than a 1970s reaction to *Roe v. Wade*.

FitzGerald, Frances. *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America*. Simon & Schuster, 2017. Comprehensive historical through-line from the early-twentieth-century fundamentalist-modernist controversies to the Trump era.

Kruse, Kevin M. *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*. Basic Books, 2015. Documents the deliberate alliance, beginning in the 1930s and 1940s, between corporate

industrialists and conservative clergy to produce what came to be called Christian libertarianism — the explicit theological equation of welfare-state regulation with godless collectivism.

Militarized Masculinity and Contemporary Evangelical Politics

Du Mez, Kristin Kobes. *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*. Liveright / W. W. Norton, 2020. Close reading of seventy-five years of evangelical popular literature, sermon archives, men's ministry materials, and youth formation curricula. Establishes white evangelicalism in the post-1945 period as a cultural and political movement organized around militarized, patriarchal masculinity, with a warrior-Christ archetype rather than the canonical-gospel Jesus as the central figure.

The Christian Nationalism Empirical Apparatus

Whitehead, Andrew L.; Perry, Samuel L. *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States*. Oxford University Press, 2020. Develops and validates the Christian Nationalism Scale — the empirical instrument now standard in the political-science literature. Establishes statistical correlation between large-scale scores and support for authoritarian social control, militarized policing, and curtailment of pluralist democratic norms.

Jones, Robert P. *The End of White Christian America*. Simon & Schuster, 2016. Documents the demographic contraction of white Christian America's absolute majority status across the post-1990 period, drawing on extensive PRRI polling data.

Jones, Robert P. *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity*. Simon & Schuster, 2020. Extends the Jones documentation to the historical relationship between American Christian institutions and the construction of racial hierarchy.

Gorski, Philip; Perry, Samuel L. *The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy*. Oxford University Press, 2022. Traces the historical fusion of white supremacy, expansionist nationalism, and biblical rhetoric that produced the contemporary Christian-nationalist framework, establishing it as the latest expression of a continuous American political-theological strain rather than a deviation from the historical mainstream.

- Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI). *2025 Census of American Religion*. Establishes white evangelical Protestants at approximately thirteen percent of the United States population (down from approximately twenty-three percent in 2006), and white Christians collectively at approximately sixty-eight percent of the Republican Party.

PILLAR VI

THE RACIAL GRIEVANCE VECTOR

The Foundational Organizing Structure of the Post-1968 Conservative Coalition

Foundational Historical Scholarship

Anderson, Carol. *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*. Bloomsbury, 2016. Establishes the long pattern: every major advancement for Black Americans in American political and legal life has been met with structurally embedded, legally codified backlash.

Anderson, Carol. *One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression Is Destroying Our Democracy*. Bloomsbury, 2018. Extends the Anderson framework to the post-Shelby County v. Holder voter-restriction legislation.

Haney López, Ian. *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class*. Oxford University Press, 2014. Advances the strategic-racism thesis. Documents how the coded language of late-twentieth-century American conservative politics — forced busing, welfare queens, law and order, illegal aliens, urban crime, states' rights — was deliberately engineered to activate white racial anxiety and forge a cross-class political coalition.

Kruse, Kevin M. *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. Princeton University Press, 2005. Establishes that the foundational rhetoric of modern American conservatism — freedom of association, neighborhood schools, anti-government privatization — emerged from the resistance to desegregation rather than from a separate libertarian intellectual tradition.

MacLean, Nancy. *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America*. Viking, 2017. Traces the connection between the defense of southern segregation through the work of economist James M. Buchanan and the modern libertarian architecture seeking to insulate property rights from democratic majoritarian control.

Perlstein, Rick. *Before the Storm; Nixonland; The Invisible Bridge; Reaganland*. Simon & Schuster, 2001-2020. Four-volume historical sequence documenting how the Republican Party absorbed the Wallace voter and institutionalized white cultural and racial backlash into a sustained national electoral strategy.

Carter, Dan T. *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics*. Simon & Schuster, 1995. Documents George Wallace's 1968 campaign as the operational template that the Nixon and Reagan campaigns subsequently refined.

Maxwell, Angie; Shields, Todd. *The Long Southern Strategy: How Chasing White Voters in the South Changed American Politics*. Oxford University Press, 2019. Documents how the Southern Strategy was deliberately expanded across decades from its original Southern application to capture white evangelical voters and white women through interlocking appeals to racial, religious, and gender anxieties.

Primary Documentary Statements by the Architects

Atwater, Lee. Interview with Alexander P. Lamis, 1981. Originally published in Lamis, *The Two-Party South* (Oxford University Press, 1990); restored full transcript published in *The Nation*, November 13,

2012, by Rick Perlstein. The architect of the post-1968 Republican strategy describes the Southern Strategy's operational evolution in his own voice.

Phillips, Kevin P. *The Emerging Republican Majority*. Arlington House, 1969. The foundational strategic document of the post-1968 Republican electoral calculus. The clarifying interview by Phillips with *The New York Times*, May 17, 1970, articulates the operational mechanism of the strategy with explicit candor.

The Empirical Political-Science Literature

Kinder, Donald R.; Sanders, Lynn M. *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals*. University of Chicago Press, 1996. Introduces the Racial Resentment Scale (also termed the symbolic racism battery) into the American National Election Studies—the standard empirical instrument for measuring racial-resentment attitudes across the longitudinal ANES panel since 1948.

Tesler, Michael. *Post-Racial or Most-Racial? Race and Politics in the Obama Era*. University of Chicago Press, 2016. Documents the spillover effect — the phenomenon by which previously non-racial issues became deeply polarized along racial-resentment lines simply because they were associated, in the public mind, with a Black president.

Sides, John; Tesler, Michael; Vavreck, Lynn. *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America*. Princeton University Press, 2018. Documents that the strongest predictor of voters who shifted from Obama in 2012 to Trump in 2016 was their score on racial resentment and anti-immigrant attitude batteries, substantially exceeding economic-anxiety variables in predictive power.

Jardina, Ashley. *White Identity Politics*. Cambridge University Press, 2019. Adds the analytical refinement that white in-group solidarity is a distinct, measurable, mobilizable political force separate from direct racial animus.

The Mortality Cost Documentation

Metzl, Jonathan M. *Dying of Whiteness: How the Politics of Racial Resentment Is Killing America's Heartland*. Basic Books, 2019. Quantifies the mortality cost of the political programs that the racial-grievance cosmology authorizes. Calculates that Tennessee's refusal to expand Medicaid cost every white resident an estimated fourteen days of life; the loosening of Missouri gun laws correlated with statistically substantial spikes in white male suicide rates.

McGhee, Heather. *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*. One World, 2021. Documents the drained-pool dynamic as the historical pattern of self-damaging political choice: the pattern by which white populations have repeatedly accepted the destruction of public goods that benefit them rather than permit those goods to be shared with minority populations.

PILLAR VII

THE DELIVERY SYSTEM

The Daily Apparatus Through Which the Cosmology Arrives

Broadcast and Talk-Radio Infrastructure

- Salem Media Group. Operates approximately one hundred owned-and-operated radio stations and syndicates content to thousands of additional affiliates nationally. Carries Charlie Kirk, Dennis Prager, Eric Metaxas, among others. Public corporate filings (SALM).
- Sinclair Broadcast Group, Inc. operates approximately one hundred eighty-five local television stations, reaching approximately forty percent of American households. Public corporate filings (SBGI). Documented requirements that local affiliates run editorial segments produced at the national level.
- Fox News Channel / Fox Corporation. Cable carriage and audience data are publicly tracked through Nielsen Media Research. Remains the dominant cable news outlet measured by viewership.

Christian Broadcasting Apparatus

- Family Research Council. Washington Watch broadcast and ancillary mobilization materials. Tax filings (Form 990) establish funding architecture.
- Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN); Daystar Television Network; K-LOVE Christian Radio (Educational Media Foundation). The principal Christian-broadcasting infrastructure delivers the apparatus's theological content nationwide.

The New Apostolic Reformation Apparatus

- Lance Wallnau (Lance Wallnau Ministries / The Lance Wallnau Show). Dutch Sheets (Give Him 15). Paula White (Paula White Ministries; New Destiny Christian Center). Greg Locke (Global Vision Bible Church, Mt. Juliet, Tennessee). Rick Joyner (MorningStar Ministries). Sean Feucht (Burn 24-7; Let Us Worship tour). The principal contemporary figures of the New Apostolic Reformation apparatus.
- FlashPoint program (Victory Channel / Kenneth Copeland Ministries). The principal broadcast venue for the NAR apparatus.
- Seven Mountain Mandate doctrine. Documented in Wallnau's writings and in subsequent NAR-affiliated literature. The theological claim that Christians are commanded to conquer all spheres of human society — government, media, education, the arts, business, the family, and religion.

Stewart, Katherine. *The Power Worshipers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Religious Nationalism*. Bloomsbury, 2020. Maps the financial and institutional architecture of the Christian-nationalist machine.

Stewart, Katherine. *Money, Lies, and God: Inside the Movement to Destroy American Democracy*. Bloomsbury, 2025. Extends the Stewart documentation through the post-2020 acceleration of the apparatus.

Posner, Sarah. *Unholy: Why White Evangelicals Worship at the Altar of Donald Trump*. Random House, 2020. Traces the connective tissue between the televangelist infrastructure and the modern populist right.

Independent Broadcast and Podcast Layer

- The Daily Wire (Ben Shapiro, Matt Walsh, Michael Knowles). Apple Podcast and Spotify charts; Podtrac measurement data.
- War Room (Stephen K. Bannon). The operational command center of the populist-vanguard wing coordinates the precinct strategy.
- Tucker Carlson Network. Launched in April 2023 following Carlson's departure from Fox News. Distribution principally through X (formerly Twitter).
- Turning Point USA / Charlie Kirk Show (Salem Media Group syndicate). Targets college and high-school demographics.
- The Dan Bongino Show. Nationally syndicated radio program; Rumble and YouTube distribution.
- The Joe Rogan Experience (Spotify exclusive). Operates outside explicit partisan affiliation but functions as a delivery system for the cosmology to demographics that explicitly partisan content cannot reach.
- Allie Beth Stuckey: Relatable. Alex Clark: Cultural Apothecary. Candace Owens (independent post-Daily Wire operation). Women-targeted apparatus translating the cosmology into maternal, theological, and lifestyle frameworks.

The X Algorithmic Repositioning

- X Corp. (formerly Twitter, Inc.), acquired by Elon Musk in October 2022. Documented dismantling of trust-and-safety frameworks; introduction of monetized verification (X Premium / Twitter Blue); algorithmic amplification of selected content categories. Public reporting in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Bloomberg*, and *The Wall Street Journal*.

PILLAR VIII

THE PRE-CATEGORIZATION APPARATUS

The Asymmetric Information Ecosystem and the Filtering of Contradicting Evidence

Foundational Empirical Documentation

Benkler, Yochai; Faris, Robert; Roberts, Hal. *Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics*. Oxford University Press, 2018. The most comprehensive empirical study of the American media ecosystem to date. Network analysis of citation patterns, content analysis of editorial alignment, and longitudinal tracking of story propagation across millions of news stories and social-media posts. Establishes the asymmetry of the American information environment as structural rather than incidental.

Jamieson, Kathleen Hall; Cappella, Joseph N. *Echo Chamber: Rush Limbaugh and the Conservative Media Establishment*. Oxford University Press, 2008. Foundational study of the operational practices of Limbaugh's national radio program, Fox News, and The Wall Street Journal editorial page. Documents the deliberate construction of what the authors term a self-protective enclave.

Ladd, Jonathan M. *Why Americans Hate the Media and How It Matters*. Princeton University Press, 2012. Historical analysis of how the pre-categorization framework was institutionalized. Traces the decline of institutional trust in the American press from approximately 1970 forward and demonstrates that the strategic attack on the institutional press was a deliberate political innovation that produced measurable shifts in mass political behavior.

The Sanchez Diagnosis from Inside

Sanchez, Julian. "Frum, Cocktails, and the Threat of Doubt." *Cato@Liberty*, March 26, 2010. Subsequently extended in *The New Republic*. The original deployment of the philosophical concept of epistemic closure to characterize the conservative information ecosystem of the late 2000s. Articulated from inside the conservative tradition. The term has subsequently entered the political science vocabulary as the standard descriptor for the dynamic.

Longitudinal Trust Data

- Pew Research Center. *Trust in Mass Media* series (annual). Documents the widening partisan trust gap across the post-1990s period.
- Knight Foundation / Gallup. *American Views on Trust, Media, and Democracy* series (annual). Identifies Republicans as substantially more likely than Democrats to perceive systemic, intentional political bias in mainstream outlets, and correlates with a measurable behavioral shift toward partisan digital alternatives.
- Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. *Digital News Report* (annual). Cross-national data rank the United States among the highest in media polarization among functioning democracies.

PILLAR IX

THE COMPARATIVE-AUTHORITARIANISM LITERATURE

Locating the American Case in the International Pattern

Hungary

Scheppele, Kim Lane. "Autocratic Legalism." *The University of Chicago Law Review*, 85(2), March 2018, 545–583. Foundational legal-scholarly framework for analyzing legalistic democratic erosion. Introduces the concept of the Frankenstate — an illiberal regime constructed entirely from disparate, perfectly legal components borrowed from other Western democracies.

Magyar, Bálint. *Post-Communist Mafia State: The Case of Hungary*. Central European University Press, 2016. Political-economy framework documenting how state resources are legally redirected through the Orbán regime to create a loyal class of oligarchs whose economic position depends entirely on continued political alignment.

- Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) Hungary, held in successive years in Budapest with Viktor Orbán delivering keynote addresses. Schedule and speaker rosters are publicly available.
- Heritage Foundation / Danube Institute partnership arrangements. Publicly documented in both organizations' institutional materials.
- Tucker Carlson broadcasts from Budapest, August 2021, and subsequent visits. Promoting illiberal Christian democracy as a desirable American political destination.

Poland

Sadurski, Wojciech. *Poland's Constitutional Breakdown*. Oxford University Press, 2019. Documents the systematic dismantling of the independence of the Polish Constitutional Tribunal, the Polish Supreme Court, and the National Council of the Judiciary across the 2015-2023 period under the Law and Justice party.

- Polish parliamentary elections, October 15, 2023. Voter turnout exceeded seventy-four percent — the highest in Polish post-Communist history. Result: defeat of the incumbent Law and Justice (PiS) coalition by the Donald Tusk-led broad democratic coalition. Public election records, Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza.

Turkey

Çağaptay, Soner. *The New Sultan: Erdogan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey*. I. B. Tauris, 2017. Documents the AKP government's progressive consolidation of political authority through legalistic mechanisms across the post-2010 period.

Çağaptay, Soner. *A Sultan in Autumn: Erdogan Faces Turkey's Uncontainable Forces*. I. B. Tauris, 2021. Extends the Çağaptay documentation through the post-2016 coup-attempt period and the subsequent purges.

India

Jaffrelot, Christophe. *Modi's India: Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy*. Princeton University Press, 2021. Foundational scholarly documentation of India's transition under Modi from a secular constitutional democracy to what the comparative literature now terms an ethnic democracy. Documents the operational role of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) as the grassroots cosmology-delivery infrastructure.

Brazil

- January 8, 2023, attack on the Praça dos Três Poderes in Brasília by supporters of Jair Bolsonaro refusing to accept his October 2022 electoral defeat. Direct hemispheric parallel to the January 6, 2021, attack on the United States Capitol. Documented in primary reporting from O Globo, Folha de São Paulo, Reuters, and the Associated Press.

Theoretical Apparatus

Levitsky, Steven; Way, Lucan A. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*. Cambridge University Press, 2010. The foundational theoretical framework for analyzing hybrid regimes. Defines competitive authoritarianism as a regime type in which formal democratic institutions exist and are meaningfully contested, but in which incumbents systematically manipulate state resources, media access, and the regulatory environment to produce a structurally tilted competitive landscape.

Levitsky, Steven; Way, Lucan A. *Revolution and Dictatorship: The Violent Origins of Durable Authoritarianism*. Princeton University Press, 2022. Extends the framework to the longitudinal study of how authoritarian regimes are established and sustained.

Levitsky, Steven; Ziblatt, Daniel. *How Democracies Die*. Crown, 2018. Identifies four universal indicators of authoritarian behavior in elected officials: rejection of (or weak commitment to) democratic rules of the game, denial of the legitimacy of political opponents, toleration or encouragement of violence, and readiness to curtail civil liberties of opponents and the press.

Levitsky, Steven; Ziblatt, Daniel. *Tyranny of the Minority: Why American Democracy Reached the Breaking Point*. Crown, 2023. Extends the analytical framework to the structural features of American constitutional design that, in the authors' analysis, permit a minoritarian coalition to maintain political power against majority preferences.

Empirical Tracking Institutions

- Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute, University of Gothenburg. V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index. Documents the United States' decline from the top tier of stable democracies in the post-2017 period into a category that includes states whose democratic standing is contested. Annual Democracy Reports through 2026.
- Freedom House. *Freedom in the World* annual reports. Documents a continuous decline in U.S. aggregate scores across the post-2010 period.
- Bright Line Watch. Expert surveys on American democratic performance have been conducted continuously since 2017. Drawing on political-science consensus across approximately thirty specific democratic principles.

PILLAR X

THE LOYALTY-BY-REPETITION LAYER

How Coalition Cohesion Is Maintained Against Observable Contradiction

The Foundational Tradition

Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Harcourt Brace, 1951; subsequent editions through 1973.

The foundational analytical text on what totalitarian propaganda does. The canonical passage on the mass condition of believing everything and nothing simultaneously appears in the chapter on totalitarian movements (Part Three of the volume).

Havel, Václav. “The Power of the Powerless.” 1978; English translation in Havel, *Open Letters: Selected Writings 1965-1990*, Knopf, 1991. The foundational analytical framework on the loyalty-signal function of public falsehood. The greengrocer’s-sign passage and its decoded translation are the canonical illustration of the mechanism.

Contemporary Frameworks

Snyder, Timothy. *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*. Tim Duggan Books, 2017.

The most extensively read contemporary application of the foundational tradition to the post-2010 cases. Lesson Ten — “Believe in truth.” — supplies the canonical contemporary statement of the mechanism.

Snyder, Timothy. *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America*. Tim Duggan Books, 2018. Extends the analytical framework to what Snyder terms the politics of eternity — the authoritarian narrative style that replaces historical progression with a mythic, cyclical loop of victimization and heroic defense.

Gessen, Masha. *Surviving Autocracy*. Riverhead Books, 2020. An analytical framework specifically focused on the function of public falsehood by autocratic political leaders. The autocrat frames the autocrat as a deliberate exertion of dominance over reality itself rather than a failure of veracity.

Applebaum, Anne. *Twilight of Democracy: The Seductive Lure of Authoritarianism*. Doubleday, 2020. Comparative-sociological analysis of the elite cohort that operates within authoritarian movements. Documents the medium-sized lie as a deliberate loyalty filter through which professionally credentialed members of the movement’s elite are required to demonstrate adherence to claims they themselves know to be false.

Stanley, Jason. *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them*. Random House, 2018. Political-philosophy analysis of the operating condition Stanley terms unreality — the public sphere in which reasoned mythic appeals, strategic blatant falsehood, and the displacement of rational political debate by raw contests of loyalty progressively replace discourse.

Empirical Measurement

Hahl, Oliver; Kim, Minjae; Zuckerman Sivan, Ezra W. “The Authentic Appeal of the Lying Demagogue: Proclaiming the Deeper Truth about Political Illegitimacy.” *American Sociological Review*, 83(1), February 2018, 1–33. Empirical measurement of one of the loyalty-by-repetition mechanism’s most counterintuitive features: that under conditions of perceived political illegitimacy, a political figure’s flagrant willingness to lie is perceived by a coalition not as a disqualifying flaw but as a positive signal of authenticity.

Huang, Haifeng. “Propaganda as Signaling.” *Comparative Politics*, 47(4), July 2015, 419–444. Empirical apparatus drawn from comparative-authoritarian research on the contemporary Chinese state. Establishes that authoritarian regimes deploy propaganda not principally to produce belief but as a deliberate demonstration of dominance — a separating equilibrium in which the population’s continuous exposure to obvious falsehood signals the regime’s capacity to compel public consumption of nonsense.

PILLAR XI

THE CONSERVATIVE COUNTER-WITNESS

What Conservatives and Dissenting Evangelicals Have Documented from Inside the Tradition

The Secular Conservative Record

French, David. *Divided We Fall: America’s Secession Threat and How to Restore Our Nation*. St. Martin’s Press, 2020. Constitutional and religious-conservative diagnosis of the modern American right’s progressive replacement of constitutional pluralism with animosity-driven tribalism. French’s subsequent columns at *The Dispatch* and *The New York Times* extend the running documentation through 2026.

Goldberg, Jonah. *Suicide of the West: How the Rebirth of Tribalism, Populism, Nationalism, and Identity Politics Is Destroying American Democracy*. Crown Forum, 2018. Argues that the modern American right has undergone a structural regression from the Lockean Enlightenment-based conservatism that grounded the post-1945 conservative movement toward what he characterizes as a romantic, European-style blood-and-soil nationalism.

Sykes, Charles J. *How the Right Lost Its Mind*. St. Martin’s Press, 2017. Foundational analytical framework for the Bulwark cohort’s collective documentation of the apparatus’s institutional incentives.

Miller, Tim. *Why We Did It: A Travelogue from the Republican Road to Hell*. Harper, 2022. Documents the operational decisions that produced the contemporary apparatus from inside the Republican operational class.

Kabaservice, Geoffrey. *Rule and Ruin: The Downfall of Moderation and the Destruction of the Republican Party from Eisenhower to the Tea Party*. Oxford University Press, 2012. Foundational text in the documentation of the apparatus’s institutional transformation across the late twentieth century.

- Niskanen Center policy-research output. Brink Lindsey, Geoffrey Kabaservice, and colleagues. Documents the contemporary Republican coalition as an anti-systemic political vehicle organized to erode democracy.

Cheney, Liz. *Oath and Honor: A Memoir and a Warning*. Little, Brown, 2023. Documents the operational mechanics of the constitutional-subversion process from inside the Republican congressional leadership during the 2020-2022 period.

- January 6th Select Committee Final Report. Government Publishing Office, December 2022. The principal public documentary record of the January 6 attack and its institutional context. Cheney served as the principal Republican co-author.

Nichols, Tom. *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign Against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters*. Oxford University Press, 2017. In-tradition analytical framework specifically focused on the apparatus's structural rejection of expertise as such, and the consequence of this rejection for the coalition's capacity to govern.

Levin, Yuval. *A Time to Build: From Family and Community to Congress and the Campus, How Recommitting to Our Institutions Can Revive the American Dream*. Basic Books, 2020. Documents the apparatus's transformation as a function of institutional abandonment — the systematic replacement of formative institutions with performative outrage as the operating mode of conservative political behavior.

Levin, Yuval. *American Covenant: How the Constitution Unified Our Nation — and Could Again*. Basic Books, 2024. Extends the Levin diagnosis to the constitutional dimension.

Will, George F. *The Conservative Sensibility*. Hachette Books, 2019. Most extensive recent statement of the Madisonian institutionalist position from inside the conservative tradition.

The Dissenting-Evangelical Record

Moore, Russell. *Losing Our Religion: An Altar Call for Evangelical America*. Sentinel, 2023. The most institutionally credentialed contemporary statement of the dissenting-evangelical diagnosis. Russell Moore served as president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention from 2013 to 2021; he is currently editor in chief of *Christianity Today*, the flagship publication of post-1945 American evangelicalism. Two passages from this volume — on market-driven religion and on Christian nationalism as a prosperity gospel for nation-states — are reproduced as load-bearing block quotations in Part Five.

Alberta, Tim. *The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory: American Evangelicals in an Age of Extremism*. HarperOne, 2023. The most extensive in-tradition documentary record of the apparatus's operation within white evangelicalism. The author is the son of a prominent evangelical pastor; the volume draws on years of access to the apparatus's operational structures.

- Beth Moore. Public statement, December 2020, originally posted to Twitter and subsequently widely circulated within evangelical channels. The most direct in-tradition naming of the apparatus's operation in pastoral language. Beth Moore departed the Southern Baptist Convention in 2021.

Stevens, Stuart. *It Was All a Lie: How the Republican Party Became Donald Trump*. Knopf, 2020. Primary-source acknowledgment of the apparatus's foundational character from inside its operational class. Stevens served as senior strategist on the Bob Dole, George W. Bush, and Mitt Romney presidential campaigns.

PILLAR XII

ADDITIONAL CROSS-PILLAR EVIDENCE

Supporting Documentation Cited Across Multiple Architectural Layers

Appelbaum, Eileen; Batt, Rosemary. *Private Equity at Work: When Wall Street Manages Main Street*. Russell Sage Foundation, 2014. Documents the role of private-equity acquisition models in the consolidation of healthcare, retail, and consumer-services sectors across the post-1990 period.

Lamis, Alexander P. *The Two-Party South*. Oxford University Press, 1990 (2nd edition 1990). The original publication venue of the Atwater interview transcript is referenced as the foundational primary document of the Southern Strategy's operational evolution.

Herbert, Bob. "Impossible, Ridiculous, Repugnant." *The New York Times*, October 6, 2005. Republished and contextualized portions of the Atwater transcript for a general readership.

Perlstein, Rick. "Exclusive: Lee Atwater's Infamous 1981 Interview on the Southern Strategy." *The Nation*, November 13, 2012. The release of the full audio recording and complete unredacted transcript of the Atwater interview, with detailed contextual analysis. The publicly available primary source on which the documentation in Part Two and the Source Inventory rests.

- PRRI / Brookings 2024 election survey series. Documents the demographic distribution of Christian Nationalism Scale scores across the 2016, 2020, and 2024 election cycles.
- ProPublica investigative series on Leonard Leo, the Federalist Society, and judicial-selection coordination. Ongoing publication.
- Center for Media and Democracy / ALEC Exposed. Database of ALEC model legislation and tracked introductions in state legislatures. Publicly accessible at alecexposed.org.

INVENTORY STATUS — VERSION 1.0

This inventory is Version 1.0 of the working source inventory for The Architecture of Consent, prepared concurrently with the drafting of the paper across April 2026. Every source cited in the front matter and the six Parts as drafted is accounted for in the inventory above. All publishers, journals, dates, and institutional affiliations have been verified against primary publication records.

The inventory is organized by the paper's architectural pillars, rather than alphabetically or chronologically, because the paper's analytical structure determines which sources perform which tasks. A reader who wishes to verify a specific claim in the paper can locate the relevant pillar within the paper's analytical context and, within that pillar, the specific source that makes the claim.

Subsequent versions of this inventory will incorporate any additional sources introduced through editorial revision of the paper, any newly published scholarship that updates the documentary record on specific findings, and any primary documentation that becomes available across the period during which the paper remains in the public record. In the Yellow Jacket Policy Research Series, the inventory is a living document. Version increments will be logged at the close of this section as they occur.

The inventory is the verification floor for the paper's documentary chain. Every analytical claim in the paper resolves to one or more entries in this inventory. The reader who finds a specific claim in the paper contestable can identify, through the corresponding pillar in the inventory, the primary source on which the claim rests, and can consult that source directly. The conclusions of the paper belong to the reader. The verification of the documentary record on which the conclusions rest belongs in this inventory.