**Donald Trump vs. America**

**The only thing that matters is his own success.**

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This column was prompted by a recent Israeli newspaper article that posed the question: “Does Netanyahu Hate Israel?” and went on to describe the many ways the Israeli prime minister is attempting to save himself from criminal prosecutions by gutting the country’s judiciary. To build the Knesset majority needed to secure his immunity, Netanyahu made concessions to far right and ultra-Orthodox religious parties, causing the societal angst bringing the country to its knees. This description of Netanyahu putting his personal interests ahead of his country is strikingly similar to Mr. Trump’s behaviours since 2015, leading me to ask the question: “Does Donald Trump Hate America?”

Mr. Trump’s most fervent followers would answer: “Of course, he loves America. He’s going to make America great again.” But after examining his rhetoric and actions, one wonders exactly what America Mr. Trump is talking about.

[Imran will be voted into power, says Rashid](https://www.nation.com.pk/16-Apr-2023/imran-will-be-voted-into-power-says-rashid)

While nominally affiliated with and embraced by the Republican Party, Mr. Trump clearly doesn’t share that party’s historic respect for law enforcement or state institutions. He held his most recent campaign rally in Waco, Texas on the 30th anniversary of the deadly Waco shoot-out between federal law enforcement and a weaponized religious cult. That event has become a cause célèbre for far-right militias nationwide as an example of government overreach.

The Waco rally began with a video of a choir of inmates imprisoned for participating in the January 6, 2021, violent insurrection at the US Capitol. Trump’s embrace of that insurrection and his view that its perpetrators are patriots was clear as he began his remarks referring to the convicts saying: “Our people love those people.”

His speech had three main components: a rehash of his 2020 “stolen election” claim; a violent denunciation of the investigations and charges against him as unjust and a “witch hunt” (emphasized by campaign-printed “Witch Hunt” signs in the crowd); and a reprise of the ominous themes that dominated his 2016 Republican convention speech.

[Punjab Assembly elections won't be conducted on May 14, tells Sanaullah](https://www.nation.com.pk/16-Apr-2023/punjab-assembly-elections-won-t-be-conducted-on-may-14-tells-sanaullah)

In attacking his political opponents, Mr. Trump used his signature violent rhetoric, accusing Democrats of being “unhinged,” “out of control,” and guilty of “rigging elections.” The “biggest threat” to the US, he observed, isn’t Russia or China, but “the Department of ‘Injustice’” and “deep state” politicians, likening the Biden administration to a “Stalinist Russia horror show.”

He referred to the NY attorney general investigating him as a “degenerate psychopath that truly hates the USA.” And declared that when he wins in 2024: “The thugs and criminals who are corrupting our justice system will be defeated, discredited, and totally disgraced.”

Mr. Trump described his campaign in apocalyptical terms. America, he said, is being threatened by “demonic forces” that are out to drive the country into a “lawless abyss,” with his campaign being the only force capable of defeating them and saving America. “Our opponents have done everything they could to crush our spirit...but they failed. They’ve only made us stronger and 2024 is the final battle... You put me back in the White House and their reign will be over and America will be a free nation once again.”

[PTI Sindh opposes alliance with Jamaat-e-Islami at local level](https://www.nation.com.pk/16-Apr-2023/pti-sindh-opposes-alliance-with-jamaat-e-islami-at-local-level)

Threads of Mr. Trump’s identification of America’s success with his own go back to the beginning of his 2016 presidential campaign. In his 2016 convention speech, after describing in dark terms the evils facing our country—many of them in racialist terms (crime, immigration, poverty, Islam and terrorism)— he proclaimed: “I alone can fix it.”

More than most politicians, Mr. Trump uses the royal “We”—“We will make America great again.” But “we” is a transparent substitute for “I.” Mr. Trump equates the threats against him—his 2020 loss, the GOP establishment politicians who oppose him, the media, the FBI, the Department of Justice, the courts—as threats to making America great. In reality, it’s easy to conclude that Donald Trump doesn’t really love America. He hates its foundational institutions that threaten him. He hates the country’s aspirational values of tolerance, diversity, and freedom for all. What he loves is Donald Trump. And like his Israeli counterpart, Benjamin Netanyahu, he’s willing to make any deal necessary, with anyone who will support him, and even to incite violence— because the only thing that matters is his own success.