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The Discourse of Crises in the United States

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1 Introduction

Americans are engaged in an ongoing discourse of inter-related crises and processes of disintegration and breakdown that are perhaps pointing to the emergence of new political systems. These perceived crises include Islamophobia, antisemitism, religion, and politics, authoritarianism, an overweening executive branch, freedom of speech, the international law and rules-based system, classical liberalism, academic freedom, the Israel Lobby, and American independence. We are asking ourselves if our nation, as we have hoped it could be, is in a process of breakdown and disintegration, and transitioning to an authoritarian, populist regime within a balance-of-power international system. We trace here how Americans express their views in this discourse through the media they choose to discuss, campaigns and electoral results, and expressions by public officials, scholars, and public intellectuals. The task for every citizen is to judge the positions taken in this discourse, recognizing that those with whom they disagree deserve to be heard.

2 Islamophobia

On May 18, 2026, three people at the Islamic Center of San Diego, the largest mosque in San Diego County, were murdered by two teenagers (Moses). This was part of a larger trend. The Council on American-Islamic Relations reports that "US government officials have used policies and public statements to suggest that Islam has no place in American society, putting basic religious freedom and equal treatment at risk." It goes on to conclude that "Islamophobia has become ingrained in our country's societal, educational, and political landscapes" (Council on American-Islamic Relations California, 2026).

The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding documents how U.S. media portrays Muslims as more prone to violence than other people and refutes the charge (ISPU). The Center for American Progress found as early as 2011 that there was an "Islamophobia network that profoundly misrepresents Islam and American Muslims in the United States." It names seven contributors that pro-

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mote Islamophobia by providing $42.6 million to Islamophobia think tanks between 2001 and 2009 (Center for American Progress, 2011). Another research group reports that:

> [B]etween 2002 and 2013, the FBI reported an average of 138 anti-Muslim incidents annually, but this figure rose sharply following significant events, such as the September 11 attacks in 2001 and the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013. The Council on American-Islamic Relations documented a dramatic rise in hate crimes, with 607 incidents reported in 2023, reflecting a broader trend of increasing Islamophobia in American society. (EBSCO, 2023)

AL Jazeera reported in 2025 that a "record 8,658 discrimination complaints in 2024 as war in Gaza stirred up Islamophobia" (Al Jazeera, 2025). Muslims' right to freely practice their religion is in crisis.

3 A Crisis of Antisemitism

Even so, Islamophobia is not the problem a US federal task force is seeking to combat. On May 19, 2026,

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> The Department of Justice Task Force to Combat Anti-Semitism today announced the launch of a 15-city National Awareness and Action Tour to combat antisemitism. The nationwide initiative reflects President Donald Trump's unprecedented campaign to confront antisemitism across America. President Trump declared war on antisemitism in a way no other president has done. His actions include Executive Orders 13899 (Combating Anti-Semitism) and 14188 (Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism). As the agency that enforces the nation's civil rights laws, the Department of Justice is committed to carrying out that mission (Office of Public Affairs, 2026).

Antisemitism is a significant reality in the United States. In June 2025, while shouting "Free Palestine," an Egyptian man in Boulder, Colorado (USA), Mohamed Sabry Soliman, was charged with throwing Molotov cocktails at marchers who were calling for the release of Israeli hostages in Gaza. One of the Jewish victims, an 82-year-old woman, died of her injuries (Brennan & Healy, 2025). The previous month, a young Israeli couple was murdered just outside an event at the Capital Jewish Museum in Washington, D.C. During the incident, the accused attacker, Elias Rodriguez, shouted "Free Palestine" (Wendling & O'Donoghue, 2025). A month before that, an intruder set fire to the home of Jewish Gov-

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ernor Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania (Commonwealth, Witz). In October 2024, Sidi Mohamed Abdallahi, a 22-year-old Mauritanian national, was accused of shooting an Orthodox Jewish Chicago resident while walking to synagogue. He later was said to have committed suicide while in jail following his arrest (Chicago Police Department, 2024). In 2023, there were considerably more hate crimes committed against Jews than other groups (New York Times editors, 2025). Examples of this ongoing crisis and efforts to combat it are examined in documents such as those of the U.S. Department of Justice and the American Jewish Committee (U.S. Department of Justice, 2026; American Jewish Committee, 2026).

Jonathan Greenblatt, the Anti-Defamation League CEO, saw the problem in 2025 as much more widespread than some specific examples. He "repeatedly compared pro-Palestinian student protesters to Islamist terrorists in comments to Republican attorneys general and said the left harbored the "real deal threat" to Jews. "There is a throughline from 'Occupy Wall Street' to BLM to 'defund the police' to 'River to the Sea,'" he added, referring to the Black Lives Matter movement launched a decade ago to protest police violence. "They are the same people, these are the same kind of nihilists" (Rosenfeld & Kornbluh, 2025).

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There are a number of efforts to fight back against the crisis of antisemitism. For example, on December 5, 2023, the United States House Committee on Education and the Workforce held a hearing on antisemitism on college campuses. The committee interviewed the presidents of Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The presidents of Harvard, Penn, and Columbia eventually lost their jobs. The committee pursued their work, such as in July 2025 (Ma, 2003; American Jewish Committee, 2025).

In addition to government efforts to combat antisemitism, there have been a number of private efforts as well. The Heritage Foundation became well known for its "Project 2025," often thought to be a blueprint followed by the Trump administration (Chretien, 2023). In October 2024, just before the presidential election, the foundation issued *Project Esther: A National Strategy to Combat Antisemitism*. The report was published in 2024 and was intended to influence the Trump administration that would take power in 2025. It stated:

> America's virulently anti-Israel, anti-Zionist, and anti-American "pro-Palestinian movement" is part of a global Hamas Support Network (HSN) that is trying to compel the U.S. government to abandon its long-standing support for Israel. Supported by activists and funders dedicated to the destruction of capitalism and democracy, the HSN benefits from the support and training of America's overseas enemies and seeks to achieve its goals by taking advantage of our open society,

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> corrupting our education system, leveraging the American media, coopting the federal government, and relying on the American Jewish community's complacency. The National Task Force to Combat Antisemitism intends to enlist all willing and able partners in a coordinated effort to combat the scourge of antisemitism in the United States. (The Heritage Foundation, 2024)

A group called "Canary Mission" states on their website that it "documents people and groups that promote hatred of the USA, Israel, and Jews. We investigate hatred across the North American political spectrum, including the far-right, far-left and anti-Israel activists. Every individual and organization has been carefully researched and sourced. You can help expose hatred by alerting us to anti-Semitic activity on your college campus and beyond" (Canary Mission n.d.). Users of the profiles are said to include Israeli intelligence organizations, Ministry of Strategic Affairs, and Shin Bet, which interrogate and deny entry to American citizens. In March 2025, multiple foreign students with Canary Mission profiles were detained by the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Betar US, the North American arm of Ze'ev Jabotinsky's international movement, states on its website that the "Jewish community, especially young people on college campuses, are facing a rise in antisemitism that fuels isolation and vulnerability. Fragmented support systems and a growing disconnect from Jewish heritage weaken their sense of unity, pride, and resilience, threatening the strength of the Jewish community." It says that there has been a 500% surge in Antisemitic incidents in the US, after October 7, 2023, 1,826 antisemitic incidents on US college campuses from October 2023 to June 2024, 8,873 antisemitic incidents across the US following October 7, 2023, and 747 bomb threats targeting Jewish institutions in 2023" (Betar US, n.d.).

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Joining the fight against the crisis of antisemitism, President Trump appointed Chabad Rabbi Yehuda Kaploun as U.S. Antisemitism Envoy in April 2025. Trump wrote, "Yehuda is a successful businessman, and staunch advocate for the Jewish Faith and the Rights of his people to live and worship free from persecution. With Anti-Semitism dangerously on the rise, Yehuda will be the strongest Representative for Americans and Jews across the Globe, and promote PEACE. Congratulations Yehuda!" (Cramer, 2025). Kaploun said that:

> Our situation is similar to that of Jews in 1930s Germany, on the eve of Kristallnacht. They, too, lived in peace and quiet until the ground shook under their feet. And in the United States, the ground is already shaking … What's important to me is to do everything in my power to help Trump win, so that we—Jews everywhere—can feel safer. (Cramer, 2025)

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In June 2025, a Trump administration investigation accused Harvard University of violating federal civil rights law by failing to protect Jewish students on campus. A federal task force said, "Harvard has been in some cases deliberately indifferent, and in others has been a willful participant in anti-Semitic harassment of Jewish students, faculty, and staff" (Nadworny, 2025). This was added to a list of other universities also accused of permitting antisemitism on their campuses, including Brown, Cornell, Northwestern, the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, Columbia, George Washington University, Harvard, Johns Hopkins University, New York University, Northwestern, the University of California, Berkeley, the University of California, Los Angeles, the University of Minnesota, and the University of Southern California (U.S. Department of Education, 2025; Blinder, 2025).

It has been common to suspect that Trump is not actually concerned about antisemitism, but that he is using that concern to gain control over universities and those opposing him, and that he is himself, in fact, antisemitic. One example of his stereotypes came during a speech in favor of his "big, beautiful budget." He said, "Trump said "No death tax, no estate tax, no going to the banks and borrowing from, in some cases, a fine banker, and in some cases, shylocks and bad people" (Samuels, 2025). The derisive term "shylocks," coming from Shakespeare's play, *Merchant of Venice*, is often associated with antisemitic stereotypes about Jews and money. A number of Jewish groups criticized Trump for this statement, and 52% of American Jews believe that Trump is antisemitic, according to one poll (Gilson & JTA, 2025). The Jewish faculty at the University of Virginia argues that "[t]he current political campaign against antisemitism in higher education does not protect Jews—it harms us, our communities and our institutions" (Jewish Faculty & Staff at U.Va, 2025).

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However, whether Trump himself is antisemitic or not, US policy is said to be firmly supportive of Israel under the Zionist Joe Biden or an antisemitic or opportunistic Trump. As Leifer (2025) reports:

> U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to join Israel in its 12-day war against Iran made it impossible to ignore what has been true all along. While the second Trump administration pitched a new approach to the Middle East, distinct from that of the Biden administration and even from Trump's own first term, the reports of a radical reorientation were always overstatements. The president's meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday will likely illustrate again just how consistent U.S. policy in the Middle East remains.

Some have argued that frequent use of the term antisemitism has trivialized it. For example, StopAntisemitism is an organization that "was born in response

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to increasing antisemitic violence and sentiment across the United States" (StopAntisemitism, 2025). Among others, its finalists for "Antisemite of the year" included Miss Rachel, a popular children's YouTube educator who has highlighted her concern for Palestinian children. The group also listed another finalist as Greta Thunberg, who has moved from environmentalism and climate change to Palestinian rights as her most visible concerns. Agreeing with the group was Israel's Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combatting Antisemitism, which listed Thunberg second on it list of "influencers that play significant roles in shaping narratives" (Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combatting Antisemitism, 2025). Does identifying these young women as examples of a serious offense diminish the term's significance to meaning anything or anyone opposed to Israeli policy and may it even endanger Jews? (Steinand & Zimmermann, 2025).

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The debate about antisemitism leads to two related issues: religion and authoritarianism. Is traditional Christian anti-Judaism linked to antisemitism and anti-Zionism? Is Trump weaponizing the issue of antisemitism to replace constitutionalism with his authoritarianism? We turn to these discourses now.

4 Religion and Politics

4.1 Christian Zionism

There has long been an active discourse in the US about religion and politics that has become more focused because of US policy towards Israel. Among the active participants have been Christian Zionists, who are more numerous than American Jewish Zionists and form an important part of the Israel Lobby (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2008). Various other American-Christian groups take different views of their Biblical traditions (see Neuhaus, 2026).

In the past, Christians were often anti-Judaic. There was a long history of European medieval pogroms and such books as Martin Luther's *On the Jews and Their Lies* (Luther, 1543). Religiously based anti-Judaism is linked to but also distinct from racially based antisemitism and nationally based anti-Zionism. The development of Christian Zionism is a Christian view that is, on the other hand, very supportive of Israel and sees a profound debt of Christians to Jews (Rhea & Weisz, 2025). The American concern with this topic emerged from the British one. As Ilan Pappé argues, "Zionism began (in Britain) as an evangelical Christian concept and later an active project" (Pappé, 2024). It went on to influence American religion and politics (see Goldman, 2018; Herman et al., 2014; Kiracofe, 2009; McDermott, 2016; Shapiro, 2015; Stackhouse, 2024).

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Over the past 2,500 years, Jews and Christians have each developed a range of interpretations of sacred scripture. One topic for Christians has been the relationship of the Tanakh, Hebrew Bible, or Old Testament to the New Testament. Do prophecies made in the Old Testament foretell Jesus of Nazareth many centuries later? Is it better to accept the Jewish prophets' concern with their own times? Are the authors of the Bible speaking to people of their own time and culture or to all of us now as well? Are they predicting a distant future of the world or taking positions on their current events? Where are their words to be taken literally or symbolically? Where is the Bible historical or mythical? For example, does Jerusalem refer to a city or to the Christian church? Is the entire Bible, both Old and New a single, eternally true, coherent dictated Word of God? Is it a complex collection of writings and editings produced thousands of years ago by many Jewish people over centuries? Are a series of subsequent interpretations of the Bible by Jews and non-Jews laid over the original texts?

Christians, such as John Hagee, the Texas-based Baptist minister who formed the group *Christians United for Israel* (CUFI), lean toward a more literal, coherent, and historical view. The group defines itself "As the largest pro-Israel organization in the United States, with over 10 million members. Christians United for Israel (CUFI) is the foremost Christian organization educating and empowering millions of Americans to speak and act with one voice in defense of Israel and the Jewish people" (Christians United for Israel, n.d.). President Trump selected Hagee to give the invocation at the dedication of the new American embassy in Jerusalem (Hagee Ministries, 2018). U.S. Ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, argues for a Biblical interpretation of a Christian Zionist position (U.S. Embassy of Jerusalem, 2025). President Joe Biden frequently said that, as an Irish-Catholic American, he is nevertheless a Zionist (TRT World, 2023). Given all this, it is common in American discourse to present interpretations of the Bible.

4.2 The Promised Land

Christian Zionists consider the entire Bible—the Old and New Testaments—as a coherent, consistent, eternally true Word of God. They begin with the Tanakh (The Hebrew Bible, Old Testament, 2019), which includes a text in which God is said to have promised certain land (Greater Israel or Eretz Yisrael Hashlema) to the Hebrew people, a promise to be realized by the modern state of Israel.

> Genesis 15: On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites,

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> the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites." (The Hebrew Bible, 2019)
>
> Exodus 23: I will set your borders from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines and from the wilderness to the Euphrates, for I will hand over to you the inhabitants of the land, and you shall drive them out before you. You shall make no covenant with them and their gods. They shall not live in your land, lest they make you sin against me, for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you." (The Hebrew Bible, 2019) ■non-matching quotation mark

We read that the Lord is said to have promised the Hebrews all of what is considered today's Palestinian territories, Western Syria, Southern Turkey, part of Iraq, part of Saudi Arabia, part of Egypt, and Lebanon. Another way to look at the text is that it was written and edited by ancient Hebrews who gave expression to their views. In this sense, the Bible is human words about God and other topics, not the Word of God.

4.2.1 Right to Land from First Settlement

Another aspect of the Genesis 15 text regards the right to land. One common current interpretation is that modern Israel is a settler-colonial state that lacks right to its land. Right comes from first settlement. Indigenous people have a right to the land they live on. One problem with this is determining who the indigenous people in the Middle East are. It has been populated by many groups over many millennia and they have often supplanted or intermixed with each other. We cannot identify ancestors of people who have been living in the Middle East within the last century or two or who were the first people to have first settled in any land. We can identify people who have been living in Palestine over more recent centuries. They were maybe not indigenous, but they have been there so long that they have developed rights to the land. The Jewish population was a small fraction of that total since the Romans banished the Jews in the first century CE up until the 19th century. Do long-standing but more recent populations, even if they are not the first ones, have stronger rights to land than those who claim rights from an ancient text?

Genesis 15 gives no right to indigenous or long-standing populations. Right to land comes from the Lord granting it. And God promises to Abram and his descendants the "land of the **Kenites**, the **Kenizzites**, the **Kadmonites**, the **Hittites**, the **Perizzites**, the **Rephaim**, the **Amorites**, the **Canaanites**, the **Girgashites**, and the **Jebusites**" (The Hebrew Bible, 2019, Genesis, 15). There were already many non-Hebrews living on the land before Abram, according to the text. The Lord gives their land to the Hebrews. God made the world, and He can

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take and give it to whom he chooses. On the other hand, if the texts were written by ancient Hebrews, putting words into the mouth of a God they imagined, then these texts currently hold little weight.

4.3 Holy War and Conquest of Land

What should we learn from reading the texts in the Bible about the use of force? How should we interpret the Exodus and Conquest of Canaan stories? Are they history or myth? Do they contain kernels of history but written long after the events they discuss for purposes that authors were addressing in their own time?

One interpretation stresses that God makes a preferential option for the poor and oppressed (Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis, Office for Social Justice, n.d.; Boff, 1997; Gutiérrez, 2009). The interpretation here will consider the use of force for holy purposes. In the Exodus story, God (Yahweh or El) takes an active interest in the liberation of his people from slavery in Egypt. He sends Moses to persuade the Pharoah to let His people go. Persuasion did not work. Moses turns his staff into a snake, but Pharoah's magicians can do that trick too. Exodus 7 begins the story of the plagues. The first is when the Lord tells Moses that He will turn the Nile River into blood: "The fish in the river will die. The river will stink. The Egyptians will not be able to drink its water" (Exodus, 7:18). There is no other source of water in the Egyptian desert; this is a story about denying Egyptians water (The Hebrew Bible, 2019).

Exodus (8:20–32) tells the story of the Plague of the Flies. "All over Egypt the flies destroyed the land." The account then describes how "all of the livestock of the Egyptians" died from disease (Exodus 9:6) (The Hebrew Bible, 2019, 673). Then painful boils covered the bodies of all Egyptians (Exodus 9:11). This is a story about causing medical maladies (The Hebrew Bible, 2019).

The next plague is the tremendous hailstorm that fell all over Egypt. It beat down on people and animals alike. It struck everything growing in the fields of Egypt (Exodus 9:22). Then came the locusts, which ate anything in the fields that the hail had not destroyed. These plagues denied Egyptians food (The Hebrew Bible, 2019).

Moses then said, "The Lord says, 'About midnight I will go through every part of Egypt. Every oldest son in Egypt will die. The oldest son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, will die. The oldest son of every female slave, who works at her hand mill, will die. All the male animals born first to their mothers among the cattle will also die. There will be loud crying all over Egypt" (The Hebrew Bible, 2019, Exodus 11:4–6).

Exodus 12:29–30 reports that "At midnight the Lord struck down every oldest son in Egypt. He killed the oldest son of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne. He

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killed all the oldest sons of prisoners. He also killed all the male animals born first to their mothers among the livestock. Pharaoh and all his officials got up during the night. So did all the Egyptians. There was loud crying in Egypt because someone had died in every home." (The Hebrew Bible, 2019). Here we have the slaughter of the first-born Egyptian males.

These texts from Exodus seem to be consistent with the statement by Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, who said on October 9, 2023, that "I have ordered a complete siege on the Gaza Strip. There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed" (The Times of Israel, 2023). And if one has to choose between international humanitarian law that prohibits such wholesale attack on civilian populations, and the Word of the God who created the universe and carried out the plagues, many Christian Zionists may find that the Bible takes precedence. Does frequent reading of the Torah teach the holy denial of water, food, medical care, and even life of children to all who stand in the way of God's promises? Does the Torah story not incorporate later principles of discrimination and proportionality? The entire nation of Egypt is targeted, civilians, military forces, and leaders. Are these stories currently instructive?

Major human rights groups reported Israel's systematic denial of water and food to Gazans (Amnesty International, 2024; Human Rights Watch, 2024). The UN reported that 21,289 children were killed in Gaza from October 7, 2023, to February 3, 2026 (UNICEF, 2026).

Following the plagues is the Biblical story describing how God killed the Pharoah's charioteers (Exodus 14:23–28). This use of force by God is not this time against human and animals' firstborns but against military targets. After this, God commands His people to use force to conquer the "promised land" from its earlier inhabitants and frequently blesses their fighting. In Leviticus 26:7, the Lord commands that he Hebrews "chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword." (The Hebrew Bible, 2019)

Numbers 31:7–12 describes how the Hebrews "warred against Mid'ian, as the LORD commanded Moses, and slew every male. And the people of Israel took captive the women of Mid'ian and their little ones; and they took as booty all their cattle, their flocks, and all their goods. All their cities in the places where they dwelt, and all their encampments, they burned with fire, and took all the spoil and all the booty, both of man and of beast. Then they brought the captives and the booty and the spoil to Moses, and to Elea'zar the priest, And Moses was angry with the officers of the army …" Moses was not angry because they had killed and stolen. Instead, he asks in verse, "Have you let all the women live?" He adds in 16–18, "Behold, these caused the people of Israel, by the counsel of Balaam, to act treacherously against the LORD in the matter of Pe'or, and so the

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plague came among the congregation of the LORD. Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man by lying with him. But all the young girls who have not known man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves" (The Hebrew Bible, 2019). In 25–29, Moses explains how everyone, including the Lord, should get their portion of the booty. Is this holy theft?

In 1 Samuel 15:3 (New International Version), the Lord Almighty says, "Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys." Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israelis were united in their fight against Hamas, whom he described as an enemy of incomparable cruelty. "They are committed to completely eliminating this evil from the world," Netanyahu said in Hebrew. He then added: "You must remember what Amalek has done to you, says our Holy Bible. And we do remember" (Lanard, 2023).

Regarding providing aid to Israel and the obligations of non-Israelis to do this, Isaiah 60 lays out the prophet's hopes for the future.

5b **the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you;**
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.
6 A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.
They shall bring gold and frankincense
and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.
7 All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you;
the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you;
9 For the coastlands shall wait for me,
the ships of Tarshish first,
to bring your children from far away,
their silver and gold with them,
10 **Foreigners shall build up your walls,**
and their kings shall minister to you,
11 **Your gates shall always be open;**
day and night they shall not be shut,
so that nations shall bring you their wealth,
with their kings led in procession.
12 For the nation and kingdom
that will not serve you shall perish;
those nations shall be utterly laid waste. (New International Version)

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Texts about total, holy war in the Torah and the statements of senior Israeli leaders were noted by the Israeli Defense Force as it fought in Gaza. One battalion posted its mission as nothing less than a systematic, concerted, and deliberate effort to erase the intellectual, cultural, and social future of the Palestinian people. "Our job is to flatten Gaza," the soldiers of Israel's official-D9 company of battalion' wrote on their Instagram page. They added, accurately: "No one will stop us" (Tirawi & Vanderlip, 2024).

They were also noted by American Christian Zionists (Carlson, 2025b). In Genesis 12:3, the Lord told Abram that "I will bless those who bless you. I will put a curse on anyone who puts a curse on you" (The Hebrew Bible, 2019). Christian Zionists take from all of this that they must support the modern Jewish state in the Promised Land. They support the United States building up Israel's walls and keeping its gates open, meaning to provide for its defense to the point that they need not even close the gates at night when there has been threats. Christian Zionists support bringing the wealth of the U.S. to Israel. God will bless the U.S. for blessing Israel, they hope and pray.

4.4 Religious Text or International Law

Part of the discourse includes whether to emphasize religious texts or international law. Was an ancient text that is not considered by many to be divinely inspired or dictated relevant at all? Many Americans, such as Omer Bartov, Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Brown University, looked more to modern documents than the Bible as being relevant for judging Israeli policy (Bartov, 2026). International right groups emphasized modern international law (Amnesty International, 2024; B'Tselem, 2025; Human Rights Watch, 2024).

Many US political leaders rejected how international law was often applied (Biden 2024a, 2024b). On January 26, 2024, the International Court of Justice ruled that it is "plausible" that Israel has committed acts that violate the Genocide Convention. On November 21, 2024, the International Criminal Court unanimously accepted the prosecutor's request and issued warrants for the arrest for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant, the former Israeli Minister of Defense. Secretary of State Antony Blinken retorted, "The United States fundamentally rejects the announcement today from the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) that he is applying for arrest warrants for senior Israeli officials, together with warrants for Hamas terrorists. We reject the Prosecutor's equivalence of Israel with Hamas. It is shameful." (Blinken, 2024; also see Reuters, 2024a). On June 4, 2024, the US House of Representatives passed a resolution calling for sanctions on the ICC. The act included:

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> The ICC's actions against Israel are illegitimate and baseless, including the preliminary examination and investigation of Israel and applications for arrest warrants against Israeli officials, which create a damaging precedent that threatens the United States, Israel, and all United States partners who have not submitted to the ICC's jurisdiction (U.S. House of Representatives, 2024).

4.5 Jewish American Discourse on Zionism

Jewish Americans fall into many camps. It would be inaccurate to think that American Jews always unquestioningly support Israel and its policies. Orthodox Jews have long rejected Zionism as a largely secular movement that seeks to establish and maintain a state on its own rather than waiting for God to do so. Many Conservative and Reform Jews have supported Israel. Increasing numbers of younger Jews have distanced themselves from Israeli policy and even supported Palestinian rights (Silver, 2026). Groups and people more critical of Israel include Jewish Voice for Peace, authors such as Peter Beinart and Naomi Klein, and Simone Zimmerman (who was prominently part of the movie *Israelism* and now has a podcast called *Beyond Israelism*). There is a vigorous debate about Israel in American synagogues (see, e.g., Stack, 2026).

4.5 Authoritarianism

In addition to the discourses about religion and politics, the issues of antisemitism and anti-Zionism also raise one about authoritarianism. Avraham Spraragen (2025) argues that "Under the guise of combating antisemitism, President Trump is spearheading an authoritarian crackdown …" Is the Trump administration using legitimate concerns about antisemitism for purposes beyond the stated ones? Are the legitimate concerns being used to undermine freedom and further authoritarianism? Constitutional crises lay behind ones regarding antisemitism, in this view.

5 Constitutional Crises

5.1 Divided Government

> He who saves his Country does not violate any Law.
> *Donald Trump quotes Napoleon Bonaparte*

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FIGURE 12.1 Long Live the King

There are several perceived constitutional crises, according to many (Liptak, 2025). The first regards the central purpose of the founding document: a system of divided, limited government with legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The Constitution outlines the distinct powers of each and how they should interact to achieve the broadly stated purposes listed in the preamble (National Archives, n.d., b).

Donald J. Trump began his second term as president in January 2025 with dominance of the Republican Party which at the time of writing has majorities in both houses of Congress. He has enjoyed rulings by the Supreme Court that are favorable to him. Many see a preponderance of power by the chief executive. Trump has gone so far as to define himself as a king, which is exactly the type of chief executive that the founders sought to avoid. Many have had fears of an imperial presidency during previous administrations, but they seem, particularly, intense this time. Opposition to Trump's overarching authoritarian goals has sometimes coalesced around the theme of the "No Kings" marches across the country (see **Figure 12.1** and **Figure 12.2**).

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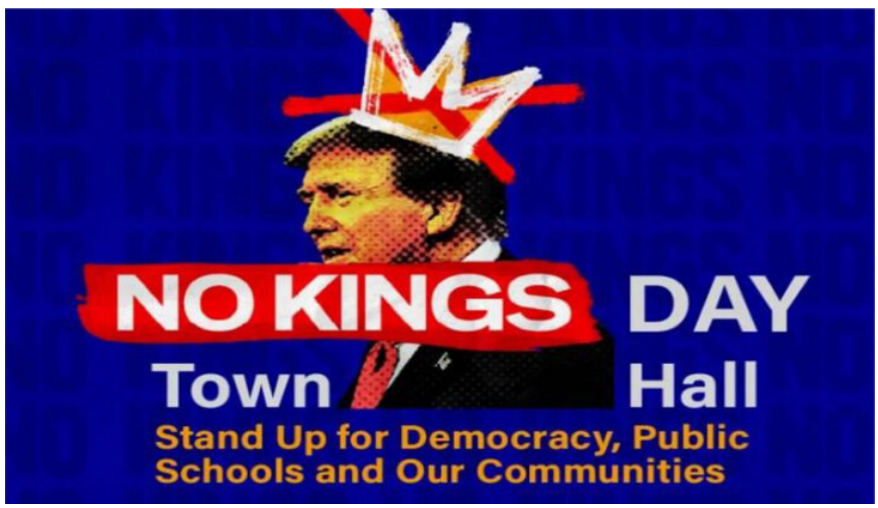


FIGURE 12.2 No Kings Day Poster

5.1.1 Executive Orders

The US Constitution presents a legislative branch to pass laws, an executive one to enforce them, and a judicial one to interpret them. However, this introduction to politics is more complex in practice. Many presidents have found it much more convenient to issue their own executive orders rather than go through Congress to get laws passed. During their terms in office, George H.W. Bush signed 166 such orders in his four years, Bill Clinton 364 in his eight years, George W. Bush 291 in his eight years, Barrack Obama 276 in his eight years, Donald Trump 220 in his first term, Joe Biden 162 in his four years, and Trump 168 in the first six months of his second term (Wooley & Peters, n.d.). Trump likes to sign these with fanfare at his desk in the Oval Office, showing the dramatic signature to invited TV cameras. The advantage of this is that a president can do much of what he wants to do without the messiness of liaison with Congress; however, the downside is that they can be quickly overturned by the next president. Still, by the time of the next president, many of the effects of the previous president's orders cannot be quickly changed. The long effects of previous orders rather than the orders themselves provide a lasting legacy. The downside to constitutional democracy is that a single chief executive can take on much of what appears to be the legislative function of passing law.

5.1.2 Dominance of Congress

Ever since 2016, Trump has enjoyed great influence in the Republican Party. With a solid majority of Republican voters behind him, he is able to threaten any

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Republican competitor in this party. He can support a loyal primary challenger to face representatives who do not vote his way. After the 2024 election, with Republican majorities in each house of Congress, this has given him legislative influence when he decides that his unilateral executive orders are insufficient (Bennett, 2025).

A number of Republican legislators at first objected to the 2025 "Big, Beautiful Bill" that Trump pushed. Fiscal conservatives initially opposed the bill since it would add trillions of dollars to the already bloated national debt of $37 trillion. Even though the bill included significant cuts to Medicaid and other social programs, some wanted those cuts to be even deeper. Others wanted more stringent immigration controls. At a number of points during the negotiations, it looked like the bill might fail. But Trump and Vance worked the phones, handing out carrots and sticks sufficient to get all but one Republican to vote for his bill. As Lillis and Schnell (2025) observed, "Trump has never had more control over GOP." And dominance over the GOP (Republican Party) meant dominance of the legislative branch—at least until the 2026 midterm elections.

Another view of who dominates Congress comes from people like Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene (Republican, Georgia, 14th District), who says that Congress is obsessed with Israel due to AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) and other groups (Carlson, 2025a). The view that Congress is an Israeli occupied territory dates back many years. One example from 1990 of this was a statement by Pat Buchanan (Anti-Defamation League, Alphonsus, n.d.). Subsequent views on this follow. This experience was repeated recently, such as when Congressional representatives Jamaal Bowman of New York and Cori Bush of Missouri learned the hard way about the costs of opposing AIPAC's views. Opposing candidates in the primaries were identified and encouraged to run, and AIPAC spent $100 million on the 2024 elections. As their website asserts, every AIPAC endorsed candidate won; however, Bowman and Bush lost. In May 2026, pro-Israel groups and individual donors added to the most expensive primary in American history (Samuels, 2026). Thomas Massie, a seven-term representative of Kentucky's 4th District, had been an outspoken critic of Israel. AIPAC and others supported his primary opponent. Massie lost by a margin of 55% to 45%. He opened his concession speech by saying, "I would have come out sooner but … it took a while to find Ed Gallrein [his opponent] in Tel Aviv" (Draper, 2026).

5.1.3 Supreme Court Support of Trump

In addition to executive orders and legislative dominance, many saw Trump able to bend a supine Supreme Court to his will due to his successful appoint-

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ment of three justices during his first term, added to the previous number of conservatives on the court. The Supreme Court ruled on July 1, 2024, that a former president is entitled to absolute immunity from criminal prosecution for actions taken within the scope of his constitutional authority (Supreme Court, 2024). He therefore could not be tried for his actions during the January 6, 2021, attack on Congress. As Michael Waldman wrote, in doing this, the court gave the president the power of a King (Waldman, 2024). It also paved the way toward Trump's re-election.

Once elected, the Supreme Court gave Trump other important victories. Among these are a June 2025 ruling that federal district judges do not have the power to issue orders that block laws or policies throughout the United States (Supreme Court, 2025). Other cases favored Trump's desire to ignore constitutional birthright citizenship and his ability to deport immigrants. Another example is the decision to permit the Trump administration to send immigrants from Vietnam, Mexico, Laos, Cuba, and Myanmarto South Sudan (Schwartz, 2025).

There have been a significant number of lower court rulings against the Trump administration; however, these have often been ignored (Associated Press, 2026). Together, these issues have added up to the executive branch under Trump, tipping the scales decisively against two other supposedly equal branches of government.

5.1.4 Manipulections

Elections are a key part of constitutional democracy. In the Federalist Papers, Alexander Hamilton discussed the springs of government, or what makes the gears of government engage to produce what the preamble's goals entail (Hamilton, 1788). What makes office holders do what they do? They cite ambition, avarice, and love of fame. Madison says a realistic form of government is necessary since men are not angels (Madison, 1788). The founders did not ask for office holders to be perfectly virtuous. They sought a system that would encourage office holders to serve society because of their self-interests. Regular elections would motivate (aspiring) office holders to show or promise their good results and intentions to the voters who chose among alternative candidates. Voters could be counted on to discern what results and promises best served their interests and perhaps even values.

The authors of the constitution did not discuss what immediately developed after its ratification: the emergence of political parties. Voters were often not rational deliberators as much as they were loyal partisans. The authors also did not anticipate the level of corruption that big money could produce. For

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many, this became particularly glaring with Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (Supreme Court, 2010). In this 2010 ruling, the Court held that corporations and unions can spend unlimited amounts of money to support or oppose political candidates, as long as that spending is independent of the candidates' campaigns. Big money donors could buy the best analyses on how to manipulate many voters. Focus groups, polls, and political consultants could make sure that elections had little to do with rational deliberation of policy options. Political scientists, such as Thomas Frank and many others, have analyzed why voters vote against their own interests (Frank, 2005). And political consultants were so effective that they could get a candidate as flawed as Donald Trump elected twice. Elections had become a weak part of the constitutional democratic dream.

5.2 First Amendment

5.2.1 Freedom of Speech

The first amendment to the Constitution states "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances" (U.S. Const. amend. I). Many have seen a crisis regarding "the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble" (Johnson, 2025).

No right is absolute and freedom needs to be defined. It is commonly said that no one is free to yell "Fire" in a crowded theater for the purpose of creating panic. No one is free to specifically advocate the use of force against a particular individual or group. However, everyone is free to criticize public policy and public officials. No one has the right to forbid speech just because it is false. I can say that a public policy is wrong even if others think it is demonstrably good and effective. I can say that a public official is scurrilous and stupid even if others think that leader is upright and brilliant. I can say that a group of people holds harmful views even if others think they are correct. What I cannot say is that it would be best if someone assassinated another person or members of any group. I cannot (or should not be able to) incite others to commit murder or say that I would like to do so.

There have been exceptions to this freedom in American history. National security during a time of war has led to fear trumping liberty. The Alien and Sedition Acts were a series of four laws passed by the Federalist party-controlled U.S. Congress in 1798 during the presidency of John Adams. These acts were

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designed to limit the rights of immigrants and restrict freedom of speech, particularly against the government. The Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918 criminalized dissent and criticism of Wilson's post 1917 war effort. They led to numerous prosecutions and censorship of speech and publications during World War I and prohibited non-citizens living within the United States from criticizing the president or US policies. The Trump administration has used these precedents to arrest—or kidnap without due process—people (especially immigrants, visa, or green card holders) for public statements during rallies and demonstrations, social media postings, or op-ed pieces in newspapers.

5.2.2 No Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof [...]" (U.S. Const. amend. I). This section is the first part of the first amendment. The reasons for this part of the first amendment and how its interpretation has developed ever since is a complex and contentious topic. The founders were well familiar with the English conflicts between Protestants and Catholics and how they played into political battles. They wanted no political struggle in the new nation due to state-sponsored support for any one religion. They also did not want to regulate how people exercised their religion. The country has faced many disagreements about what these two clauses mean (Greenawalt, 2017; American Civil Liberties Union, 1999). Does government funding of religious schools constitute establishment? Are the payments by the government (vouchers) sent to parents used by the latter to pay for religious schools? If religious people think that the exercise of their religion means petitioning the government for redress of grievances, what should be done? Many American Jews were motivated by their faith's teachings and protested Jim Crow laws. Many American Christians who were motivated by their religious teaching protested US immigration laws and policies. Should religiously motivated people be denied the right to exercise what they thought was their rightful place in the public square?

The increasingly important role of US foreign policy in defending the existence of a Jewish state raises the question if this is a form of establishment. Does significant aid to a Jewish state and frequent resolutions in Congress and statement by the executive branch in favor of it indicate establishment?

Regarding domestic laws, does it suggest that we have a form of established religion that 38 US states that have passed laws or executive orders designed to penalize the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, usually by restricting state entities from doing business with companies that boycott

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Israel? These regulations commonly require contractors to certify they are not boycotting Israel and mandate state investment funds to avoid such firms (e.g., see Goldfeder, 2018; Israel Legal Advocacy Project, n.d.; Robinson, 2023; Sheffrey, 2024; Unnamed Student Author, 2020).

Would it be more in keeping with American values if we supported other nations adopting laws such as the first amendment's non-establishment clause? Many Jewish and Christian Zionists, in such groups as AIPAC and CUFI, believe that their free exercise of religion includes lobbying and working for the benefit of a Jewish state. Should their right of free expression over-ride the non-establishment clause?

5.2.3 The Press

"Congress shall make no law [...] abridging the freedom of [...] the press; [...]" (U.S. Const. amend. I). The press did not refer to the actual mechanical means by which newspapers were printed in the 18th century; it referred to the public dissemination of information and political, even partisan, views. With the new technologies of radio, TV, and the internet, media is a better term now than press. The crisis now is often not thought to be congressional action but executive orders and policies taken by the chief executive against the freedom of the media. This ranges from individuals who publish or otherwise disseminate views critical of the government or the president to companies that include the work of such individuals.

Trump threatened to sue the parent company of the news program *60 Minutes* for editing an interview with Kamala Harris during the 2024 campaign. Paramount's controlling shareholder, Shari Redstone, favored settling the case. She was seeking federal approval for a multibillion-dollar sale of her company to a Hollywood studio, Skydance, and Paramount decided to pay $16 million to Trump's future library and be done with it. In response, Dan Rather, a former CBS news anchor, lamented that this was "a sad day for journalism" (Betts, 2025; Helmore, 2025b). Trump was unhappy as well about how the bombing of Iran and ICE (U.S. Immigration of Customs Enforcement) kidnappings of immigrants and green card holders was being conducted. He threatened to sue the CNN news outlet over this (Helmore, 2025a).

These specific cases went along with his often-repeated accusations of fake news from the "lame stream media" (Williams, 2019) which are enemies of the people. He refused the Associated Press from covering certain events in the White House when it refused to call the Gulf of Mexico the "Gulf of America." He has also pushed to defund the newscasts of PBS and NPR (Public Broadcasting System and National Public Radio) (Bauder, 2025; Easton, 2025; Freking

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& Jalonick, 2025; Hamilton, 2025). In the opinion of these people and others, Trump wants a subservient press, not an independent one.

5.2.4 Law Firms

Law firms are companies that are part of the process of how law is practiced in the United States. These private firms have often sought to act as good citizens, providing free legal representation, pro bono—to persons and causes that they deem worthy. Should this form of free expression be dismissed? Should President Trump be free to pressure law firms not to provide pro bono work as they see fit but to provide it to persons and causes that Trump supports? Is this a crisis in the freedom of assembly? Should persons assembled in a corporation not be free to determine what they think is in the public interest to support pro bono work?

In Trump's memorandum, *Preventing Abuses of the Legal System and the Federal Court* of March 22, 2025, he wrote, "Lawyers and law firms that engage in actions that violate the laws of the United States or rules governing attorney conduct must be efficiently and effectively held accountable. Accountability is especially important when misconduct by lawyers and law firms threatens our national security, homeland security, public safety, or election integrity" (Trump, 2025).

This has led to the administration taking specific action against the firms: Covington & Burling; Elias Law Group; Jenner & Block; Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison; Perkins Coie; Susman Godfrey, and Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr. It has also taken action against the attorneys: Alvin Bragg, Norman Eisen, Marc Elias, Letitia James, Peter Koski, Lisa Monaco, Mark Pomerantz, James Quarles, Jack Smith, Andrew Weissmann, Mark Zaid, and Aaron Zebley (Balevic et al., 2025).

5.2.5 Universities

Liberal societies have long seen the value of academic freedom, ivory towers in which scholars are free from social and political constraints to consider and explore ideas beyond common discourse or even criticisms of the existing social order. In practice, this has often led to tensions between academics and the rest of society. During the Trump administration, many see a crisis having developed. The administration, congressional committees, and a number of billionaire donors have pressured universities to fight against the crisis of antisemitism—which appears to many rather as punishment of academic freedom.

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In the spring of 2024, students set up pro-Palestinian tent encampments at a series of universities, starting with Columbia in New York City. They cited the crisis facing Gaza and the US complicity in it by sending billions of dollars in military aid to Israel. Many of the protestors were Jewish, but others alleged that the protestors chanted antisemitic slogans and blocked the free movement of pro-Israeli students. Other times, the crisis was about anti-Palestinian events. In a number of cases, university officials called in police to break up the peaceful protests (Reuters, 2024b). At UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles), a pro-Israeli group attacked the pro-Palestinian encampment as police watched without intervening for hours (Georgiades, 2024).

Another form of the anti-Palestinian crisis was the use of doxxing, or publicizing the names of the protestors to harass them or lead to diminished job prospects. For example, a truck with a digital billboard, displaying the words "Columbia's Leading Antisemites," alongside the names and faces of affiliates who were allegedly part of organizations that signed a Palestinian solidarity statement, began driving around the campus. The group that sponsored the trucks, conservative media group Accuracy in Media, also published a website titled *Columbia Hates Jews* (Karam, 2023). Columbia University subsequently acquiesced to the Trump administration's demands and agreed to pay $400 million in fines over its alleged failures to comply with federal civil rights laws related to antisemitism.

The House Committee on Education and the Workforce and its chairwoman, Virginia Foxx, in December of 2023 invited Harvard President Claudine Gay, Penn President Liz Magill, and MIT President Sally Kornbluth to testify about antisemitism on their campuses (CBS). Other university officials testified at subsequent hearings. Magill and Gay lost their jobs shortly after the hearings. Minouche Shafik resigned in August 2024. This did not end the issue. The Trump administration accused a number of universities of harboring antisemitism. A particularly noteworthy example was in regard to Harvard, but there were others. The administration threatened to withdraw funding to these universities. Some suspected that the administration was using antisemitism as a pretext to harass universities with liberal/ progressive professors who had been critical of Trump and DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) policies. The University of Pennsylvania was but one which removed DEI information from its website, as well as barred a transgender swimmer, Lia Thomas, from being on its women's swim team. Trump was said to be opposed to free speech and academic freedom when it led to criticism of him or his version of American values.

Others suspected that Trump's association with billionaires led him to support their efforts to influence universities. William Ackman, Ken Griffen, Seth Klarman, Lloyd Blankfein, Marc Rowan, Vahan H. Gureghian, Jay Clayton, and

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other major donors to various universities were critical of anti-Israel, anti-semitic, and pro-DEI tendencies on campus (Copeland, 2023). Many commented on how well represented billionaires are in the Trump administration and its policies (Charalambous et al., 2024; Mannweiler, 2025).

6 Globalization of Authoritarianism

As we have seen, the US discourse of crises goes beyond strictly the topic of constitutionalism to US politics more generally. It also expands to the topic of America's place in world politics. The crisis within the United States of President Trump, wanting to be independent of any external constraints from Congress, the judiciary, individual critics, the media, and universities, has been seen as a growing crisis of authoritarianism within the country (Levitsky & Way, 2025). Trump's admiration of authoritarians in other countries has threatened the traditional stated US support for a world of democratic nations and led to an overt support of authoritarianism in other countries. Trump and Vice-President Vance have been critical of democratic allies and supportive of other authoritarians such as Vladimir Putin, Viktor Orban, Kim Jong Un, and Ji Jinping.

At the Munich Security Conference in February 2025, Vice-President Vance Munich Security Conference criticized what he called the "retreat" of free speech across Europe.

> "The threat that I worry most about, vis-a-vis Europe, is not Russia, it's not China, it's not any other external actor," he said. "What I worry about is the threat from within: the retreat of Europe from some of its most fundamental values—values shared with the United States of America." "Across Europe, free speech, I fear, is in retreat," he added. "Under Donald Trump's leadership, we may disagree with your views, but we will defend your right to offer it in the public square—agree or disagree." (DW News, 2025)

He may have had a point regarding Europe but to single those allies out rather than including the criticism in authoritarian countries seemed to make a pointed criticism of democratic nations.

There is a debate about if Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been able to consolidate power in Israeli politics or if he is highly susceptible to the threats of members of his fractious coalition. Those who held the former view point to his attempt before the assault on Gaza to reduce the power of the Israeli Supreme Court, as well as his firings or attempted firings of such officials as Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, Shin Bet Director Ronen Bar, Mili-

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tary Chief Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi, Military Spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari, and others. Perhaps more important is the view that the longest serving Israeli Prime Minister in the country's history has been able to prolong the war in Gaza to remain in power (Kingsley et al., 2025). Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, key coalition partners, have often threatened to take down the government, but they would likely lose their own power if they did. Trump sees Netanyahu as a successful authoritarian, and he objects to courts having been used to try and sentence him for felonies. With that in mind, he has told Israeli courts to drop the cases of corruption charges against Netanyahu (Durbin, 2025).

He has done the same for former authoritarian Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, who was accused of having helped incite an insurrection after he lost the 2022 election. On July 9, 2025, Trump wrote to the current leftwing president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, to demand that the charges against Bolsonaro be dropped and announce he would impose 50% tariffs on Brazilian imports until they were. "[This] is a Witch Hunt that should end IMMEDIATELY!" Trump wrote (Phillips, 2025). Neither of his efforts regarding these two court cases was successful, but they show that Trump not only wants his own authoritarian power free from judicial constraints but that other nations' authoritarian leaders will also exercise lack of legal restraints.

7 A Crisis of Power over Law

From the founding of the United States through the end of the Second World War, and throughout the Cold War, the nation routinely asserted its support for international law, a rule-based world order, free trade, free markets, and human rights. Many have understandably doubted the sincere and total commitment to these ideals, but beginning with the Biden administration and then especially in the Trump one, the fidelity to these ideals was placed in crisis. In their place was the assertion of a strictly power-based international system, national interest in the service of authoritarianism, a spheres-of-influence world disorder, and even a mafia-style foreign policy (Hadavas, 2025).

Classical liberalism, since Woodrow Wilson and again since the US backed post WWII system, had sought legal solutions through international law and organization for international disputes. The United Nations, the International Court of Justice, and other international institutions promised that dialogue and law could settle disputes more peacefully than the balance of power system. The Biden administration at best gave lip service to these ideals, and the Trump administration shoved them into a crisis. The US regularly voted in the Security

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Council of the UN against the vast majority of nations in diplomatic protection of Israel. Both administrations gave many billions of military aid to Israel while feigning support for cease fires in Gaza. The US had long said it favored a two state solution and opposed Israeli settlements in the West Bank after the 1967 war but almost never meaningfully supported those statements. Trump abandoned any public support for them and just threw US support behind Israel's drive towards a Greater Israel. With US support for Israeli actions in Syria and Iran, the borders of that Great Israel outlined in the Bible—not only including Gaza and the West Bank, but going from the Nile to the Euphrates—no longer looked out of sight.

International human rights law and the laws of war that the US and Israel had supported after WWII were routinely ignored as Israel bombed tens of thousands of civilians as they pursued enemy fighters, repeatedly displaced much of the West Bank and almost the entire population of Gaza, and carried out policies that led to mass starvation and dehydration.

There was a reason to believe that the US plotted with Israel to feign negotiations with Iran so that Israel could benefit from surprise in its unprovoked attack of the country. Both the US and Israel claimed Iran was on the verge of developing nuclear weapons, as Netanyahu had often asserted since 1996. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the US intelligence services said that this was not the case even in 2025, but both Trump and the Israeli leader remained steadfast to their unfounded claims. The goal of the US was a change in regime that would give Trump the same kind of control over Iranian oil as he had earlier achieved in Venezuela by kidnaping President Maduro. When Netanyahu met with Trump on February 11, 2026, he assured Trump that Israeli intelligence predicted a quick victory against Iran. Trump heard what he wanted to hear. The bombing of Iran would start on Saturday, February 28. Trump would control Iranian oil by the time the stock market opened on Monday. Another win and lots of money for the US.

Netanyahu's goal was different from Trump's; he wanted what would be similar to what had been achieved in Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria; he was looking for the significant weakening or fragmentation that would leave Iran powerless to resist Israeli regional hegemony. This would be solidified relations with the Gulf States and a negotiated peace and trade policies with Saudi Arabia, and continued subservience of Egypt. Netanyahu's 30-year goal becoming dominant throughout the Middle East and adding territory to Greater Israel, would be concluded.

As of spring 2026, Trump faces an Iranian regime as much or more hostile to the US as before the war, continued fears of Iranian nuclear ambitions, significant Iranian missile stockpiles, and a Strait of Hormuz that had been open

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before the war. The Strait's closing had been thought to be of no concern since the war was to have been concluded before Iran could even plan for such a closing. The US had achieved none of its stated goals, faced serious losses of influence throughout the Middle East and global politics, and faced global economic recession if not depression. Resulting expectations for midterm electoral losses for the Republican Party and a significant increase in Democratic Party anti-AIPAC sentiment are remaking US politics.

7.1 Undermining International Organization

An example of the US undermining the liberal, rules-based international order that it had been instrumental in establishing after the Second World War is the US government's denial of visas to the Palestinian delegation that had intended to attend the UN's General Assembly meeting in September of 2025. The United States denied and revoked visas for about 80 senior Palestinian officials, including President Mahmoud Abbas, who were planning to attend the meeting even though the 1947 United Nations Headquarters Agreement mandates the US to allow entry for representatives of UN missions, though the US retains some legal discretion to deny entry (Lee, 2025). Palestine has held Observer status in the UN since 2012. For the US to deny visas to Palestinian officials to this meeting defies world public opinion, the public diplomacy that liberal organization has supported since Woodrow Wilson, and what the Declaration of Independence calls a decent respect to the opinions of mankind. Britain, France, Australia, and Canada said that they would join the other 147 of the 193 UN members that already recognize Palestine. The Palestinian officials represent no threat to US security or other reasonable justifications to deny visas to them.

7.2 Crisis in NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was established with its US anchor in 1949 in order to help contain the perception of Soviet expansion under Stalin. Trump dismissed and sidelined the organization, dismissing the Russian threat and placing NATO in crisis. He demanded significant increase in NATO nations' defense spending and threatened to conquer Greenland, which is under the authority of Denmark and Canada, both members of NATO. He has consistently claimed that the US bears the primary financial burden for NATO's collective defense and that Europe has enjoyed a free ride throughout the Cold War and beyond. He has pushed for each nation to increase its defense spending to 5% of its budget. He has implied an ambiguous meaning of the treaty's article 5, which states that an armed attack against one or more NATO

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allies shall be considered an attack against them all. Trump has emphasized that each ally will assist the attacked ally by taking actions as deemed necessary by itself.

8 A Crisis of Independence

Each year on July 4, the United States celebrates its 1776 Declaration of Independence. The document written by Thomas Jefferson refers to human events, the Laws of Nature and Nature's God, and a decent respect to the opinions of mankind. It asserts that all men—we would say all humans—are endowed with unalienable Rights of Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. Independence from colonialism would allow the United States of America to assume a separate and equal station among the powers of the earth and realize universal rights.

To achieve that, independence would require a War of Independence and the generalship of George Washington, who became the nation's first president. After two four-year terms, Washington announced in 1796 that he would not seek a third term. In his farewell address, he said:

> Nothing is more essential than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular Nations, and passionate attachments for others, should be excluded; and that, in place of them, just and amicable feelings towards all should be cultivated. The Nation, which indulges towards another a habitual hatred, or a habitual fondness, is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest.
>
> A passionate attachment of one Nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favorite Nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest, in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter, without adequate inducement or justification. It leads also to concessions to the favorite Nation of privileges denied to others, which is apt doubly to injure the Nation making the concessions; by unnecessarily parting with what ought to have been retained; and by exciting jealousy, ill-will, and a disposition to retaliate, in the parties from whom equal privileges are withheld. And it gives to ambitious, corrupted, or deluded citizens (who devote themselves to the favorite nation) facility to betray or sacrifice the interests of their own country, without odium, sometimes even with popularity; gilding, with the appearances of a virtuous sense of obligation, a commendable deference for public opinion, or a laudable zeal for public good, the base or foolish compliances of ambition, corruption, or infatuation.

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> As avenues to foreign influence in innumerable ways, such attachments are particularly alarming to the truly enlightened and independent Patriot. How many opportunities do they afford to tamper with domestic factions, to practice the arts of seduction, to mislead public opinion, to influence or awe the Public Councils!
>
> Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow-citizens), the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake; since history and experience prove, that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of Republican Government. But that jealousy, to be useful, must be impartial; else it becomes the instrument of the very influence to be avoided, instead of a defense against it. Excessive partiality for one foreign nation, and excessive dislike of another, cause those whom they actuate to see danger only on one side, and serve to veil and even second the arts of influence on the other. Real patriots, who may resist the intrigues of the favorite, are liable to become suspected and odious; while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people, to surrender their interests.
>
> It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world. (Washington, 1796)

A passionate attachment to a foreign nation is one threat to Washington's theme of national unity. The passionate attachment of some would become one reason for national disunity, since not all would share it. He warns against the political factions that would threaten republican government as well as national unity. There would be conflicts between those who share that attachment and those who see US interests and values as distinct from the foreign nation.

With the unconditional support of Israel, a crisis of independence has developed. It is possible to see Israel as the outpost of the United States in the Middle East. It is through supporting it that the US gains dominance and access to the resources of the region. It is, on the other hand, possible to marvel at the acquiescence of the world's most powerful country to the desires of a nation the size of the US state of New Jersey and a population of some 7 million people, making Israel seemingly the nation in control. Netanyahu can puff himself up thinking that he can manipulate American presidents at will. These two views misunderstand the issue as one of two distinct nations, as if each were like billiard balls.

Israel does not control the US; US policy towards Israel is most significantly influenced by a domestic Israel Lobby—American citizens who against Washington's advice have a passionate attachment with a foreign country. Their love of the US and of Israel leads them to think it is in the American national interest to provide enormous amounts of aid to Israel and help it fight on its behalf, even at the cost of trillions of dollars. Without having annexed Israel,

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the Lobby's American citizens cannot see a distinction between the nations' interests and values. They do not have dual loyalties—they see a single loyalty. Divided and limited government, freedom of speech, the establishment clause, freedom of the press, academic freedom, international law, other alliances, and Washington's advice all pale in the presence of the joint mission of the US and Israel. US independence from Israel is a violation of that common mission.

9 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed the discourse in the United States about a series of crises. Tentative positions within this discourse might include the following. There is a crisis of Islamophobia and antisemitism. There are cases of people hating and seeking to harm Jews just because they are Jewish and Muslims because of their Islamic faith. This is wrong and a rejection of the best of what it means to be an American. There is also an excessive expansion and even trivialization of how antisemitism is defined, seemingly for the purpose of shutting down legitimate discussion and criticism of Israeli policies and certain interpretations of Judaism.

There has been unjustified hostility to Judaism by Christians over time. There have also been some ideas of Judeo-Christianity and Christian Zionism in the United States that take interpretations of Christianity outside of what many take to be its traditional teachings.

Especially the Trump administration, but even during previous ones, the United States government has become increasingly opposed to a constitutional republic. This entails a manipulation or rejection of law and the judicial system as well as the legislative branch and public opinion. State and federal governments have unjustifiably limited free speech and raised legitimate questions about the establishment clause of the first amendment to the US Constitution. US policies often suggest a loss of national independence and focus on national interests and values.

The United States government has become hostile to international law and organization, the goals for which it championed after WWII. Especially President Trump holds an autarkic vision for the nation and inaccurately perceives the extent of our power. He seems to have contempt for everyone, including his supporters and close allies.

It is not the first time in our history that we have had multiple crises and have made it through them, or at least limped through them, well enough to continue as a nation. Politicians regularly tell us that our best days are still

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ahead. Multiple dystopian TV series, movies, and books indicate a considerable market for those who are skeptical about that. A partial list would include *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Silo*, *The Last of Us*, *the Leftovers*, *Black Mirror*, *Severance*, *Paradise*, *Fallout*, *Blade Runner*, *Children of Men*, and the movie *Civil War*.

The future is likely to be between the best of our founding texts' principles and dystopia. We will need a rational analysis of the emerging global multipolarity and how we can best further our goals within that. Even with that, the transition to a new global status could have dislocated domestic results.

Will the current crises produce a lasting transformation in American regime type? Or will the United States again attempt to become, in the Constitution's words, "a more perfect Union"?

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