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Trump's Neo-Fascist Discourse: CPAC Revisited

By Norman Pollack
March 1, 2017

For an overview of where America stands, let's begin with Trump's speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference, 2-24-17, and work outward from there to two interrelated areas to which he refers, attacks on the media and rising militarism, which together provide, more than a glimpse, an actual serving of notice of coming fascistization in America. We have already seen enough of what to expect, the CPAC speech alerting us, beyond Trump's demagogic style and appeal (an audience of unabashed worshipers at the altar of Reaction, standing and cheering frequently, whenever a particularly rightist point was made, repeated, caressed, on occasion breaking into the chant, "U.S.A."—a genuinely spontaneous reception of like-minded souls saturated in resentment and venom to match that of the speaker), to his no-holds-barred, non-apologetic statement of antidemocratic themes and key words.

Out of this experience there emerges a frightening characterization of leadership, perhaps like nothing seen before in a president (the line crossed between traditional conservatism in both major parties to a ruthless, cynical expression of plebeian-flavored ideology in service to the very rich) but defining, if the recent election is to be believed, the wave of the future. Curiously, major outlets like The Times did not provide a full transcript of the speech, so what follows is the verbatim transcript, its value lying in the ferocity of response (as seen in the video) almost as much as in Trump's words. Like an evil conductor, his baton free-swinging, he has the crowd in the palm of his hand.

Trump immediately closes the distance with CPAC: “Great to be back at CPAC. It’s a place I have really—I love this place. I love you people.... And it really is an honor to be here.” This to a body now part of, but previously outside of, the mainstream of American politics. He adds: “I wouldn’t miss a chance to talk to my friends. These are my friends. And we’ll see you again next year and the year after that. And I’ll be doing this with CPAC whenever I can, and I’ll make sure that we’re here a lot.”

Watching this, one feels how hermetically sealed the presidency will be, Trump withdrawing behind ideological walls, then striking out with one negation of democratic practice after another, with no one to answer to—at least that is his hope and the source of his confidence, the confidence a demagogue exhibits when he is convinced that he has taken power into his own hands: here a proto-geese-stepping army of trained seals which bolsters his ego.

Trump plays with the crowd: “sit down, everybody, come on,” as though he learned his politics at Kazan’s “Face in the Crowd,” a folksy fascism to drive home his appeal. Then the attack on the media, fueled by the interrogatory thrust to encourage a unison of thought in the knowing giveback: “You know the dishonest media, they’ll say he didn’t get a standing ovation. You know why? No, you know why? Because everybody stood and nobody sat. So they’ll say he never got a standing ovation, right?” Trump from the start hits his stride, dripping with sarcasm and attaching the key word “dishonest” to “media” to make it stick, before, later, saying it only applies selectively (after it has been drummed home mercilessly).

“They are the worst,” he continues: “So sit down. Donald Trump did not get a standing ovation. They leave out the part they never sat down. They leave that out. So I just want to thank you.” When a speaker refers to himself/herself in the third person, as here, it is time to watch out. (The tone of being under-appreciated defines, here and below, the personal references; more, there is no break or difference—for the speaker, audience, and supporters at the election— between the Leader and the State.)

For what the thanks? Clear demagogic tendencies that only a thickly-suited psychological armor could believe of oneself, for he describes an early sense of being predestined for greatness: “But you know, my first major speech was at CPAC, probably five or six years ago. First major political speech, and you were there. [He seeks legitimacy as he romances the crowd.] And it was—I loved it. I loved the people, I loved the commotion, and then they did these polls where I went through the roof and I wasn’t even running, right? But it gave me an idea. And I got a little bit concerned when I saw what was happening in the country, and I said let’s go for it. So it was very exciting.”

Trump is Immodest, to be sure, but also self-drafted for higher things, together what becomes a messianic complex, he—one step further—the savior of humankind. He is in his element: “I walked the stage on CPAC; I’ll never forget it, really. I had very little notes and even less preparation. So when you have practically no notes and no preparation and then you leave and everybody was thrilled. I said I think I like this business.” Man of destiny (self-proclaimed) or egomaniacal, both apply and one need not choose between them.

Then the springs of fascism open, where he fully aligns himself with CPAC, citing cascading issues (later developed further), and then, amid standing applause, cements his identity with his followers (the fascistic social bond, as in the way he describes it) and segues into a theme of patriotism never far out of sight: “I would have come last year, but I was worried that I’d be at that time too controversial. We wanted border security, we wanted very, very strong military. We wanted all of the things we’re going to get, and people consider that controversial, but you didn’t consider it controversial.”

Trump has found a home that helps him move the political-ideological spectrum rightward, already present in the configuration of forces to which he appeals, followed by the leap outward, the aforementioned closeness to his constituency. “So ,” he goes on, “I’ve been with CPAC for a long time. All of these years we’ve been together, and now you finally have a president, finally. [thunderous applause] Took you a long time. Took you a long time. And it’s patriots like you that made it happen, believe me. You did it because you love your country, because you want a better future for your children, and because you want to make America great again.” This is like welcoming a coup—but the long time is over.

Praise of the folk is a sure political formula for success, particularly in scapegoating putative enemies—here more innocuous than his tirades against the media, but sufficient proof of harboring hates and resentments as inseparable both from his personality and his perception of reality. It is innocuous, but nonetheless dangerous: “The media didn’t think we would win. The pundits—you’re right—they had an idea. The pundits didn’t think we’d win. The consultants that suck up all that money—oh, they suck it up—they’re so good. They’re not good at politics, but they’re really good at sucking up people’s money. Especially my opponents’, because I kept them down to a minimum. [Always the virtuous one] But the consultants didn’t think we would win.” Trump is instinctively brilliant in setting up the contrast, the nefarious interests and the pristine people, a fascist trick with some pedigree: “But they all underestimated the power of the people, you, and the people proved them totally wrong. This is so true, and this is what’s been happening. Never underestimate the people. Never. I don’t think it will ever happen again.”

Trump is always on the verge of striking out: “And I want you all to know we are fighting the fake news. It’s fake. Phony. Fake. A few days ago I called the fake news the enemy of the people, and they are. They are the enemy of the people.” With a free press the cornerstone, or prime indicator, of a democratic society, Trump has already declared his lack of sympathy for its value and significance. Cannily, after frequent use of “fake,” he draws back, protesting he was not generalizing, even though the repetition and depth of hostility indicate smoldering resentment (a demand for acceptance and even admiration, notwithstanding his disclaimer here): “They’re very dishonest people. In fact, in covering my comments, the dishonest media did not explain that I called the fake news the enemy of the people—the fake news. They dropped off the word ‘fake’. And all of a sudden the story became the media is the enemy. They take the word ‘fake’ out. And now I’m saying, oh, no, this is no good. But that is the way they are.”

Yet the description is so bitter, the perpetrators of the “fake” so ubiquitous in his view, that his explanation seems unconvincing, not a mea culpa over the need for clearer communication, but a push forward as though his (supposed) intended meaning was always present, and even then a note of anger or sarcasm comes through: “So I’m not against the media, I’m not against the

press. I don't mind bad stories if I deserve them, and I tell you, I love good stories, but we won't talk—I don't get too many of them. But I am only against the fake news media or press. Fake. Fake. They have to leave that word."

But does he? "I'm against the people," he states, "that make up stories and make up sources." He complains, I think rightly, that sources should be identified (although his group, beginning with Spicer, the press secretary, does not follow the practice). As for criticizing him, "let them say it to my face." Trump wants admiration and recognition, complimenting Reuters for a "very fair story" about himself, written by "a very honorable" reporter. Again, we see the imposed dichotomy: "There are some great reporters around, they are talented and honest as the day is long; that is great. [Singled out for praise in other statements are Breitbart, the Washington "Times," etc., and Spicer's gaggle of newsmen in a closed-door press conference hardly bespeaks respect for a free press, NYT, among others, excluded.] But there are some terrible, dishonest people that do a tremendous disservice to our country, and to our people."

The attack does not let up, here on the polls during the campaign, presumably stacked against him: "Look at how inaccurate. Look at CBS, look at ABC also. Look at NBC." His remarks on hated symbols—why he chose and then manipulates them—reveals the selective intolerance of the media among his audience: "Take a look at some of these polls. That were so bad, so inaccurate. And what that does is it creates a whole false narrative. It creates this narrative that it's just like we're not going to win." Here the whining quality becomes unmistakable, if not earlier in the speech: "People say I love Trump but I'm not feeling great today. He can't win, so I won't go and vote. It creates a whole false deal, and we have to fight it, folks. We have to fight it. They're very smart, they're very cunning, and they're very dishonest." And, I would add, they're essentially centrist, with their own pro-capitalist, pro-defense leanings, and yet to Trump—the personal factor coming into play because of their lack of approval of him, in addition to the obvious, that centrism is for him unacceptable as a menacing Left in disguise—the urge to tear down familiar institutions and structures comes forward.

Relent on this one-sided theme (obsession?), never; for his vindication, as he sees it, lies in his having transcended a political discourse which fails to appreciate his personal qualities, claims to leadership, and policy construct, a well-oiled clock, sealed off from internal opposition and dissent. In that atmosphere Trump can thrive as a Disciple of Truth, one who places patriotism foremost and identifies with flag-worship. A sotto voce tribute to the Second Amendment brings the audience to its feet, but he plays civil libertarian by praising the First: "I love the First Amendment. Nobody loves it better than me. Nobody—who uses it more than I do? But the First Amendment gives all of us ... the right to speak our minds freely. It gives you the right and me the right to criticize fake news and criticize it strongly."

One would have hoped for a more inclusive usage of the First than attacking the press, but his thinking is warped by, not surprising, conspiracy theory in explaining fake news: "And many of these groups are part of large media corporations, [while favoring wealth, he adopts the Nazi playbook through implying his position of semi-socialism, as in National Socialism, deliberately obfuscating the corporatist foundations of, in Trump's case, the intended foundations of the polity] that have their own agenda. And it's not your agenda and it's not the country's agenda, it's their own agenda." By this point, a free press is even difficult to conceptualize.

Trump here buries it: "... and even now [following the campaign] the fake news doesn't tell the truth. Doesn't tell the truth. So just in finishing, I say it doesn't represent the people, it never will represent the people, and we're going to do something about it because we have to go out and we have to speak our minds and we have to be honest." The veiled threat is now disclosed; government suppression, in context, appears a live option. Yes, "to do something about it."

He dovetails the thought with a boast about victory in the election—there being little wiggle-room for nonconformity and dissent: "Our victory was a victory and a win for conservative values. And our victory was a win for everyone who believes it's time to stand up for America, to stand up for the American worker, and to stand up for the American flag. Yeah, there we should stand up. There we should stand up. And, by the way, we love our flag." In this orgasm of patriotism, one must not overlook the reference to the American worker (increasingly cropping up in Trump's speeches), part of the theme of class-reconciliation and the diversion of analysis from the monopoly-capitalist foundations of the political economy.

Trump announces (obliquely) the advent of the New World Order, resting on America's power and virtue: "There is such love in this country for everything we stand for. You saw that on Election Day and you're going to see it more and more. So we're all part of this historic movement, a movement the likes of which the world has never seen before. There's never been anything like this." The general argument laid down, Trump now rhapsodizes on the new society he seeks to shape—America First, as part of a paradigm of global order masterminded by America: "I'm here to tell you what this means for the future of the Republican Party and the future of America. First, we need to define what this great, great, unprecedented movement is and what it actually represents."

The fortress-imagery comes immediately to the foreground (yet with an implied active foreign policy), a boastful quality its natural accompaniment: "The core conviction of our movement is that we are a nation that will put its own citizens first. For too long we've traded away our jobs to other countries, so terrible. We've defended other nations' borders while leaving ours wide open—anybody can come in. Oh, we're going to build a wall, don't worry about it. We're building the wall. We're building the wall. In fact, it's going to start soon. Way ahead of schedule. Way, way, way ahead of schedule."

What can one make of this? Although party is referenced, Trump thinks in terms of movement, which has the potential, aside from popular mobilization as a step toward regimentation, of bypassing constitutional restraints for a presumed higher order. Too, he seeks to make the wall a certainty, central to withdrawal from normalized international relations, and, beyond nativism, facing the world as though heretofore the victim of horrendous forces—again the immigrant as scapegoat.

We have a borderless America, open to pillage, unprotected, thereby inciting others to take advantage. This calls for internal purgation, cleansing society of those who wish to do America harm, and resulting in a state of new-found innocence and moral purity. (How long, once the process of removal begins, one wonders does it take for the line between immigrant and citizen to be breached, native-born dissidents the symbolical immigrant in our midst.) Thus, Trump observes, of his point man at DHS, "Gen. Kelly, by the way, has done a fantastic job. Fantastic,

the job he's done.” (I'll return to Kelly outside the confines of the speech, when he justifies full-scale deportation.)

From the reference to Kelly Trump jumps to an angry denunciation of the immigrant, leaving no doubt about the seriousness of his intentions in carrying out mass deportations and the dark waters he has plumbed: “And remember, we are getting the bad ones out. [This is POTUS speaking, not some rabble-rouser dragged in off the street.] These are bad dudes. We're getting the bad ones out. Okay? We're getting the bad—if you watch these people, it's like oh, gee, that's so sad. [It's not clear whether he's caricaturing his critics, or just being sarcastic.] We were getting bad people out of this country. People who shouldn't be, whether its drugs or murder. We're getting bad ones out. They're the ones who go first. I said it from day one.” Presumably others would follow, charged with lesser crimes, until the reservoir is drained.

Trump's anger has not (actually it never seems to have) abated. Rebuilding America, beyond a cost-benefit analysis, targets the neglectful within our midst, one more generic scapegoat to deal with: “Basically, all I've done is keep my promise [the reference to deportation]. We've spent trillions overseas while allowing our own infrastructure to fall into total disrepair and decay. In the Middle East we've spent, as of four weeks ago, \$6 trillion. Think of it. And by the way, the Middle East is in what—I mean, it's not even close—it's in much worse shape than it was 15 years ago. If our presidents would have gone to the beach for 15 years, we would be in much better shape than we are right now. [This is not FDR advocating for dam construction by PWA, but a snarling chief executive feeling free to belittle his predecessors, not, however, on their record of deregulation, war, and intervention, but simply, malicious neglect, courtesy, as is Trump's style, thrown out the window.] That I can tell you. Could have been a hell of a lot better. We could have rebuilt our country three times with that money.”

The stage is set for the man-on-horseback theme so beloved in French history: “This is the situation I inherited. I inherited a mess, believe me.” The follow-up is the dismantlement of government, at his initiative, the health-care system a clear priority: “We also inherited a failed health care law that threatens our medical system with absolute and total catastrophe.” That may be so, but for the opposite reason than he intends: not better coverage and squaring off with the medical, health care, and pharmaceutical communities/industries, but, since he has delayed announcing changes, an implied privatization consistent with other proposed changes in federal programs.

Not satisfied, Trump seeks to blame the Democrats, differentiated from the folk, and to view elections as mandates to rollback welfare programs, however sound in constitutional terms: “Obamacare doesn't work, folks. I could say, I could talk. And now people are starting to develop a little—but the people that you're watching, they're not you. They're largely, many of them are the side that lost. They lost the election. It's like, how many elections do we have to have? They lost the election.” Stated with finality; one wonders, had he lost and Clinton won, psyched up as he was for leadership, whether he would have become more raucous, possibly even envisioning a coup. No matter, the point is, he won, and is, from his day one (and before), planning the total reconstruction of government and homogenization of domestic society.

On health care, he claims much, without advocating for a public factor informing its workings: “Obamacare covers very few people. And remember, deduct from the number all of the people that had great health care that they loved that was taken away from them. Millions of people were very happy with the health care. They had their doctor, they had their plan. Remember the lie? 28 times. You can keep your doctor. You can keep your plan. Over and over and over again, you heard it. So we’re going to repeal and replace Obamacare.”

Trump is not replacing a single-payer system, nor even provision for a public option; rather, he wants thus far a return to the status quo ante, with little prospect of the elimination of previously-held vested interests. If that were not so, health care would be the lone exception (not including, of course, the vast increase in military spending and execution) in his restructuring of government and bringing the private sector, as before, into the picture.

For one who gives off isolationist signals, Trump is remarkably belligerent, gung ho a useful appellation here. This is to swing into high gear: “We inherited a national debt that has doubled in eight years. Think of it, \$20 trillion. It’s doubled. And we inherited a foreign policy marked by one disaster after another. [His non-stop thinking is not free association so much as it is juxtaposing somewhat disparate topics for the purpose of reinforcing each.] We don’t win anymore. When was the last time we won? Did we win a war? Did we win anything? We’re going to win. We’re going to win big, folks. We’re going to start winning again. Believe me.”

I do, because he seeks to run a war polity, perhaps better, a Warrior State, an interesting mixture in which the polity becomes stripped down, the warrior state combined with a patina of laissez-faire. In other words, curb government when regulation is involved, expand it when the military is. He uses the past as sanction (as with the national debt and health care) to project a policy of winning as everything. Trump is on a roll: “But we’re taking a firm, bold, and decisive measure. We have to, to turn things around.” Those familiar with German history will immediately recognize an implied invocation of the stab-in-the-back legend. Trump is again on a Nazi-like wave length: “The era of empty talk is over. It’s over. Now is the time for action. So let me tell you about the actions that we’re taking right now to deliver on our promise to the American people and on my promise to make America great again.”

We are back to square one, the wall and deportation, but by this point in the speech and the revelation of his thinking, this is more than nationalism and isolationism. Like a giant jigsaw puzzle, he fits these and other elements, including vindictiveness, into a workable plan of what I called in previous writing, the pre-fascist configuration containing within itself its actualization. The military component to his vision and planning is never far (as will be seen) from sight.

Hence, he states with accustomed bravado and immodesty: “We’ve taken swift and strong action to secure the southern border of the United States and begin the construction of a great, great border wall. By doing this and with the help of our great border police, with the help of ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement, part of DHS, and Kelly’s bailiwick, now increasingly important to planners], with the help of Gen. Kelly and all of the people that are so passionate about this. Our border patrol, what they do—they came and endorsed me, ICE came and endorsed me—they never endorsed a presidential candidate before. They might not be allowed to, but they were disgusted with what they saw.” (We’ll note shortly that most ICE personnel

warmed to their task of deportation and, it turns out, harassment, gladly following Trump's lead—which speaks to the complicity of government in following the orders of a strong leader.)

This switch in emphasis from the Muslim world to Mexico should not go unnoticed, Mexicans, for Trump, seen as a more immediate and serious threat, as though every Mexican is a drug dealer and potential murderer (the audience at one with him in sentiment): “We’ll stop it, we’ll stop the drugs from pouring into our nation and poisoning our youth. Pouring in. Pouring in. We get the drugs, they get the money. We get the problems. They get the cash. No good. No good. Going to stop.”

The analysis has a cost-benefit result, immigrants draining America's resources that might be put to use in rebuilding “struggling American communities, including our inner cities.” Trump does not, however, mention his aversion to the savings in “tax dollars” which are then being applied to public functions—private developers take notice. But the overriding point is less economy in government than the ferreting out of enemies in America's midst: “As we speak today, immigration officers are finding the gang members, the drug dealers, and the criminal aliens [he lumps them together as one] and throwing them the hell out of our country. And we will not let them back in. They're not coming back in, folks. They do, they're going to have bigger problems than they ever dreamed of.” I would add, in relation to Mexican immigrants, stereotyping on Trump's part, fully evident here, is a well-known trait among authoritarian types.

Much the remainder of the speech deals with a grocery list of demands, the important ones accorded slightly larger discussion. He has “withdrawn America from the Trans-Pacific Partnership so that we can protect our economic freedom,” an example of Trump's deeply-ingrained unilateralism. He has also disclaimed interest in multilateral trading frameworks, believing as with TPP America would benefit from using its muscle for one-on-one negotiations and agreements: “And we're going to make trade deals, but we're going to do one-on-one—one-on-one—and if they misbehave, we terminate the deal, and then they come back and we'll make a better deal. None of these big quagmire deals that are [a] disaster.” Next he criticizes NAFTA, following from his general view of trade agreements. Then, he relates he authorized the future construction of the Keystone and Dakota pipeline and issued the rule that pipes have to be made of American steel and in this country. (Here Trump is critical of demonstrators of pipeline construction altogether.)

In his review of his policy-making, he makes a point of economic deregulation, as though regulation was anathema to production, employment, and development (thus failing to appreciate its capitalist uses—a sign of Trump's ultimate lack of sophistication concerning the modern economy, despite his great success as a capitalist): “We're preparing bold action to lift the restrictions on American energy, including shale oil, natural gas, and beautiful, clean coal, and we're going to put our miners back to work. Miners are going back to work We have begun a historic program to reduce the regulations that are crushing our economy. Crushing.”

And they are “crushing our jobs,” he adds, “because companies can't hire. We're going to put the regulation industry out of work and out of business.” Yet with all that he represents and has said before CPAC, Trump's turnabout on regulation is suspicious, as though living in a parallel universe: “And by the way, I want regulation.” Worse still, he wants comprehensive regulation,

except when it hurts business: “I want to protect our environment, I want regulations for safety, I want all of the regulations that we need, and I want them to be so strong and so tough, but we don’t need 75 percent of the repetitive regulations that hurt companies, hurt jobs, make us noncompetitive overseas with other companies from other countries, that we don’t need.”

One senses, after stating that he will put “the regulation industry out of work and out of business,” a mild case of political schizophrenia has set in: “But we’re going to have regulation. It’s going to be really strong and really good, and we’re going to protect our environment and we’re going to protect the safety of our people and our workers, okay.”

There is more, e.g., lowering taxes: “Another major promise is tax reform. We are going to massively lower taxes on the middle class, reduce taxes on American business, and make our tax code more simple and much more fair for everyone [like his use of the worker, Trump cites the middle class when papering over the large gains that would accrue to business], including the people and the business.” In anticipation of “tax reform,” jobs are starting to return to America. Trump will be Trump: “In fact, I think I did more [on this count] than any other president.” He met, as President-elect, with the executives of leading corporations—“I just wanted to save a little time”—which, because of the results of the election, were “making major investments” in the US. In the spirit of unrestrained capitalism (to much applause) he fairly blurted out, “It’s time for all Americans to get off of welfare and get back to work. “You’re going to love it. You are going to love it.”

Finally, in his itemization of changes he wants to bring about, he comes to the military: “We’re also putting in a massive budget request for our beloved military. And we will be substantially upgrading all of our military, all of our military, offensive, defensive, everything.” Nothing could be clearer, with respect to the military, and I would contend, Trump’s proneness to fascism: “Bigger and better and stronger than ever before, and hopefully we’ll never have to use it, but nobody’s going to mess with us, folks. Nobody. It will be one of the greatest military buildups in American history.”

Be it said at this juncture, militarism is not only about engaging in war; it is also about the hierarchical structure of society: the ideological transference from a civil to a military social order inculcating service to the nation, respect for authority, habituation to command, the purging of dissidents, etc. The vast increase in military spending announced (2-28) after CPAC underscores in material-aggressive terms the commitment of the Trump administration’s policy toward war, business growth, a docile labor force—expenditures, incidentally, done specifically at the expense of social welfare measures at home.

To justify this, he sees only present weakness and the hint of betrayal: “No one will dare question, as they have been, because we’re very depleted, very, very depleted sequester. Nobody will question our military might again.” He speaks of “peace through strength,” a seemingly harmless phrase, and probably widely subscribed to in American political and military circles; yet it has an ominous ring, as though given currency by Germany (the analogy of Strength through Joy) in the ‘thirties. “Depletion” has become Trump’s favorite word, in describing what needs to be done—primarily in military terms. Strangelove’s concern about the juices drying up, has met its match. The only thing not to be depleted, for Trump, is the private sector, the public

intentionally to be cut to the bone. This politicized quid pro quo, where strengthening the military leads incisively to weakening domestic regulation and (such as it is) reform, characterizes the salience of Trump's policy framework.

Trump goes from the military to national security, starting by saying that he has "directed the defense community to develop a plan to totally obliterate ISIS," which leads him back to the topic of the wall: "At the same time, we fully understand that national security begins with border security. Foreign terrorists will not be able to strike America if they cannot get into our country." He once more returns to an impending Muslim threat, implying an equivalent yet different kind of threat from that posed by Mexico, terrorism versus narcotics and crime. He observes, "Take a look at what's happening to our world, folks. And we have to be smart. We have to be smart. We can't let it happen to us. So let me state this as clearly as I can: We are going to keep radical Islamic terrorists the hell out of our country." There is considerably less attention in the speech, almost none, devoted to terrorism (the reasons unclear), but the logic of his position, emphasis on a strong military, is that it hovers over his thinking: "We will not be deterred from this course, and in a matter of days we will be taking brand new action to protect our people and keep America safe." Yes, a touch of braggadocio: "You will see the action. I will never, ever apologize for protecting the safety and security of the American people."

Nearing the close, Trump delivers (what he believes to be) a knockout punch: "One by one, we're checking off the promises we made to the people of the United States. One by one. A lot of promises. And we will not stop until the job is done. We will reduce your taxes, we will cut your regulations, we will support our police, we will defend our flag." In addition, he states, "We will rebuild our military. We will take care of our great, great veterans. We're taking care of our veterans. We will fix our broken and embarrassing trade deals that are no good. None of them." In any such list, it is not out of place to find this: "And, by the way, we will protect our Second Amendment." Nor to give fulsome praise to the National Rifle Association: "And they're great people. And by the way, they love our country. They love our country. The NRA has been a great supporter. They love our country."

He has touched base on several foci of Reaction, including CPAC itself, but it is at the close of his speech that Trump reaches the heights of patriotic grandeur. Supposed concern for the American worker provides him some leverage in calling for mass acquiescence in what he is defining as the national purpose—haute capitalism, militarism, societal consensus, and the, perhaps in his mind, interrelated identities between immigrants and terrorists. The cohesion of this vision promises, or so he believes, the stabilization of the political order.

Extolling the political importance of the worker serves as an entering wedge into heightened patriotism and social inclusiveness (albeit on hierarchical lines), much of this buried under the surface of public discourse: "The forgotten men and women of America will be forgotten no longer. That is the heart of this new movement and the future of the Republican party. People came to vote and these people, the media, they said where are they coming from? What's going on here? These are hard-working, great, great Americans.... The GOP will be from now on the party also of the American worker." Trump points to the party's growth, immodestly taking credit: "I won't say it was because of me, but it was, okay?" Here, near the end, I take my leave from the speech and explore related matters, either previewed (before) or summarized (now), a

task made easier because Trump is like a broken record, a person of few and limited ideas—hardly the fertile creativity of FDR and his colleagues.

I am struck by the militarization of consciousness in his speech, but preceding it we already have a clear indication of Trump's devotion to militarism and his respect/admiration for generals, admirals, and those of military background—provided of course they don't take issue with him on broad policy goals. But unlike flag-worship, or in addition to it, he seeks to make an analytical case for militarism, predicated on sheer power, geopolitical ambition, and, at home, the high defense requirements (or so he imagines) of Fortress America. Defense is never for its own sake, but the reverse side of, and indistinguishable from, offense.

I have in mind, beyond budgets and boasting, the high number of military personnel occupying major positions in the administration. This takes on the appearance of a *fait accompli*, so early does it occur in, and places its stamp on, the administration. Nothing quite like it before. The signs are all around us. Take for example Peter Baker and Eric Schmitt's New York Times article, "3 Generals Bound by Iraq Will Guide Trump on Security" (2-21). Briefly, the reporters write that Trump's "appointment of H.R. McMaster, an Army lieutenant general, as his new national security adviser creates a powerful troika of senior officers who served in Iraq, teaming him up with Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and John F. Kelly, the secretary of homeland security, both retired four-star Marine generals." Significantly Baker and Schmitt note: "This administration is the first to have all three security jobs filled by senior military veterans at the same time." The best case for the generals, that they bucked the military hierarchy, may or not stand up when one considers—supposed independence notwithstanding—how far they have come in and then beyond that hierarchy. Moreover, that Steve Bannon sits on the national security principals committee only adds to the closed nature of military and strategic thinking.

The New York Times editorial, "Mr. Trump's 'Deportation Force' Prepares an Assault on American Values," (2-22), as the name implies, sweeps away any notion of Kelly's alleged moderation. His memos just released are the "battle plan" for this deportation force Trump promised in the campaign: "They are remarkable for how completely they turn sensible immigration policies [what would make them sensible, except presumably in accord with Obama's strictures?] upside down and backward. For how they seek to make the deportation machinery more extreme and frightening (and expensive), to the detriment of deeply held American values." With Obama, deportation was reserved for "dangerous criminals, national-security threats and recent border crossers."

By contrast, Kelly "has swept away those notions. He makes practically every deportable person a deportation priority. He wants everybody, starting with those who have been convicted of any crime, no matter how petty or old." Proportionality is out the window. This is emerging as the fascist state in microcosm, from contempt for the rule of law to an avowed militaristic mind-set in the conduct of policy itself (mine). The editorial—to NYT's credit—continues: "The targets now don't even have to be criminals. They could simply have been accused of a crime (that is, still presumed "innocent") or have done something that makes an immigration agent believe that they might possibly face charges." In sum, Kelly is "keeping his options open about whether to short-circuit due process [currently, those caught within two miles of the border for swift deportation without a hearing] with a coast-to-coast show-me-your-papers policy." This becomes

a police state, particularly with the enlargement of ICE officers and Border Patrol guards, along with the transmission downward to local and state officials to conduct similar operations. The Times again: “He [Kelly] wants to ramp up programs deputizing state and local law enforcement officers as immigration enforcers. He calls them ‘a highly successful force multiplier,’ which is true if you want a dragnet.”

We have here the intersection of military spending, deportation, and the wall, the latter perhaps less possible to spot, but in Trump’s thinking and planning, not only adding to the political claims for the necessity of a strong military, but to ensure, beyond the undocumented immigration people, that the citizenry live partly in fear (evident today) and accommodative to the combined political-military establishment under Trump. Kelly is instrumental in molding an uncritical base for sanctioning the weakening of meaningful civil liberties for American society, his remark on “force multiplier” showing how deeply military lingo infuses the administration.

Here Trump’s attack on the media joins the wall as feeding into the general militaristic posture of how he is transforming America into a land of fear and suspicion, a Hobbesian world of international struggle whose counterpart at home is class-jealousy, such as remains, of class-differences, and a soft population weakening the nation with its claims for social justice. Can America outlive the Trump Phenomenon, and if so, is there still something worse coming down the pike? Continuity, as opposed to revolutionary change, best describes the structural-historical process. America elected Trump as testimony to the century-old accommodation to its experience of increasing consolidation and military engagement and preparedness in defining its pattern of capitalist development.