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Millionaires and billionaires are bankrolling a 'radically anti-democratic agenda': Robert Reich

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Liberal economist Robert Reich examines a disturbing trend in [an op-ed published by The Guardian](#) on May 23: millionaires and billionaires funding Republican candidates who are overtly anti-democracy.

“Decades ago,” Reich writes, “America’s monied interests bankrolled a Republican establishment that believed in fiscal conservatism, anti-communism and constitutional democracy. Today’s billionaire class is pushing a radically anti-democratic agenda for America — backing Trump’s lie that the 2020 election was stolen, calling for restrictions on voting and even questioning the value of democracy.”

In an [op-ed for the Cato Institute’s website](#) back in 2009, Peter Thiel wrote, “I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible.” Thiel has also written that the term “capitalist democracy” is an oxymoron. And such statements, according to Reich, speak volumes about his outlook.

“Thiel has donated at least \$10m to the Arizona Republican primary race of Blake Masters, who also claims Trump won the 2020 election and admires Lee Kuan Yew, the authoritarian founder of modern Singapore,” Reich notes. “The former generation of wealthy conservatives backed candidates like Barry Goldwater, who wanted to conserve American institutions. Thiel and his fellow billionaires in the anti-democracy movement don’t want to conserve much of anything — at least not anything that occurred after the 1920s, which includes Social Security, civil rights, and even women’s right to vote.”

On May 19 and 20, the [Conservative Political Action Conference \(CPAC\)](#) held an event in Budapest, Hungary, where the keynote speaker was [Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán](#). The fact that so many MAGA Republicans hold Orbán in high regard, according to Reich, speaks volumes about their authoritarian outlook.

“The Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán and his ruling Fidesz party have become a prominent source of inspiration for America’s anti-democracy movement,” Reich warns. “Steve Bannon, Trump’s former adviser, describes Orbán’s agenda as that of a ‘Trump before Trump’.... Orbán has used his opposition to immigration, LGBTQ+ rights, abortion and religions other than Christianity as cover for his move toward autocracy — rigging Hungary’s

election laws so his party stays in power, capturing independent agencies, controlling the judiciary and muzzling the press.... Tucker Carlson — Fox News' progenitor of White replacement theory — broadcast his show from Budapest.”

Reich wraps up his op-ed by stressing that Thiel's agenda is a recipe for authoritarianism.

“Peter Thiel may define freedom as the capacity to amass extraordinary wealth without paying taxes on it, but most of us define it as living under the rule of law with rights against arbitrary authority and a voice in what is decided,” Reich writes. “If we want to guard what is left of our freedom, we will need to meet today's anti-democracy movement with a bold pro-democracy movement that protects the institutions of self-government from authoritarian strongmen like Trump and his wannabes, and from big money like Peter Thiel's.”