Conclusion
It Can Happen Here

Matthew Evangelista

As we suggested in the introduction, the question that motivated this volume concerned the relationship between U.S. wars and the quality of American democracy, especially since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent global war on terror. We wondered about both the positive and negative effects of the period of "forever war," post-9/11. Did military service, for example, promote equality and diversity and boost the socioeconomic prospects of minority and immigrant communities? What were the costs and benefits of military spending for the overall economy, as well as its impact on income inequality? We sought to explore the evident negative effects of this era's preoccupation with terrorism and war, such as suspicion of and discrimination against Muslim Americans at home; a congressional blank check for military intervention abroad in the form of the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force; the politicization of the armed forces, including regional and partisan divides within the military; and the economic consequences (including hidden and long-term costs) of funding endless war without raising (and instead often decreasing) taxes.

This work was inspired in part by the extensive emerging literature in political science on democratic "backsliding," but also by the impression that scholars working on that topic had little to say about war or its influence. Several months into Donald Trump's second administration, for example, a conference at Cornell University in May 2025 brought together many of the leading figures in the American Democracy Collaborative, including Robert C. Lieberman, one of the authors in this volume, to discuss the impact of political divisions and cleavages on U.S. democracy. But the topic of war and militarization did not arise.[1] The same is true of the collaborative's most recent comparative work on global challenges to democracy produced by government scholars at Cornell.[2] This absence is somewhat surprising, considering how popular culture has long linked militarism and war with threats to democracy – for instance, in dystopian novels from Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* (1935) to Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* (2004). The

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lack of attention to this topic is also notable because the four factors that scholars have identified as key components of democratic backsliding – excessive executive authority, restrictions on who constitutes the political community, increasing economic inequality, and political polarization – are linked to war and militarization, at least in the United States. In these concluding remarks, I elaborate on these links with reference to the essays in this volume and to antidemocratic developments during the early period of Trump's second presidency.

The growth of executive authority provides a key instrument for undermining democratic norms and institutions. In their presentation of the eponymous "four threats" to democracy in their 2020 book, political scientists Suzanne Mettler and Robert C. Lieberman connected the exertion of U.S. executive power to war, particularly to the war in Vietnam.[3] They also addressed other issues throughout U.S. history that linked war to democratic decline: the Alien and Sedition Acts, the intermittent threat of civil war in the early years of the republic, the Bonus Army crisis of the 1930s, the expansion of executive power during World War II and the Cold War, and the creation of the "national security state" after 9/11. In their treatment of the first Trump administration, they explain how the president benefited from the resources and executive authority accumulated by his predecessors, including the "vast and increasingly opaque web of intelligence operations that has unprecedented capacity to investigate, harass, spy on, and disrupt not just suspected enemies but American citizens as well, ostensibly for the purposes of finding and suppressing subversive or otherwise dangerous activity."[4]

From the start of Trump's second presidency, he made clear his administration's ideological commitment to expansive executive authority. His political appointees have consistently amplified his view that a close win of a presidential election – at least in Trump's case – confers a mandate for the president to do whatever he chooses. In his essay in this volume, Harold Hongju Koh depicts the growth of executive power and its relationship to the "unitary executive theory" primarily in the realm of foreign affairs.[5] Returning to Mettler and Lieberman, we concur with their expectation that the president would rely on the vast resources of the executive branch for domestic policies as well, to confront internal political enemies he deems dangerous to America. As Trump self-referentially put it, "He who saves his country does not violate any law."[6]

The second Trump administration is showing that a U.S. president with authoritarian inclinations can wield executive power to exacerbate the other three threats to democracy: namely, by enforcing exclusionary definitions of citizenship, increasing income inequality, and promoting political polarization. By signing executive orders and co-opting a Republican-dominated legislature and Supreme Court, Trump has employed the first threat – excessive executive power – to carry out policies that embody the other three, starting with limitations on who belongs

to the political community. As the American Democracy Collaborative authors explain, "democratic backsliding in the modern world often starts with the unwinding of a consensus about who is a 'true' citizen and whose voice should legitimately be heard in democratic politics." They describe how Trump "capitalizes on the idea of a 'real' American people under threat from outsiders entering the country."[7] War might not be a prerequisite for such exclusionary policies, but it is striking how often in U.S. history anti-immigrant measures were connected to ongoing wars and how frequently these efforts evoked the language of national security.[8]

Even though U.S. military activity in the two major post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq has wound down, Trump avails himself of the powers accreted to the presidency during that period, as well as the rhetoric of war, to carry out mass deportations. He has expanded the already extensive presidential power over immigration to refashion American society to conform to his nostalgic vision of a white, male-dominant, Christian nation by expelling immigrants, including those convicted of no crimes. His main instrument for deportation is Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), founded in 2002 along with its parent agency, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The department received an additional $170.7 billion through H.R. 1, Trump's "one big beautiful bill," passed on July 4, 2025. The ICE share, $74.8 billion, is higher than most countries' military budgets, while the portion of its funding allocated to building new detention centers – $45 billion – rivals the budget of the entire federal prison system, as discussed in the essay by Jacob Swanson and Mary Fainsod Katzenstein in this volume.[9]

The United States has experienced several periods of anti-immigrant sentiment, including when the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 was used to deport radicals and antiwar activists such as Emma Goldman during World War I, and when it was used to justify the mass internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, some five thousand U.S. residents of Muslim or Middle Eastern background were rounded up as suspected terrorists and held in detention or deported without due process or access to lawyers or family members.[10] These abuses were carried out during wartime. Trump's innovation is to invoke the metaphorical language of war in peacetime, as he did by denouncing "invasions" of immigrants during his presidential campaigns. The Alien Enemies Act as written provides no justification for his actions, however. As Koh explains in his essay, the Trump administration invoked the law "to dispatch alleged members of a Venezuelan drug cartel to El Salvador . . . even though that law does not authorize government immigration enforcement against a claimed drug cartel, which is not a 'foreign nation or government,' carrying out an 'invasion' or 'predatory incursion' required to trigger the statutory authority."[11] In a recent opinion piece, law professors Erwin Chemerinsky and Laurence H. Tribe have also argued that "by invoking the Alien Enemies Act, the government claims it can circumvent the usual procedures for deportation, including due process."[12]

Even in the best of times, those usual procedures provide rather weak due-process protections, given the courts' deference to claims that immigration is the president's foreign-policy prerogative. A case in point is Trump's arrangement with president of El Salvador Nayib Bukele to fly Venezuelan immigrants in the United States to Bukele's country, where they are imprisoned as terrorists in the notorious Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo (CECOT, or Terrorism Confinement Center) prison. Trump defied court orders not to send them, as well as a district court judge's ruling that he should "facilitate and effectuate" the return of one man – Kilmar Abrego García – who the government acknowledged was deported by mistake. The judge in this case asserted that Abrego García's "continued presence in El Salvador, for obvious reasons, constitutes irreparable harm" (he had fled gangs in El Salvador and was then imprisoned with hundreds of suspected gang members) and ordered that the government "restore him to the status quo." The Supreme Court seemingly endorsed the judge's decision to effectuate Abrego García's return, but provided the Trump administration a big loophole, consistent with the judicial branch deference to executive authority described by Koh and by Shirin Sinnar in their contributions to this volume.[13] As the justices claimed, "The intended scope of the term 'effectuate,' . . . is, however, unclear and may exceed the District Court's authority. The District Court should clarify its directive, *with due regard for the deference owed to the executive branch in the conduct of foreign affairs*."[14] Conducting foreign affairs at his White House meeting with Bukele in April 2025, President Trump nodded in agreement as the Salvadoran president told reporters that "of course" he would not return Abrego García.[15] The administration subsequently arranged his release from the Salvadoran prison and return to the United States only to have Abrego García arrested and held in detention in Tennessee on various criminal charges of dubious credibility.[16]

Trump made little distinction between deporting legal immigrants on unsubstantiated charges of terrorism or criminal activity and extending the same treatment to citizens born in the United States. Here we see an effort, combined with Trump's executive order to eliminate the "birthright citizenship" enshrined in the Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment, to exclude native-born Americans from the political community. U.S. citizens had been caught up in Trump's mass deportations from the start – a consequence of haste, willful incompetence, and the lack of due process or any kind of oversight.[17] In his April 2025 meeting with Bukele, Trump made clear that he had now set his sights on U.S.-born citizens: "Homegrown criminals next," he said. "You gotta build about five more places."[18] The analysis of the prison- and military-industrial complexes by Swanson and Katzenstein in this volume provides a valuable framework for understanding how Trump could carry out his plans.[19] He had already hired out CECOT reportedly for $6 million. The next step would be to privatize the operation, dispensing

funds from ICE's generous budget. Blackwater founder Erik Prince put forward a proposal to "handle the logistics of gathering '100,000 of the worst criminal offenders' from U.S. prisons, holding them at a 10,000-person detention camp and flying them to El Salvador." According to an article in *Politico*, the "proposal includes sample language for a 'Treaty of Cession' so that a portion of the prison complex can become U.S. territory, arguing that 'transferring a prisoner to such a facility would not be an Extradition nor a Deportation,'" so there would be no need to meet ICE's already low standards of evidence to justify seizing and deporting people.[20]

Trump's funding of ICE comes in the same bill, H.R. 1, that boosts military spending substantially and transfers a fortune in tax breaks to the ultra-wealthy ($4.6 trillion over ten years) while depriving low-income citizens of Medicaid benefits, nutrition subsidies (food stamps), and student loans.[21] In his analysis of the bill's consequences, journalist John Cassidy explains that the bill will "decrease the financial resources of households in the bottom twenty per cent of the income distribution by about seven hundred dollars a year and increase the resources of households in the top 0.1 per cent by more than a hundred thousand dollars annually," in what he calls "a reverse-Robin Hood mechanism."[22] In her contribution to this volume, Heidi Peltier finds that the preponderance of theory and evidence supports the claim that military spending increases income inequality.[23] Thus, in one single piece of legislation, Trump threatens democracy in two ways: by funding militarized deportations to redefine the political community in a narrow, exclusionist fashion and by directly exacerbating economic inequality.

Trump's policies have also exacerbated the fourth threat to democracy, political polarization. He has menaced any Republican politicians who do not follow his dictates with a vow to support their opponents in primary elections, thereby ensuring compliance. He has selected Supreme Court justices whose deference to Republican preferences is consistent with, and extends beyond, the pattern that Sinnar identifies in her essay.[24] Trump's secretary of defense Pete Hegseth – now calling himself the Secretary of War, after Trump signed an executive order renaming the Department of Defense (another abrogation of a congressional prerogative) – has sought to purge the military command of any officers suspected of disloyalty to the Trump ideology. His words and deeds exacerbate the partisan divide that Heidi A. Urben describes in her essay on civil-military relations.[25] In a way that Katharine M. Millar's essay helps us understand, Hegseth has also done his part to reinforce a white, masculinist norm for military leadership by firing senior Black and female officers and anyone he deems "woke."[26]

In September 2025, Hegseth summoned hundreds of senior officers from around the world to Marine Corps Base Quantico in Northern Virginia. He claimed that diversity within the armed forces was responsible for U.S. military failures since World War II and he denounced "the insane fallacy that 'our diversity is our strength.'" Women, he asserted, should be held to the "highest male

standard," and "if that means no women qualify for some combat jobs, so be it."[27] After listing by surname the military leaders appointed by Democratic presidents whom Donald Trump had fired, Hegseth called the members of his captive audience "great Americans." "But," he added, "if the words I'm speaking today are making your heart sink, then you should do the honorable thing and resign."

President Trump invited himself to the Quantico meeting and spoke after Hegseth. He began with a comment on the total silence that met Hegseth's remarks – a tribute to the military leaders' effort to resist the secretary's partisan tone: "I've never walked into a room so silent before." He urged the audience to "just have a good time. And if you want to applaud, you applaud." The generals remained stone-faced, as Trump delivered what *The Economist* called a "nakedly partisan speech." Trump assailed the "radical left Democrats" and "Sleepy Joe Biden" for incompetence, for an increased crime rate, and for welcoming criminals from Congo and Venezuela into the United States. Trump partially credited the armed forces for his electoral victory: "We did really great, and part of it is because of our success with the military, the rebuilding of the military, the vote that I got from the military."[28] Even if the officers remained unmoved, the Quantico speeches offered further evidence of the Trump administration's contribution to narrowing the political community and to partisan polarization.

Linking the literature on democratic backsliding to the wars of the post-9/11 era does not encompass the entire relationship between militarization and growing authoritarian rule in the United States. The Trump administration has invoked national security to justify other antidemocratic practices that go well beyond the four threats described in the literature. They include efforts to control the internal governance and content of academic research at universities and to cancel the visas of foreign students. Trump has recruited Secretary of State Marco Rubio to bar students from receiving visas if their political views are seen as harmful to U.S. foreign policy. In March 2025, Rümeysa Öztürk, a Turkish PhD student at Tufts University, was surrounded on the street in her neighborhood in Somerville, Massachusetts, by six plainclothes agents, later revealed to be ICE, and driven away in an unmarked car. Accused of no crime, she nevertheless ended up in an ICE detention facility in Louisiana.[29] Apparently, she had caught the attention of a vigilante organization called Canary Mission for having coauthored an article in the student newspaper that cited credible reports of Israel's "deliberate starvation and indiscriminate slaughter of Palestinian civilians and plausible genocide" in the course of the war in Gaza that was launched following the Hamas terror attacks of October 7, 2023.[30] Canary Mission – an anonymously run and funded organization known for making false charges (including against one of the present guest editors) – denounced Öztürk for engaging in "anti-Israel activism."[31] Although the State Department acknowledged it could find no evidence that she supported

Hamas or terrorism, it authorized her arrest anyway.[32] It has subsequently revoked hundreds of student visas on similarly shoddy grounds, without formally informing their universities.

A key contention of Koh's essay is that all three branches of the U.S. government share responsibility for the demise of constitutional checks and balances that threatens U.S. democracy. We saw an example of this in April 2025, when a U.S. judge accepted the administration's justification for deporting Columbia University student Mahmoud Khalil. As an article in *The Guardian* described, "The decision sides with the Trump administration's claim that a short memo written by the secretary of state, Marco Rubio, which stated Khalil's 'current or expected beliefs, statements or associations' were counter to foreign policy interests, is sufficient evidence to remove a lawful permanent resident from the United States." Despite Rubio's undated memo – the core evidence submitted by the government – containing "no allegations of criminal conduct," Judge Jamee Comans "ruled that Rubio's determination was 'presumptive and sufficient evidence' and that she had no power to rule on concerns over free speech." She added, "There is no indication that Congress contemplated an immigration judge or even the attorney general overruling the secretary of state on matters of foreign policy."[33]

The Trump administration's attempts to criminalize speech and employ the tools of foreign policy and immigration to do so were revealed in a social media promotion posted by ICE (even if officials claimed it had been done in error): "If it crosses the U.S. border illegally, it's our job to STOP IT: PEOPLE, MONEY, PRODUCTS, IDEAS."[34] In the spirit of protecting the country against ideas, the United States ordered "consular offices to significantly expand their screening processes for student visa applicants, including through comprehensive social media investigations, to exclude people they deem to support terrorism."[35]

At an April 2025 hearing in Boston's federal district court, government lawyers exposed the Trump administration's view that the U.S. Constitution does not protect the rights of free speech and free assembly of "aliens," even noncitizens legally residing in the United States. ICE's boast to ban "ideas" was not made in error, after all. The case pitted the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and additional claimants against Marco Rubio and other government officials for violating the First Amendment by arresting students such as Khalil and Öztürk for exercising free speech.[36] The presiding judge was eighty-four-year-old William G. Young, appointed by Ronald Reagan in 1985 to the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts. He asked Trump's lawyers whether they "agree that a noncitizen lawfully in the United States has the same constitutional rights under the First Amendment as a citizen?" At first, Victoria Santora, one of the lawyers, argued correctly that "the First Amendment does refer to 'persons,' and that people in the United States share the same rights under the First Amendment." She then asked "to add one qualification to my answer to the question you

posed at the beginning. I apologize if I misspoke earlier. But I do want to say that there are nuances to the First Amendment."

"Like what?" Judge Young asked.

"I'm sorry?"

"Like what? What are the nuances?"

"The nuance," Santora tried, "is that this context involves issues of national security, foreign policy, immigration enforcement."

Two weeks later, the government's concluding statement left no doubt: "The answer to the question of whether aliens and citizens have equivalent rights under the First Amendment is no."[37] In particular, aliens – including foreign-born university professors and students – lack the right to criticize Israel for policies of destruction and starvation of the civilians in Gaza if the government deems such criticisms evidence of antisemitism and support for Hamas terrorism.

The Trump administration's broad definition of what constitutes terrorism is perhaps the clearest legacy of the two decades of continuous war addressed in this volume. Already during the administration of George W. Bush, courts began applying terrorism statutes to extend the prison sentences of animal-rights and environmental activists who damaged property, even if they harmed no people.[38] As Sinnar recounts, during the Biden administration, prosecutors in Georgia used a new domestic terrorism law to charge more than forty people demonstrating against the Atlanta Public Safety Training Center (colloquially known as "Cop City" in the press and discussed in this volume by Azadeh N. Shahshahani and Sofía Verónica Montez), to elevate "trespassing, vandalism, or other property crimes to offenses with steep penalties."[39] In the wake of protests from 2016 to 2017 by the Standing Rock Sioux tribe and environmental activists against the Dakota Access Pipeline, Sinnar writes that "elected officials in at least thirty states introduced legislation to curb protests of oil and gas pipelines, including by defining protest-related activity as terrorism."[40] In March 2025, critics of Elon Musk's enabling of Trump's authoritarian takeover carried out demonstrations and boycotts against his Tesla electric car company's dealerships. When some protests resulted in vandalism, Trump vowed that the perpetrators would "go through hell."[41] His attorney general Pam Bondi accordingly charged three suspects with "domestic terrorism" and threatened them with jail sentences of twenty years.[42] The practice of invoking terrorism charges against political opponents is a clear legacy of the war on terror and an evident connection between war and the demise of U.S. democracy.

Perhaps the most direct link between militarization and the demise of democracy in the United States came with Trump's deployment of troops against Americans on U.S. soil and his threats and use of violence against political opponents. A few days before staging the $30 million military parade in

Washington, D.C., to celebrate the U.S. Army's two hundred and fiftieth anniversary on June 14, 2025 (Trump's seventy-ninth birthday), the president gave a speech at the Fort Bragg military base. The audience of soldiers, almost exclusively male, had been vetted for physical appearance ("no fat soldiers" a note to one unit prescribed) and political allegiance (discouraging attendance if "soldiers have political views that are in opposition to the current administration," according to another note). During the speech, Trump criticized and ridiculed the media and Democrats, as "soldiers roared with laughter and applauded Trump's diatribe" in what Military.com called "a shocking and rare public display of troops taking part in naked political partisanship."[43] In a rambling hour-long speech, Trump described the protesters against the ICE raids in Los Angeles as a "vicious and violent mob" of "rioters bearing foreign flags with the aim of continuing a foreign invasion of our country." He invoked California Governor Gavin Newsom and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass in his remarks, drawing boos from his selected audience of soldiers. "They're incompetent," he said, "and they paid troublemakers, agitators, and insurrectionists."[44]

Trump's mention of insurrection was intentional. In June 2020, during his first term, he had asserted his right to deploy troops under the Insurrection Act of 1807 in response to protests against the police murder of George Floyd. Most legal authorities, including Harold Hongju Koh, judged that the circumstances did not permit overriding the statutory *posse comitatus* ban on using military forces for civilian law enforcement on U.S. territory, although there were others, such as legal scholar and former deputy assistant attorney general John Yoo, who disagreed. Yoo, author of the "torture memos" defending the United States' use of torture in the war on terror on the grounds of expanded executive authority during wartime, suggested that the courts would support Trump's action.[45] In 2020, military authorities balked at the prospect of using soldiers against civilians and talked the president out of it. On the first day of his second term, however, Trump issued an executive order declaring an emergency on the border with Mexico that "requires use of the Armed Forces," describing the situation as an "invasion" and granting the secretary of defense authority to deploy forces accordingly at his discretion.[46] Particularly controversial was Trump's claim that he can deploy the armed forces against the wishes of local civil and police authorities. In the case of Los Angeles, both Governor Newsom and Mayor Bass rejected the deployment, which is why his heaping scorn on those elected officials before an appreciative audience of soldiers was so concerning. In response, a former member of George W. Bush's Defense Department claimed that "What worries me most are the normalization of political involvement by troops, and novel and expansive interpretations of executive power," as Trump described the military deployment to Los Angeles as "the first, perhaps, of many." He warned other cities that might become the sites of anti-ICE or anti-Trump protests, "they're going to be met with equal or greater force than we met right here."[47]

Less than two months later, Trump ordered military forces and federal law officers onto the streets of Washington, D.C., including eight hundred National Guard troops, and took control over the district police. In this case, the deployment did not respond to, but rather provoked, protests. Trump justified the deployment as necessary "to rescue our nation's capital from crime, bloodshed, bedlam, and squalor," even as violent crime there hit a thirty-year low. When district police and masked ICE agents set up a traffic checkpoint, stopping cars for minor violations and questioning drivers about their immigration and citizenship status, spontaneous protests broke out among passersby.[48] Such actions, justified on grounds of security, exacerbate political polarization (some protestors yelled, "Go home, fascists!") and represent a further aggrandizement of executive authority.

In his speech at Quantico in September 2025, Trump invoked "the enemy from within" to justify the deployment of troops to Washington, D.C., and blamed George Soros and the "radical left" for funding "insurrectionists."[49] He then ordered National Guard troops to Portland, Oregon, and Chicago, Illinois, against the objections of both states' governors and with uneven opposition from the courts. Trump's decision to deploy troops from "red," Republican-majority states to "blue" cities governed by Democrats demonstrated his intention to pursue partisan political objectives to the point of violence – especially given evidence that the presence of the troops provoked and exacerbated violence, rather than containing it. He again vowed to invoke the Insurrection Act. "We have an Insurrection Act for a reason," Trump said. "If I had to enact it, I'd do that if people were being killed and courts were holding us up, or governors or mayors were holding us up."[50]

The aspiration for democracy was present at the founding of the United States. In many respects, and despite major setbacks, democratic norms, institutions, and practices have been functioning and expanding overall, with occasional regressions, since then. The rule of law has often provided a basis for expanding rights or seeking redress if those rights have been violated. Like any living organism, democracy thrives in some conditions and suffers in others. This volume on war and democracy has explored how more than two decades of war and military preparations in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, have contributed to the deterioration of U.S. democratic norms and institutions. Links between war and immigration, dating to the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 and the Insurrection Act of 1807, provide the historical context and ready pretexts for would-be authoritarian rulers to restrict the rights of citizens and noncitizens alike.

War and militarization exacerbate all four threats that scholars of democratic backsliding have identified: executive aggrandizement, narrowing the definition of who belongs to the political community, economic inequality, and political po-

larization. Most worrying of all is that the system of constitutional checks and balances established with the founding of the republic might prove inadequate to stem the demise of American democracy. Scholars of democracy and authoritarianism have recently introduced the concept of "democratic resilience" as a way to measure democracies' capacity to resist the "autocratization" of political systems that has characterized the period since the 1990s. As with the kindred literature on democratic backsliding, there is little mention of the impact of war or preparation for war.[51] By contrast, a group of scholars in Europe, concerned about the impact of remilitarization precipitated by the February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and the growing danger of nuclear war, have highlighted the connections between the strength of democratic institutions and national security. They stress the risks of military spending that comes at the expense of social welfare and robs resources from efforts at combating climate change and economic inequality. Paradoxically, militarization can render states less secure, making them vulnerable to "hybrid warfare" and other forms of external intervention, as well as domestic efforts to stoke political polarization and inflame anti-immigrant and xenophobic sentiment to make way for authoritarian rule.[52]

Preparing for and fighting wars can hollow out democratic institutions and weaken democratic norms, as this volume has suggested. Bolstering democratic resilience requires countering the four threats to democracy by containing executive power, expanding the political community, and reversing economic inequality and political polarization – all the while recognizing the risk that endless war poses to democratic survival.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matthew Evangelista is the President White Professor of History and Political Science (Emeritus) at Cornell University. He is the author of six books, including *Allied Air Attacks and Civilian Harm in Italy, 1940–1945: Bombing Among Friends* (2023), *Gender, Nationalism, and War: Conflict on the Movie Screen* (2011), and *Law, Ethics, and the War on Terror* (2008).

ENDNOTES

[1] "From Political Divisions to Regime Threat? American Democracy and Cleavages in Comparative Perspective," American Democracy Collaborative Conference, Cornell University, May 16–17, 2025. The only partial exception to addressing the topic of war and militarization came when Theda Skocpol presented her paper, "How Immigration Flashpoints Have Fueled Partisan Polarization and Republican Radicalization in Recent U.S.

Politics," observing that the latest wave of immigration included refugees from wars in the Middle East and elsewhere.

[2] Valerie J. Bunce, Thomas B. Pepinsky, Rachel Beatty Riedl, and Kenneth M. Roberts, eds., *Global Challenges to Democracy: Comparative Perspectives on Backsliding, Autocracy, and Resilience* (Cambridge University Press, 2025). A notable exception to scholars neglecting to address the relationship between war and the rights essential to democracy is Sidney Tarrow, *War, States, and Contention: A Comparative Historical Study* (Cornell University Press, 2015).

[3] Suzanne Mettler and Robert C. Lieberman, *Four Threats: The Recurring Crises of American Democracy* (St. Martin's Press, 2020).

[4] Ibid., 222–226.

[5] Harold Hongju Koh, "Concentration of Power in the Executive," *Dædalus* 154 (4) (Fall 2025): 69–86, https://www.amacad.org/daedalus/concentration-power-executive.

[6] Doina Chiacu, "Trump: If It Saves the Country, It's Not Illegal," Reuters, February 16, 2025, https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-if-it-saves-country-its-not-illegal-2025-02-16.

[7] Kenneth M. Roberts, Valerie J. Bunce, Thomas B. Pepinsky, and Rachel Beatty Riedl, "Global Challenges to Democracy: Backsliding, Resiliency, and Democratic Theory," in *Global Challenges to Democracy*, ed. Bunce, Pepinsky, Riedl, and Roberts, 22.

[8] David D. Cole, *Enemy Aliens: Double Standards and Constitutional Freedoms in the War on Terrorism* (New Press, 2003); and Tarrow, *War, States, and Contention*. Even the right-wing, anti-immigrant populists in Europe who seemingly invoke only the metaphor of "invasion" are nevertheless responding to a refugee crisis intrinsically linked to two decades of U.S. wars in the Middle East and South Asia and antiterrorist operations in Africa.

[9] Lauren Gambino, "How Trump's Bill Will Supercharge Mass Deportations by Funneling $170bn to Ice," *The Guardian*, July 2, 2025, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jul/02/immigration-trump-big-beautiful-bill; and Jacob Swanson and Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, "From the Battlefield to Behind Bars: Rethinking the Relationship between the Military- & Prison-Industrial Complexes," *Dædalus* 154 (4) (Fall 2025): 295–311, https://www.amacad.org/daedalus/battlefield-behind-bars-rethinking-relationship-between-military-prison-industrial-complexes.

[10] Cole, *Enemy Aliens*; and Adam Hochschild, *American Midnight: The Great War, a Violent Peace, and Democracy's Forgotten Crisis* (Mariner Books, 2022).

[11] Koh, "Concentration of Power in the Executive."

[12] Erwin Chemerinsky and Laurence H. Tribe, "We Should All Be Very, Very Afraid," *The New York Times*, April 9, 2025, https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/09/opinion/trump-deportations-gulag-prison.html.

[13] Koh, "Concentration of Power in the Executive"; and Shirin Sinnar, "The Supreme Court & the Unaccountable Racialized Security State," *Dædalus* 154 (4) (Fall 2025): 106–121, https://www.amacad.org/daedalus/supreme-court-unaccountable-racialized-security-state.

[14] Kimberly Wehle, "In the Abrego Garcia Case, the Supreme Court Is Letting Trump Get Away with It," The Hill, April 14, 2025, https://thehill.com/opinion/judiciary/5247983-in-the-abrego-garcia-case-the-supreme-court-is-letting-trump-get-away-with-it (emphasis added).

[15] Alexandra Hutzler and Laura Romero, "El Salvador's Bukele, Meeting with Trump, Says He Won't Return Migrant Wrongfully Deported," ABC News, April 14, 2025, https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-hosts-el-salvadors-bukele-amid-deportation-controversy/story?id=120788481.

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[17] María Luisa Paúl, "As Trump Cracks Down on Immigration, U.S. Citizens Are Among Those Snared," *The Washington Post*, April 5, 2025, https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/2025/04/05/us-citizens-deported-immigration; and Julia Preston, "In Trump's Dragnet," *The New York Review of Books*, March 30, 2025, https://www.nybooks.com/online/2025/03/30/in-trumps-dragnet.

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