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Populist nationalism in the age of Trump

This paper builds upon the arguments advanced by Johnson and Frombgen in “Race and the Emergence of Populist Nationalism in the United States” (2009). Johnson and Frombgen made three central arguments: that the US is two nations, not one; that racial attitudes are central to each national identity, and that social movements of a populist character have critically shaped each national identity. They then offered a typology of left and right national identities, each of which had been shaped by populist social movements. This paper seeks to revisit the two nations thesis in the era of Donald Trump on the right and Bernie Sanders on the left. Following Johnson and Frombgen, it employs the Gramscian theory of hegemony to analyse both populisms, the overarching nationalisms associated with them, and the place of race within each national identity. It goes on to examine the tensions within both traditional and progressive nationalism between the mainstream and populist hegemonic projects regarding the American nation. Thus, a typology revising Johnson and Frombgen’s is also offered.

Keywords: nationalism, populism, race, hegemony

This paper builds upon the arguments advanced by Johnson and Frombgen (2009) and Johnson and Hansen (2017). Johnson and Frombgen made three central arguments: that the US is two nations, not one; that racial attitudes are central to each national identity, and that social movements of a populist character have critically shaped each national identity. They then offered a typology of left and right national identities, each of which had been shaped by populist social movements. The Johnson and Hansen paper sought to demonstrate empirically

the manner in which populism critically shaped both nationalisms in US history by plugging historical examples into the 2009 typology. A rudimentary effort was made to incorporate the Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders campaigns into that typology. Johnson and Frombgen also employed the Gramscian theory of hegemony to analyse both populist movements and the overarching nationalisms as hegemonic projects for the nation as a whole. The theory of hegemony will also be applied herein. This article seeks to apply the two nations thesis to the period from the Great Recession of 2008, until the first year of the Biden presidency. First, following Johnson and Frombgen, it will argue that the two poles of American national identity are broad hegemonic orientations advanced by the centrist establishments of the major political parties. Secondly, it will illustrate the way that populist hegemonic projects have emerged on the right and left since the Great Recession of 2008 that challenge the establishment projects. Thirdly, the ideas of Trump and Sanders will be plugged into a revised Johnson and Frombgen typology to demonstrate the extent to which they represent unique hegemonic notions, and thus, distinct visions for what it means to be American. The centrality of ideas about race for each national identity will be advanced. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of the extent to which these populist poles threaten the ability of establishment forces on the right and left to reconfigure political consensus.

Part I. The American national idea and populism

The classical literature on nations and national ideas concluded that nations are either ethnic, featuring “a sense of peoplehood arising from a common language, culture and genetic type”, or civic, and based on the rule of law erected upon a constitutional order, in which the bond among citizens is cemented around “patriotic attachment to a shared set of political practices and values” (Ignatieff 1994: 6-7, 294). Johnson and Frombgen averred that settler colonial nationalism emanating from an Anglo-Saxon metropole was ethnic at its origin. However, settlers ...

... were conscious that they were also white people making their way in regions inhabited by

people who were in their minds, at lower levels of civilization ... While their ethnicity may have

been more salient in the initial generations of settlement, the dynamics of either capitalist

industrialization, or the politics of decolonization (or both) brought the white racial character

of their regimes into stark relief by the twentieth century (Johnson and Frombgen 2009: 632).

People of colour (POC) challenged the system of white racial nationalism in the United States over the generations by using the civic national idea. But though they may have used a creed based on individual rights as their platform, the final breakthrough against the system of white supremacy was accompanied by racial identity movements aspiring to not just individual but to group equality. They advanced a multiracial/multicultural notion of what it meant to be American. Whereas American civic nationalism at its best offered a colourblind creed and individual equality before the law, identity movements sought an acknowledged multiracialism and group equality. Both civic nationalism and multiracialism were movements pursuing what Antonio Gramsci called hegemony, or 'intellectual and moral leadership' in civil society (Hoare and Smith 1971: 57).

Political action to mobilise populations to craft a political consensus that can determine public policy direction for future generations is a hegemonic project (Winant 1990). Contesting hegemonic projects in the civil society are fighting a 'war of position' within the structures of state and civil society (Omi and Winant 1994: 81). Winant describes a number of hegemonic projects on a continuum from the far right to the far left in American politics, with more than one on each side of the ideological divide. In this analysis we argue two things. The Republican Party has been the broad repository for a range of conservative ideas that we term American traditionalism. Its core principles are socially conservative Christianity, free market capitalism, individual equality before the law, white assimilationism and a parochial way of seeing America as exceptional. The central principles of progressivism, around which the Democratic Party is built, are secular social liberalism, welfarist capitalism, social engineering toward intergroup equity, multiracialism, and an exceptionalist, but more inclusive, nationalism.¹ In the period since the 2008 recession these populist forces have become more pronounced as the centrist establishments on the right and left have failed to deliver satisfactory policy outputs. So what we see are four hegemonic projects, two on the right and two on the left vying for supremacy in the establishment political parties, and also within American society more broadly. As we shall demonstrate, for each of these projects understandings about race are central.

1 Here we replaced Johnson and Frombgen's use of multiculturalism with multiracialism to focus more on the centrality of race in differentiating the two nationalisms.

The roots and evolution of contemporary populism

Johnson and Frombgen define populism as “an ideology that advocates the devolution of political and economic power away from a corrupt elite to the common people” (2009: 635). This definition draws upon a long thread in the populism literature beginning with people like Margaret Canovan (1981) and Harry Boyte (1989). But in defining populism as an ideology, it diverges from much of the literature, which argues that populism is “a political logic – a way of thinking about politics” (Judis 2016: 14).

Jan Werner Muller has offered a useful model of the features of populist movements (2016: 25–32). First, all populist movements are *anti-elitist* and *moralistic*. They seek to shake up the established way of doing things. Secondly, in the battle between us and them, the opposition is not seen as legitimate. They (the populists) are the real people. In this way we can see that populists, though they utilise the democratic political space, do not accept that there can be a real debate about national political direction. Therefore, they are *anti-pluralistic*. Third, populists make *moralistic claims*, but are *not* overly concerned with offering *empirical evidence* to back up those claims. Fourth, populists see themselves as the *hard-working people*, the producers. Elite fat cats, brown immigrants and people of colour in general can be perceived as ‘*takers*’. Finally, for populists institutional intricacies and/or corrupt elites obstruct the *real majority* from having its way. In this way they *oversimplify policy challenges*.

All populists eschew political elites, but they can differ over the *character of those elites* and who is said to be *the people*. The literature does concede that populist movements historically have cut to the right or the left on the ideological spectrum, and it is over these two issues that they diverge. Michael Kazin observes that while both populisms are sceptical of the alliance between big capital and big government, they differ over solutions to the problem. Left-wing populism is dyadic, seeing elite collusion to keep the middle and working classes down. In contrast, right-wing populism is triadic. It eschews class-based elite oppression, but looks to the side (or below) and finds enemies among those more marginalised (immigrants, black people, etc.) who are said to be taking opportunities away from the ‘real people’ (Kazin 2017: 17). Race is at the centre of both strains. Left populists are able to embrace the lower classes regardless of race and offer a social welfarist agenda. Right populists carry racism into their agenda and offer social welfare only for the ‘herrenvolk’ (Frederickson 1981: ix–xi). Populism is a creature of the Enlightenment. It emerges in political cultures based in some notion of the rights of (hu)man(ity) and popular sovereignty in the abstract, in which non-elites cannot fully exercise those rights. Revolutionary America in the late-18th century was a place heralding those great ideals and it

mobilised the masses to fight for independence in their name. Thus, it became the perfect laboratory for a new political logic in which the common people might rise up against an illegitimate elite.

After a brief survey of the racial roots of American populism in the 19th century, this paper will focus primarily on contemporary populism from the Great Recession of 2008 until the first year of the Biden presidency. (For a discussion of American populism in the 20th century, see Judis (2016). It will demonstrate the way that movements on the right and the left conform to Kazin's populist model, and several features of the Johnson and Frombgen typology. We will also argue that in the period after the Great Recession of 2008 populist hegemonic projects from the left and right pulled the country toward opposite poles on issues related to race and the establishment consensus of moderate right and left has collapsed. The nation thus is experiencing a populist surge. But that populism is not a singular thing, because it's manifest in two very different notions of national identity. And as this analysis will attempt to show, differences about race are a centrepiece of those populist poles.

The racial bases of populism in post-revolutionary America

The first six presidents of the United States until 1829 came from the eastern seaboard states of Virginia and Massachusetts. They were elites representing the political consensus of the revolutionary era. Andrew Jackson was different. The classic American 'Indian fighter' of the early 19th century, he carried out some of the most barbarous military campaigns against Native Americans in south-eastern North America (Takaki 2008: 79-82). As an early settler west of the Appalachian Mountains, he was also a slave-owner. With those credentials as a product and beneficiary of American white supremacy, Jackson won the US presidency in 1828. He ran on the slogan "Andrew Jackson and the Will of the People," His "people" were the Jeffersonian "yeoman farmers" poised against eastern seaboard elites. He called for universal white male suffrage. Though women and people of colour were excluded, this was the first significant expansion of the franchise since the revolution. It was brought on by the thrust toward white settlement in the West by many who did not own property but were making the political consensus around Manifest Destiny a reality on the ground (Engerman and Sokoloff 2005: 35-36). Here we see right-wing populism with racism ingrained full-blown. Jackson was a counter-elite leading a mass movement that would create a broadening electorate, but for white men only.

The abolitionist movement against slavery in the United States also used the 'us versus them' dichotomy typical of populism, but turned it toward a series of moral arguments that disputed the 'self-evident truths' of 19th century racial

ideology. This approach would generate solidarity among slaves, free Black abolitionists and white abolitionists. Over time it led to a more radical faction led by John Brown, which believed that only violence could disrupt the inertia of the slaveholding system. Brown was white, but his band of men that attacked the US Army arsenal included black men (Franklin 1980: chapter 12). Thus, in both its moderate and radical wings, slavery abolitionism was a bi-racial movement and a forerunner of the left populism of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Following the Civil War the United States imposed its will over the southern states during the Reconstruction period (1865-77). That meant the immediate passage of the series of post-war constitutional amendments that ended slavery, made the former slaves citizens and extended the franchise to the men. Those policies incurred the resentment of white southerners and became the occasion for the next wave of right-wing populism. This time the enemy was the alliance between the federal government and Yankee capital to eradicate the privileges of southern white people in order to provide equal rights to black people. The Ku Klux Klan was the most prominent of a number of white supremacist terrorist organisations that appeared in the South in the late 1860s. That movement harassed, physically attacked and sometimes murdered African Americans. They combined acts of terror with electoral mobilisation. By the mid-1870s former Confederates were voting again and had their representatives in state legislatures and the Congress. The outcomes of the 1876 presidential election were disputed in Florida, Louisiana and South Carolina. In the latter two states both parties claimed victory “and established dual governments” (Franklin 1980: 258). A Republican-dominated commission to resolve the election dispute ruled Republican Rutherford B Hayes the winner. To quell disturbances in the South Hayes immediately agreed to recognise Democratic victories in all three states and the Reconstruction era came to a close (Franklin 1980: 255-58). That combination of legal and extra-legal tactics brought victory for right wing populism in re-institutionalising white supremacy.

Populism of the kind we see today originates with the People’s Party in late 19th century America. The People’s Party, subsequently dubbed Populists, arose in the post-Civil War period of accelerating capitalist industrialisation led by eastern Yankee capital, with southern agrarian capital a junior partner after the end of Reconstruction in the South. When the Populists congealed as a political party in 1891 their platform called for nationalisation of the railroads, recognition of labour unions, an end to land speculation, debt-relief for farmers, a graduated income tax, direct elections of US Senators and the secret ballot. Radical Populists like Georgia congressman Tom Watson promoted voting rights for blacks and a black-white farmers’ coalition. However, Democratic Party-inspired violent attacks on many blacks during the 1892 election campaigns discouraged black turnout

and destroyed any prospects for an enduring bi-racial alliance (Franklin 1980: 258–63). The roots of both a white nationalist right populism and a multiracial left populism had thus been planted by the turn of the 20th century. After the Great Recession of 2008 they would both return to centre stage in full force, destabilising the American political system.

Populism since the Great Recession

The Great Recession of 2008 gave rise to populist responses from the right and the left. The most immediate response came from the right in the form of the Tea Party movement. In classic populist fashion it divided America between ‘makers and takers’. The makers were hardworking middle-class Americans. The Tea Party was more frustrated by political elites than by the economic ones whose practices had caused the crash. They had no sympathy for those who lost their homes because of sub-prime lending practices by banks. When Congress passed a law assisting homeowners facing foreclosure, the Tea Party viewed beneficiaries as takers. When the \$787 billion economic stimulus package passed, they saw massive overspending by big government. They also objected to the Affordable Care Act as a programme funded by the taxes of makers to redistribute welfare to unworthy takers (Judis 2016: 55–57).

Although the Tea Party made most of its headlines for opposing big government spending, its supporters were also motivated to a significant extent around issues of race. Survey data indicated that higher percentages of Tea Party supporters doubted President Obama’s citizenship and generally held negative emotions about him. (see Figure 2). In apparent ignorance they could characterise Obama as Hitler-like (fascist) and at other moments as a socialist. One member, however, showed the connection in a billboard linking Obama, a purported democratic socialist, to Hitler, a national socialist, and Lenin, a Marxist socialist (O’Brien 2010). Barreto et. al. also found considerable anti-immigrant sentiments among Tea Party sympathisers (Figure 2), along with images in their online presence portraying undocumented immigrants as ‘takers’ sneaking across the border, taking jobs and threatening domestic security (Parker and Barreto 2014: 54). Along with sweeping House of Representative elections in 2010, the Tea Party would provide the social base for Donald Trump’s campaign in the Republican primaries. Trump’s attitudes toward the Obama presidency and immigrants would be huge elements in his appeal to the primary electorate.

The left, not fearful of the new Black president, patiently waited to see the outcomes of Obama’s response to the financial crisis. By 2011 though, many were becoming frustrated that Wall Street was not being punished enough for their misdeeds, while common people were losing their homes. The idea of protesting

on Wall Street emerged early in the year. After several missteps, over 1 000 demonstrators rallied in Zucotti Park in the financial district, with 300 camping out overnight. Behind the slogan 'We are the 99%', the 'Occupy Wall Street' movement soon spread to dozens of cities across the country. The occupations became occasions for mass meetings where political education about the failures of the economic system and political elites took place. Though comprised mostly of young people, the movement was joined and given more impetus by veterans of anti-globalisation politics since the 'Battle in Seattle' against the World Trade Organisation summit in 1999 (Judis 2016: 59–61). As the holiday season approached and temperatures dropped only the most committed continued to occupy, and officialdom began to break up the encampments. Never centrally organised, nor committed to a singular platform, the movement dissipated. But as Todd Gitlin observed, it was the first time since the mass movements of organised labour in the 1930s that the populist left had captured the sentiments of the majority (Gitlin 2012). Most Americans desired some kind of economic justice and objected to the greed of the 1%. Unlike the Tea Party, the Occupy Movement did not organise itself into an interest group that could directly impact electoral politics. But it influenced the public mood going into the 2012 elections and undoubtedly helped Obama win a second term (Judis 2016: 61).

The following section will address the ways in which Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders are right and left-wing populists respectively. In doing so it will view them as proponents of distinct hegemonic projects on the right and left that challenge the right and left establishments of the two major parties. They will then be placed into a revised version of the typology put forth by Johnson and Frombgen in 2009. Admittedly, Trump can be much harder to pigeonhole on any ideological continuum than Sanders. While Sanders was consistently on the left prior to running for president, Trump was noted for being all over the place on policy issues. However, beginning with his birther campaign against President Obama, we see his calculation that his prospects for making an impact were on the right. Trump energised the Tea Party and white nationalists into a political force with populist hegemonic aspirations that were distinct from mainstream Republicanism. Bernie Sanders, by tapping into the energies of the Occupy Movement, did something parallel on the left. We now take a look at the extent to which Donald Trump conforms to American traditionalism and how well Bernie Sanders fits into American progressivism. In the process we will also examine the extent to which race is at the heart of each man's populism as well as each strain of American national identity.

PART II. Sanders, Trump and American national identity

The Great Recession of 2008 demonstrated the bankruptcy of the neoliberal Washington Consensus. While the global regime of free trade significantly reduced poverty globally after 1992, it did so by transferring manufacturing to the global South and fostering de-industrialisation in the North Atlantic world (Mishel 2015). In the midst of the crisis Dani Rodrick warned that as the hardships suffered by globalisation appeared from country to country, political elites would be wise to heed the pain of their citizens and make social welfarist policies to alleviate that suffering (Rodrik 2011). Otherwise, they risked the rise of populist demagogues seeking to discard them, their policy orientations, and often their political institutions. In the wake of the recession both populist poles were mobilised simultaneously in the United States. Mainstream scholars, political commentators and establishment politicians rarely talk about populism in a positive light. But populism can play a useful role in shaking up the inertia among establishment politicians when it becomes obvious to the common people that the political consensus is not benefiting them. Real populists rarely seek to overthrow the capitalist system. But they use moralising simplistic rhetoric that threatens the elite, because otherwise they don't get heard, or sufficiently cut into the decision-making process (Judis 2016: 16-17).

In order to demonstrate the cleavages between mainstream nationalist and populist hegemonic projects the typology developed by Howard Winant is instructive (1990). He conceived four racial hegemonic projects in American politics: far right, new right, neoconservatism, and radical democracy. We have devised a revised version of his typology to delineate the tensions between differing hegemonic visions on both the right and left. Winant offers three projects on the right and only one, radical democracy, on the left. In our updated typology we identify two projects on the right and two on the left. For us they represent four versions of American national identity with populist projects at the extreme on each side (See Figure 3). While we presented the entire Johnson and Frombgen typology in Figure 1, we now wish to discuss Trump and Sanders with regard to our revised typology. We retain two categories: character of nationalism and racial ideology, and replace the other two with a new one: character of the polity. We think these three centre most closely on the role of race in each pole of American national identity.

The character of the nation, the character of the polity and race

At the outset we said that American identity originated as ethnic nationalist principles erected by an Anglo-Saxon people. The influx of southern and eastern

European immigrants during the industrial revolution engendered the political construction of a white racial nation by the mid-20th century. The civil rights revolution challenged white racial nationalism in the 1950s and 60s. But while the identity politics phase of that revolution called for group recognition and rights, the policy reforms of the era all advanced individual, not group, rights. Thus, the civic nationalist creed of the American Revolution, which encouraged individual assimilation to 'whiteness' survived. However, that 'parochial' notion of what it meant to be American continued to be contested as POC movements insisted upon a cosmopolitan and multiracial view of Americanness for the rest of the century.

Johnson and Frombgen refer to traditional American identity as 'parochial' and 'exceptionalist' (See Figure 1). Both traditional conservatives and progressive liberals have viewed America as an exceptional country on the global stage. The fact that the country was founded on a set of ideas rather than a people, and a zealous idealism about those ideas, are cited as indicators of exceptionalism (Lipset 1996; Nye 2018) Others would add that its unique geographic location astride the world's two great oceans, and buffered from the European powers and their conflicts over territory bequeathed exceptional geopolitical conditions for developing parochial ideas about itself (Friedman 2010: 4-5). Until World War Two that worldview lent itself to a unilateral orientation to foreign policy and isolation from the power struggles between the European great powers (Braumoeller 2010). Unilateralism was geopolitical, but also psychological. But after emerging as the world's most powerful state from two world wars in the 20th century the US became the leader of the Western alliance and embraced multilateralism to defeat communism and manage the process of decolonisation. Traditionalist Republicans embraced the defence of the international institutions that came out of the war and leadership in multilateral approaches to national security. We now turn to the way in which Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders relate to these competing notions of American national identity and also to the configuration of American political institutions with regard to race.

Donald Trump: making America great again

National identity is a Janus-headed phenomenon which defines a nation internally, regarding who its members are, but also who it is in relation to other nations. Competing notions of racial ideology have been integral to how the United States defined itself since the time of the abolition of the slavery movement in the 1830s. Race has also influenced US thinking about the brown nations emerging from colonialism after 1945 as it led the Western alliance including the former colonial powers. We argue that Trump's racial ideology is white nationalism, and

further, that racism permeates Donald Trump's view of national identity and racial ideology.

Exceptional American unilateralism

Under President George Bush Jr. a return to unilateralism could already be seen in the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, when the UN and all Western Allies except Great Britain opposed that initiative. Trump pushed America in an even more unilateralist direction as he pulled out of longstanding international agreements such as the Paris Accords on climate change and the Iran nuclear deal, questioned the UN and NATO, and left important senior positions at the State Department unfilled. Most of the Republican (establishment) traditionalist candidates in 2016, likewise, seemed to favour multilateralism with robust American leadership, but many of them continued to be willing to go it alone and lead with militarism where necessary in international crises (Lizza 2015). Trump is an outlier in his urge to undermine global institutions and disregard the interests of allies, but in more favourable company on the right when it comes to the penchant for unilateralism. We now move to a focus on the way that Trump's attitudes about race have an impact on his view of immigration issues and domestic politics.

Racial ideology

Racism in national security thinking has been around in conservative circles since Patrick Buchanan opposed immigrants from brown countries at the Republican National Convention in 1992. The populist right wing of the Republican Party has abandoned traditionalist assimilationism, because they doubt that America as they have known it can be sustained if the white race is no longer a majority (Buchanan 1986; Huntington 1996: 304–05). In order to foreclose the browning of America they think a more aggressive immigration restrictionist posture must be pursued. Mindful of these concerns, Donald Trump targeted Latino immigrants in his campaign announcement. He declared, “they’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists.” This set the tone for how he would talk about immigration and Latino immigrants for the remainder of his campaign and throughout his presidency (Schwarz 2015). He then called for a wall on the southern border. From the initial assertion that Mexico would pay for the wall, to shutting down the government to demand congressional funding for the wall, to shifting money from the Defence Department budget to the Department of Homeland Security to pay for it, Trump never abandoned the concept of a border wall. When it was discovered that he was misleading the American people about the status of the border wall in February 2019 he had to back-peddle once again (Blake 2019). In a desperate move to prove to his voters that he

could make something happen on the issue of immigration he cut US aid to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, accusing those countries of allowing their citizens to join migrant caravans destined for the United States (Hayes 2019). This maintained the racially charged citizen versus non-citizen dichotomy that Trump used to speak about the border. Trump had been insulting to all of his perceived mainstream competitors on immigration during the presidential debates and they in turn were critical of him. But most of their criticism was over his decorum, “the Constitution, the limits of government power, the freedom of the individual, or the traditions of the American republic”, not the racist way that he talked about immigrants (Matthews 2016; Heer 2016).

Trump’s other big immigration issue, also racial, relates to those from Muslim countries. A week after his inauguration Trump issued an executive order banning travel from seven predominantly Muslim countries to the US for 90 days, and from Syria indefinitely. That initial ban was overturned in the federal courts. The banning issue continued to be fought in the courts, until the Supreme Court upheld the administration’s power to take such action in June 2018 (Supreme Court 2020). If one examines the vision of Jeb Bush, the leading Republican traditionalist candidate in 2016, one finds support for American exceptionalism, but also inclusiveness for newcomers to the country.

(America) should not have a multicultural society ... America is so much better than every other country because of the values that people share – it defines our national identity. Not race or ethnicity, not where you come from. When you create pockets of isolation ... in some cases the assimilation process is retarded because it’s slowed down (*Ballotopedia* 2016).

Whereas American traditionalism wants immigrants and non-white people to assimilate to become like the white majority, white nationalism wishes non-white people would go away. Although traditionalist assimilationism may contain unconscious ideas about racial superiority, white nationalism is the conscious belief in white superiority and aversion to living in an interracial society (DiAngelo 2016). Trump’s calls for border walls and Muslim bans tap into this sentiment and his bombastic rhetorical style, offensive to many, is also felt as a breath of fresh air from all of the ‘political correctness’ imposed on ordinary people by a cultural elite.

Focusing only on the domestic front one can also cite a number of things about the Trump administration that signify a white nationalist ideology: his inclusion of white nationalists such as Stephen Bannon and Stephen Miller in his administration (Alternative Right 2016); his insistence after the white nationalist rally at Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017 where one counter-demonstrator was

killed, that “there were some very fine people on both sides” (Parton 2017); calling African American football players ‘sons of bitches’ when they began to ‘take a knee’ during the national anthem to support the Black Lives Matter Movement (Steltzer 2017). In each of those instances Trump revealed a complete lack of interest in embracing the role of US president as unifier in favour of a politics of us versus them.

In their typology of American national identity Johnson and Frombgen include Christian-based social conservatism as the social value-orientation of traditional nationalism (see Figure 1). They have a separate category for traditional racial ideology which they define as “white assimilationism” (as we do here). Evangelical Christians embraced Trump in both of his campaigns because he promised to appoint anti-abortion justices onto the US Supreme Court and throughout the federal courts. Many observers wondered how good Christians could support a candidate who was so openly racist, but Robert Jones has shown that Protestant Christianity has provided fundamental support for the erecting of racist institutions since the country’s inception. Jones found that larger percentages of white Christian identifying Americans today oppose affirmative action policies, reject the idea of structural racism, and carry higher degrees of racial resentment than non-religious identifying whites (Jones 2020: chapter 5). Today this holds true for Catholics as well as Protestants. American Christianity continues to be a major conveyor of racial animus.

No issue illustrates the gulf between traditionalism and progressivism and the tensions within traditionalism between conservatism and populism more than voting rights policy. We alluded earlier to the tensions in the Republican Party over immigration and the coming brown majority. Keeping brown immigrants out of the country is one way to retain white dominance. Restricting voting rights in ways that mostly impact POC is another strategy and it is a tack that the Republican Party has increasingly pursued since the trauma of seeing the nation elect its first African American president in 2008. The liberal-leaning Brennan Center (2019) reported that between 2010 and 2020 ...

25 states have put in place new restrictions since then – 14 states have more restrictive voter

ID laws in place (and six states have implemented strict photo ID requirements), 13 have laws making it harder for citizens to register, eight cut back on early voting opportunities and three made it harder to restore voting rights for people with past criminal convictions.

Nearly all of the states imposing new restrictions over that period had Republicans in control of both houses of the legislature and the governor.² Prior to the 2020 election much of the focus had been on voter identification rules. But when Trump lost in 2020 and insisted that the process was fraudulent, Republicans began to focus with laser-like precision on mail-in voting, extended days and hours for voting, and in Texas offering refreshments for those standing line for hours to vote. “More than 400 bills with provisions that restrict voting access (were) introduced in 49 states in the 2021 legislative sessions” and “at least 18 states enacted 30 laws that restrict access to the vote” (Brennan Center 2021). Among Trump’s mainstream conservative rivals from 2016, Jeb Bush supported rolling back of federal authority over elections in the *Shelby v. Holder* US Supreme Court (2013) (Milhiser 2015); and John Kasich signed voting restrictionist legislation as Ohio governor (Higgs 2014). Neither had anything to say about the wave of new laws pending or passed in 2021. On this issue it seems that conservatives agree with Trumpists that making it harder to vote is a good idea.

Traditionalism and constitutional republicanism

The average American believes that the United States is a democracy. The US Constitution recognises the rights of individuals. In theory it also constrains the ability of any faction to gain too much power through federalism and states’ rights and the system of checks and balances at the national level. Policy makers are determined through popular elections to represent the citizenry. That representative system was not fully democratic until the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. At that point one could define the system as a liberal democracy: liberal because it protects individual liberties and democratic because representatives are elected by processes in which all adult citizens are eligible to vote.

Under current conditions of polarisation, opinion polling typically takes democracy as a given and asks if Americans think it is under threat. Most Americans on the right and left appear to think that it is (Agiesta and Edwards-Levy 2021; Vinopal 2021). But the American founders, while they believed in popular government, eschewed ‘pure democracy,’ seeing it as akin to mob rule. Among the Tea Party generation of Republicans in the Congress, well aware of founding principles, one finds people like Senator Mike Lee (R-Utah) who

2 Space does not allow for a state-by-state description of the kinds of restrictions and when they were passed. See the *Brennan Center for Justice* <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/voting-laws-roundup-may-2021> for those details. And see *Ballotpedia* https://ballotpedia.org/State_government_trifectas for states with total Republican control at given points in time.

believes that the United States is not a democracy, but a 'constitutional republic' where the checks and balances in the system prevent pure majority rule. Lee and traditionalist scholars argue the object of government is not democracy, but to ensure "freedom, prosperity, and human flourishing" (Lee 2020), while protect(ing) the minority from unjust majorities, which was "the true goal of the American revolution" (Dobski 2020: 3). As a young lawyer Lee clerked for Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito, a leader of the Federalist Society, whose project is to uphold the vision of the founding generation today and for posterity. Donald Trump may be an anti-intellectual populist who seeks to trash the constitutional in order to have his way, but in the Federalist Society and other traditionalist think tanks like the Heritage Foundation, he has powerful allies in a 'white' intelligentsia who do not believe in majority rule. Most of them view themselves as white assimilationists who see racism as individual rather than systemic, but they coalesce with Trump in wanting to deny majoritarian outcomes in a multiracial society (Gonzalez and Butcher 2021).

The evidence for this assertion lies in the behaviour of Republicans in the wake of the 2020 presidential election. Buoyed by Trump's declarations that the election was a fraud, thousands of Trump loyalists rallied at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, the day that the Congress was to officially certify the election results. Several hundred of them forcibly entered the building, injuring 138 Capitol and Washington DC police officers. One protester was shot and killed (Schmidt and Broadwater 2021). Despite that 'insurrection', 139 of 195 Republicans in the House of Representatives and 8 of 52 in the Senate voted to overturn the results of the November election that evening, when the Congress, badly shaken, returned to its business. No concrete evidence of voter fraud was offered (Yourish, Buchanan and Liu 2021). The House numbers are particularly significant, because it is the more popularly elected branch, and 71% of Republican members voted to decertify the election. Thus, conservative Republicans, who used to have a majoritarian electoral strategy that involved attracting Latino and Asian American voters, are increasingly being pulled toward the populist hegemonic direction favouring white nationalism and voter suppression in order to entrench (white) minority rule.

Bernie Sanders and the political revolution

American nationalism and race

Johnson and Frombgen described progressive American nationalism as 'rooted cosmopolitanism'. This orientation tends "to appreciate and celebrate cultures from all over the world" in the making of America while retaining a firm sense

of American identity (Johnson and Frombgen 2009: 653). Although the liberal establishment were white assimilationists at the time of the passage of the civil rights laws of the 1960s, by the time of Obama and Biden liberals had joined Sanders and populists in adhering to a rooted cosmopolitanism embodying the idea of a multiracial nation (see Hirsch 2020; Voto Latino 2021).

As we saw with traditionalism, national identity for progressives involves ideas about who is inside the nation as well as its posture in international politics. All progressives support a multilateral approach to foreign policy, including strong support for international institutions that underpin it. However, it is in his foreign policy perspective that Sanders most distinguishes himself from mainstream liberalism. Since his application for conscientious objector status in opposition to the Vietnam War, Sanders has embraced elements of a left anti-imperialist understanding of US policy toward the global South. He opposes US-led economic globalisation and military interventionism, because he views those policies as denying sovereignty to post-colonial nations. He did vote for the post-9-11 invasion of Afghanistan, but against the Persian Gulf War in 1991 and the Iraq invasion of 2003; and he later conceded that he was wrong to have supported the invasion of Afghanistan (Quealy 2019). Overwhelming majorities of both parties voted for each of those wars (CNN 2002). While liberals continue to support interventionism and militarism, Sanders opposes it in a way that we identify as opposition to US imperialism: a distinct hegemonic perspective.

The war on drugs, refugees and border enforcement are issues that straddle domestic and foreign policy. The issue of building a wall to secure the border reveals differences between Sanders and liberals. Unlike Biden, Obama and Hillary Clinton, he voted against the border wall in 2006, but he does acknowledge that some reasonable kinds of immigration controls are necessary. He says,

Rather than building walls, we must target construction wisely and invest in high-tech equipment

and state-of-the-art cameras. We must avoid the over-militarisation of our border communities and

work more closely with local residents and law enforcement (Sanders 2018: 192).

By the 2020 campaign though, Biden had moved closer to Sanders, doubting the efficacy of the barrier and calling instead for increased “technological capability at legal ports of entry because that’s where 95% of all the stuff (drugs) is coming through” (Kaczynski 2019).

Sanders' anti-imperialist views are further illustrated by his stance regarding the drug wars which destabilise Mexico and Central America. He declares that cartel violence pushes people out of those countries. Of course, the drugs that cause the trade end up in the US market. Because the US backs the authoritarian regimes in the region who do nothing to protect beleaguered citizens caught in the crossfire, Sanders believes the US is deeply implicated in the refugee tragedy and is obligated both morally and by international law to provide a haven for them. On her trip to Central America in June 2021 Vice-President Kamala Harris warned would be refugees not to come, because they would be turned away. The Biden administration inherited Trump's policy of holding asylum seekers in camps in Mexico while their applications were being processed. Biden returned to processing refugees after they entered the country when he took office, and the numbers arriving at the border swelled by the summer. In August 2021 the US Supreme Court ruled the Trump era policy could not be overturned and Biden signalled that he would comply (Montoya-Galvez 2021). Thus, after moving closer to Sanders' position, Biden seems to have hardened his stance. In fairness, it is hard to know, given the unruly situation at the border, what Sanders would actually do were he in power.

Sanders' approach towards immigration does not mean he is unconcerned about American workers. He opposed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and its successor, the US-Mexico-Canada agreement. Yet he understands why people immigrate from Mexico and Central America. He points out that NAFTA pushed small Mexican farmers off the land and frequently 'al Norte' looking for opportunity. And both agreements 'outsourced' American jobs to the lower-wage Mexican market. Thus, Sanders is an American nationalist in his position on free trade agreements. But on this issue and refugees he sees US imperialism as an underlying problem (Bannan and Cashman 2019). He is more thoroughgoing than liberals in the humanitarianism, cosmopolitanism and anti-racism in his concern for the plight of those fleeing economic hardship and political instability in Mesoamerica.³

Racial Ideology in Domestic Politics

Regarding the domestic issues over how immigrants are treated once inside the country, Sanders supports the Dream Act, which would allow a pathway to permanent residency for undocumented young people under the age of 35 who arrived in the US before the age of 16. He also supports a path to citizenship for the

3 Mesoamerica refers to the group of highly advanced civilizations that rose and developed in Mexico and Central America prior to the Spanish invasion and conquest in the 16th century.

undocumented, visa reform toward a point-based merit system, and increased opportunities for qualified individuals to take steps towards permanent residency (Sanders 2018: 190–92). Biden essentially holds the same position (2021).

Criminal justice is another set of issues affecting black and brown communities. Sanders received criticism that he did not have a well-developed platform on these issues in 2016, because he had too many ‘smart-assed white boys’ prominently placed on his campaign instead of black and brown people (Phillips 2016: 79 uses this phrase to describe typical mainstream presidential campaigns). After being shouted off the stage in 2015 by representatives of the Black Lives Matter movement in Seattle, Sanders was forced to make racial issues more central in his campaign. He acknowledges that African Americans are disproportionately jailed and imprisoned in the United States and that the entire criminal justice system is broken. He now has a long list of remedies for reform, including:

- New standards for the use of force involving de-escalation techniques.
- Emphasis on “meaningful community engagement” including community policing and “greater civilian oversight of police departments”.
- Required body cameras for law enforcement officers in the name of accountability, and federal funding for such programmes.
- Zero tolerance for the abuse of police power including rigorous investigation of alleged abuses and vigorous prosecution when warranted.
- “Police forces that reflect the diversity of the communities they work in.” This starts with the leadership of departments and includes rigorous training in areas such as cultural sensitivity and implicit bias (Sanders 2018: 169–70).

In a related vein, Sanders assails the carceral state and the way the war on drugs targets black and brown communities, resulting in disproportionate percentages of those populations being incarcerated (Sanders 2018: 59–62). However, when George Floyd was murdered by a Minneapolis policeman in May 2020, he rejected the ‘defund the police’ slogan, while endorsing the movement of mental health and addiction responses and the attending resources to professionals in those fields. (Allasan 2020). Biden also rejected the defund slogan and called for more and better trained police. On issues like community policing he sounded much like Sanders (Andrew, Ryan and Kelly 2021).

It is clear that Sanders is very sensitive to racial justice issues, and his lifelong activism reflects an anti-racist view. Like Martin Luther King with the ‘Poor Peoples Campaign’ and Jesse Jackson with the ‘Rainbow Coalition,’ Sanders seeks to change the debate over racial injustice into a conversation about economic injustice. He is not unlike other progressives in this respect. But whereas liberals

seek to chip away at racial and class inequity in separate policy areas and with an incrementalist approach, Sanders believes the two are patently intertwined in the capitalist system. According to *feelthebern.org*:

People of colour face systemic discrimination in every aspect of our economy, from education to hiring to compensation.

We must create more jobs, raise the minimum wage, and increase access to education and training. We must also expand social safety net programs and guarantee affordable healthcare and nutrition programs so that we enable working families of colour to get ahead (Sanders 2020).

Like true populists Sanders advances a sweeping agenda, but by the time Biden had garnered the Democratic nomination there was not much distance between him and Sanders on these issues. And rhetoric aside, after decades as a congressman who often enough voted for legislation to the right of his preferences, it is hard to know how different Sanders would be were he actually president. This is in part because, as the old adage in politics holds, 'where you stand on issues depends on where you sit'. Once one is sitting in the White House and trying to govern the entire country the policy 'stances' one is compelled to take can look very different.

The Sanders campaign had run its course by the spring of 2020, but his support among POC had been critical to his performance. He won majorities of the Latino vote in the California and Nevada primaries and a plurality in Texas, but Biden countered with a string of victories in the South where the Black vote was 50 % or more of the electorate (Barron-Lopez 2020)). What appeared to be a split between black and brown voters has been explained by three factors. First, Sanders did outreach in both communities primarily among the young and the Latino electorate is younger than the Black electorate. So his youth vote in states with large Latino electorates buoyed his results in those states. Moreover, his outreach toward Latinos generally was unprecedented for many in those communities (but not new in Black communities), and they showed their appreciation on primary day. For their part, Black voters wished to support the candidate they thought had the best chance to beat Donald Trump, and many of them doubted that an avowed democratic socialist would be that person for the broader white electorate. So it made no sense for them to vote for someone in the primary who couldn't win in November (Hinajosa 2020; 'After Biden' 2020). In insisting on the interconnection between a range of race and class issues to be addressed comprehensively, including POC in the brains trust of his campaign and taking it to communities of colour in a way no presidential campaign since Jackson had done, Sanders' multiracialism runs deeper than that of liberals. We

call it structural multiracialism: a different hegemonic position than the liberal multiracialism of the Democratic establishment. But Biden also included a number of POC in his cabinet and his White House staff, and for reasons offered below, we argue that the need to retain his party's electoral base may pull him inexorably toward a more populist structural multiracialist position (Weiss 2021).

There is, however, another form of structural multiracialism on the landscape that challenges the Jackson/Sanders race-class structuralism. It is based in racial and gender cultural identities. Using the term "woke" to mean being aware of and sensitive to people who have been marginalised, these actors prioritise their racial or gender issues in an unyielding fashion that becomes 'policing' of the actions and speech of fellow citizens. Journalist Dan Perry incisively captures the dangers this hegemonic mission poses for Democrats.

There is, in the American centre, visceral distaste for the cultural war stoked by the woke project: that zone of thought and activism stretching from 'defund the police' and trigger warnings to gender pronoun inflation and complaints about 'cultural appropriation,' from summary firings of the guilty-if-accused and 'cancellation' of the 'inappropriate'.

Perry cites opinion data illustrating the unpopularity of 'wokeism' alongside evidence that Democrats can win if they emphasise social welfarist issues such as paid maternity leave, government-funded child care, tuition-free public college and Medicare for all (2021). After being shouted off the stage by woke Black Lives Matter activists in 2016, Sanders accommodated their concerns, while continuing to stake out his social democratic positions on the issues Perry identifies. Most of the inveterately woke are young, probably under 35.

As older more centrist voters, some a little to the left, others a little right, lament the impact of this cultural structuralism of which race is a component, young people have been voting in higher numbers than ever before ('Election Week 2020' 2020; 'Half of Youth Voted 2020'; 2021). Their turnout in 2020 seems to have cemented Biden's victory and propelled Democrats to office, astonishingly, in two Georgia Senate races. Traumatized by the possibility of a second Trump term, enough young people, identity politics aside, held their noses and voted for Biden and enough Democrats for the party to control both houses of the Congress in 2020. The Republicans do not have an agenda for young people who cannot afford to pursue post-secondary education, get inundated by debt when they do, cannot afford to buy a home when they are educated, and demand public and private spaces where racism and sexism is taken seriously. If Biden/Sanders Democrats can harness the techniques employed on the ground in Obama's two

campaigns and the Stacey Abrams machine in Georgia, they can neutralise the impact of identity politics fundamentalism in the 2022 elections.

Progressivism and American democracy

We identified the features of liberal democracy in our discussion of traditionalism above. Democrats have also been proponents of liberal democracy. But in recent years progressive voices in civil society and several Democrats in the Congressional Progressive Caucus have been using the term ‘multiracial democracy’ to describe their vision of where the country should go.⁴ Though Sanders has strengthened his message regarding race, racially diversified his staff and spent more time in POC communities, we were not able to find an instance where he explicitly called for multiracial democracy as a goal. One cannot find any moments where Biden or Democratic establishment politicians have uttered the phrase either. Biden is a thoroughgoing pragmatist, and Sanders, despite his populism, has his reasons for not verbalising multiracial democracy. The Democrats failed to pass voting rights legislation to counter the restrictionist laws passed in several states in 2021. They did push through the massive infrastructure package. And in 2022 they passed the “\$700 billion-plus tax, climate and health care-pricing bill” and some other laws that can generally be seen to benefit the middle and working classes, which will benefit POC in those classes (Murray and DiMartino 2022). But if Republicans are not curtailed from suppressing the POC vote, Democrats face the possibility of losing control of Congress in 2022 and a weakened Biden presidency thenceforth. Whether or not liberals or populists in Congress state that they are multiracial democrats, they need to assure that their multiracial base can get to the polls and return Democrats to power. Therefore, just as it is in the electoral interest for traditionalists, conservative and populist, to suppress voter turnout, it is in the electoral interest of progressives, liberal and populist, to create conditions where the largest possible number of people vote.

Part III. Is populism a threat to national unity?

Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders exemplify populist hegemonic projects on the right and left that emerged in the wake of the Great Recession of 2008. We have offered a revised version of the Johnson and Frombgen typology of American

4 Multiracial democracy has been advanced by progressive interest groups (See *Demos* 2018; Siders 2020); by intellectuals and academics (*Facing history, facing ourselves* 2021); and those who worked on the Sanders campaign (Arievitch, Naroda, and Mora 2020). For members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus advancing multiracial democracy, see Jones 2021; Omar 2021; Ocasio-Cortez 2020; Booker 2019.

national identity that delineates the differences between Trump's and Sanders' populist projects and the projects of the establishment on national identities. In the years since he began to question President Obama's citizenship, Donald Trump has moved the fulcrum of traditionalist politics from mainstream conservatism to rightist populism in two of the three categories we examine: racial ideology and character of the polity. Regarding racial ideology, when Trump attacked Muslims and Mexicans, conservatives seemed more troubled by the lack of decorum and disregard for institutional processes than by the racist nature of his rhetoric. On voting rights, again we found Jeb Bush mute on the impacts of the *Shelby v. Holder* decision that gutted the Voting Rights Act; moderate John Kasich signing restrictionist legislation into law as governor of Ohio, and all leading Republicans silent about the wave of voter suppression legislation passed since *Shelby*, and particularly, after the 2020 election. In this way we can see conservatives acceding to white nationalism as an electoral strategy.

When we move to the character of the national polity and attending institutions, we have demonstrated that, faced with the reality that its base is overwhelmingly white people, and having no programme to attract the impending POC majority, establishment conservatives have moved toward Trump's populist position regarding voter suppression and alleged electoral fraud. That political strategy is complemented by an intellectual argument that the constitution did not set up a democracy and therefore, that protecting individual liberty is more important than the will of the majority. For them America is a constitutional republic. In a country whose majority will be POC in the next generation, conservative intellectuals have justified a way that the (white) minority can continue to determine elections and important public policies. Intellectually, they complement Trump and his working-class white supporters in advancing white nationalism.

Regarding national identity, Trump broke with the post-war era traditionalism by rejecting the country's role as a world leader in multilateral institutions and pushed the country toward unilateralism once again. He proved willing to destroy intricate networks of alliances, treaty obligations and all manner of formal agreements and accepted institutional practices in international relations. In doing so he broke with traditionalism by abdicating three quarters of a century of American world leadership. Still, we must acknowledge that the tendency for the United States, as the pre-eminent world power, to go its own way can be seen in Bush Jr's. invasion of Iraq in 2003, and even with Biden's precipitous withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. However, no conservative or liberal leaders have undertaken the wholesale disregard for international institutions in the way that Trump did. We predict that, though Trump practiced a kind of crass unilateralism, conservative presidents in the future would not take such a course.

Similar to Trump, Bernie Sanders contradicts mainstream progressivism in his views on American nationalism and racial ideology. But as we saw in the case of Trump on the right, frustrations caused by the Great Recession have compelled liberals to move toward populist positions in order to hold their social base. We saw how after initially mis-stepping in 2016, Sanders significantly increased the numbers of black and brown people on his staff, a trajectory he continued into 2020. That structural multiracialism that involved a white candidate taking leadership from people of colour was outside the Democratic party mainstream. There may be a subtle difference between the Sanders' embrace of POC at the heart of his campaign and the way they were incorporated by Biden, but Biden also had many POC in key positions on his campaign, and now in his White House. Moreover, as the primaries played out and the campaign against Trump unfolded, we have shown where Biden moved to positions on immigration, race and criminal justice and voting restriction that were almost indistinguishable from Sanders'. Because the electoral future of the Democratic Party depends on its mobilisation of POC voters, we predict that what has been liberal multiracialism featuring a 'celebrate diversity' and let's sing 'kumbaya' approach to race relations will steadily be replaced by a structural multiracialism seeking greater interracial understanding, trust-building and power sharing. It follows then, for liberals and left populists alike, that a multiracial democratic polity affording the easiest and broadest access to voting for citizens is the proper course for the nation.

Conclusion

The American political system is in crisis and a new decisive policy direction is needed. With respect to race the right-wing populist agenda calls for restriction of immigration, continuation of the status quo regarding criminal justice policies and greater voter restriction. Left-wing populism calls for transformation of the criminal justice system, policies that generally support both legal and undocumented immigration and easy access to voting. Is it possible to straddle these polar policy sets somewhere in the middle? Historically, it is not often populists themselves who win office and implement needed reforms. Neither of the patrician Roosevelts was a populist. Theodore, the Republican, nevertheless, co-opted Peoples Party issues and established anti-trust law and the regulation of railroads. His cousin Franklin heeded populist pressures and created the modern welfare state. They were pragmatists. They didn't try to blow up the system. They sought to make it work more effectively for average Americans. What is required is a scenario in which pragmatists of the moderate left or right seize the high ground and move the agenda in their desired direction by forcing the populists to compromise. Donald Trump was not that person on the right. He demonstrated no interest in offering a unifying message. A traditional

conservative political consensus by some future candidate might be advanced, but as this analysis demonstrates, the Republican electoral base is pulling the party toward white nationalism and the abridgement of democracy. It is hard to see where a colourblind white assimilationism can win the support of that base. Trump's misogynist rhetoric did gain him more votes from black and brown men. Senator Marco Rubio of Florida is among those believing that eliminating the harsh racial tone and appealing to a 'multiethnic, multiracial, working-class' electorate is the way forward in Republican politics (Choi 2020). Time will tell.

On the left the question is whether President Joseph Biden can engineer enough incremental change in areas like immigration and criminal justice to placate left populists and create a new centre that can attract some conservatives and isolate the right populists. Enough white centrist and conservatives in American suburbs were alienated by Trump to shift that vote 5% nationally to Biden. That put him over the top in key states like Georgia, Wisconsin and Michigan (Badger and Bui 2020). However, in the run up to the 2022 Congressional elections Trump pro-election fraud candidates won in state primaries for the House of Representatives, the Senate and governor over 90% of the time (Moore and Chu 2022). While 2020 outcomes suggest that the Democrats may be moving to straddle the centre, Republican primary results for 2022 indicate that the party base remains loyal to Trump. This writing is on the eve of the 2022 elections, and polling suggests a very close race for control of the US Congress. If Democrats sustain support from enough white suburbanite voters to retain control of both houses, they might be able to incrementally move toward a pragmatic centrist consensus in which far right populists will be neutralised, at least for the time being. But if Republicans gain control of the Congress, they can be positioned to stifle Biden's agenda for the next two years. Also, because of Biden's age (he will turn 80 before the end of 2022), questions loom over whether he will run for re-election. Control of the Congress, and no obvious Democratic challenger for the presidency, may be enough to give Republicans and white nationalism momentum in 2024. That would a recipe for partisan divisions in America to grow even more in the future making the two nations thesis yet more plausible.

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Appendix: figures

Figure 1: Traditionalism, progressivism and American national identity

	Traditionalism	Progressivism
Social value/policy orientation	social conservatism (Christian), anti-social welfarist	social liberalism (secular), social welfarist
Economic policy orientation	economic conservatism (free market capitalism)	social welfarist capitalism (regulatory)
Legal philosophy	strict constructionism, individual equality before the law	social engineering, group equality before the law
Racial ideology	white assimilationism	multiculturalism
Character of nationalism	exceptionalist, parochial	cosmopolitanism (rooted)

Adapted from Johnson and Frombgen 2009.

Figure 2: True Believers in the Tea Party

Emotions	Negative	Mixed	Positive
For Obama	91%	0%	9%
Illegal Immigrants	82%	9%	9%
Homosexuals	64%	36%	0%

Adapted from Parker and Barreto 2014.

Where was Obama Born?			
	United States	Foreign country	Don't know
Tea Party	41%	30%	29%
All Americans	58%	20%	22%

Adapted from Sarah Dutton, Jennifer De Pinto, Fred Backus and Anthony Salvanto, *CBS News Poll*, April 14, 2010.

Figure 3: American nationalism, populism and race

Traditionalism		
	Conservatism	Populism (Trump)
Character of nationalism	exceptionalist (parochial), multilateralist, (unilateral when it suits them)	exceptionalist (parochial), unilateralist
Racial ideology	white assimilationism, trending to white nationalism to keep electoral base →→→	white nationalism
Character of polity	liberal democracy	constitutional republic

Progressivism		
	Liberalism	Populism (Sanders)
Character of nationalism	exceptionalist (cosmopolitan), multilateralist	exceptionalist (cosmopolitan), anti-imperialist
Racial ideology	liberal multiracialism, trending to structural multiracialism to keep electoral base →→→	structural multiracialism
Character of polity	liberal democracy	multiracial democracy