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4 Reasons The Left's Methods Are Far More Cult-Like Than Trump's

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Media elites and other leftists will never stop contorting themselves in attempts to tag President Trump as a dictator. Law professor Pamela Karlan's testimony during "impeachment" proceedings before the House Judiciary Committee even invoked the name of Trump's 13-year-old son Barron to imply Trump views himself as a monarch.

The list of such contortions is endless. It includes this past summer's attempt by some self-appointed psychiatrists to declare Trump unfit. But the recent meme that there is a "Cult of Trump" trumps them all.

We should be grateful that folks like CBS commentator-emeritus Dan Rather, disgruntled former Trump associate Andrew Scaramucci, and CNN's Brian Stelter have served up the subject of cults for discussion, because it is a subject the public doesn't understand well enough. Even as the meme fades—as it well should—we would be remiss to pass up the opportunity to inspect and dissect it.

Americans have been in the dark for far too long about what a cult mindset really *is*. That unawareness makes us far too susceptible to the media's propaganda and mass manipulation.

Ignorance of Cult Methods Makes Them Work Better

In 1985 Nobel Laureate Doris Lessing lamented our general ignorance about the mechanics of group think. In a series of lectures, Lessing asked "How is it that so-called democratic movements don't make a point of instructing their members in the laws of crowd psychology, group psychology?" She speculated that power elites actually hoard that information to promote their power. They are loath to explain how group think works because doing so would immunize more people from being psychologically manipulated by those who depend on group think to maintain power.

So, in their effort to label Trump as a cult leader and smear all 63 million of his supporters as cultists, media elites have finally cracked open the door to a real discussion about mass conformity. It is fascinating to see this latest "cult-of-Trump" meme coming from the left because they are the true masters of group think and deploying mobs to demand total conformity and compliance with their agenda.

In recent years they have even passed an array of laws to control speech and to coerce people into violating their religious beliefs. Those who refuse can be penalized with life-destroying

finer, up to \$250,000 in New York for calling a transgender person by a sex-accurate pronoun. They also aim to federalize such Orwellian laws by getting the Senate to pass their so-called Equality Act.

Any thoughtful observer can see the cult-of-Trump meme as a classic case of psychological projection. After all, accusing your perceived opponent of exactly what you intend to do is a very old tactic of control freaks. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

4 Basic Points to Grasping the Definition of 'Cult'

Just as Lessing speculated, much of the knowledge related to cults and group think has been suppressed. Below I will try to offer a very few general points just to get us started in understanding the traits of cults and their leaders.

We should keep these points in mind when trying to discern whether we can legitimately apply the label of "cult" to a group or "cult leader" to a person. Since the media has offered Trump and his supporters as the subjects at hand, we ought to do a compare-and-contrast with our would-be leftist overlords.

1. Cults Are Defined By Their Methods, Not Their Beliefs

Cults use coercive and deceptive methods. They psychologically manipulate people and isolate people from other points of view. Margaret Thaler Singer (1921-2003) was probably the 20th century's greatest expert on cults. In her must-read book "Cults in Our Midst," she constantly drove home the point that a group's beliefs, no matter how outlandish, have *nothing* to do with it being a cult.

Singer was interested primarily in the *methods and processes* of undue influence and coercive persuasion that dangerous cults practice widely. The purveyors of the "cult of Trump" meme all despise Trump and what he stands for, exactly counter to Singer's admonition to ignore beliefs. So instead of looking at the left's beliefs or Trump's beliefs, let's look instead at methods used for achieving goals.

Trump supporters generally adhere to methods involving the rule of law and due process as well as respect for free speech and transparency. Trump himself nominates judges who intend to apply those same processes to their rulings. Whatever you think of Trump's idiosyncrasies, his policies reflect application of such methods—consistent with the Constitution—quite often with an emphasis on the word "fairness" as it is traditionally understood.

On the other hand, Trump opponents habitually use methods that are coercive, manipulative, and deceptive. They incite high emotion and resentment. They flout the law, as we've seen in cases of immigration, impeachment, or election law, as a means of perpetuating their power. They tend to justify lawlessness by claiming they have a moral authority to do so.

Consider also the left's large-scale imposition of political correctness throughout all of society's institutions, particularly in the media, which they control. It is a cult-like practice because it is designed specifically to isolate people from other points of view through social pressures of ostracism and worse.

The left also has a manipulative habit of assigning group identities to people according to the dictates of identity politics, rather than simply allowing us to see one another as individual human beings. That is also very isolating and polarizing to our society.

A current mantra enforced on so many college campuses, that “free speech is hate speech,” is by nature so coercive, manipulative, and deceptive that it can stand alone as a classic cult method of enforcing self-censorship, isolation, and separation of other people and their ideas. Other methods of control media elites use include ritual defamation and organizing mob action.

2. A Cult Leader Does Not Allow Any Criticism

A fascinating sidelight to the “Trump Cult” meme comes from a scholar who has studied the profiles and practices of real-life dictators and their cults of personality. Frank Dikotter is a professor of humanities at the University of Hong Kong who recently published a book titled “How to Be a Dictator: The Cult of Personality in the Twentieth Century.”

In November, during a Q&A session after he spoke about the book at the Cato Institute, Dikotter was asked if Trump might qualify as a dictator who promoted a cult of personality. Dikotter answered this way: “We tend to denounce anyone we don’t like as a dictator. . . . I think it’s very dangerous to start comparing what might occasionally be seen as the buffoonery of one man to the horrendous crimes against humanity committed by true dictators. . . . A cult of personality is when *nobody knows who thinks what*. When I open a newspaper in this country, it’s pretty clear who thinks what.”

After a pause, Dikotter concluded by saying: “Maybe it’s the exact opposite. Maybe it’s the man in charge who gets nothing but criticism.” As a dictator, “he’s failed abysmally.”

There can be no question that Trump gets a constant barrage of criticism that is blazed throughout all of the media as well as on just about every college campus and increasingly through all of our institutions. Furthermore, Trump’s detractors express *no fear* in criticizing him and generally no negative consequences for doing so.

Celebrities audaciously criticize Trump, as Madonna did when she publicly proclaimed after the inauguration that she felt like “blowing up the White House.” Academics like Pamela Karlan are not at all afraid to spew their anger at Trump (and his family) publicly. Students on college campuses, and increasingly in K12, are encouraged to do so as well.

Consider also how the left specializes in cultic mob action to amplify their criticism. They do so on social media as well as in real life, as we see when Antifa thugs rough up anyone wearing a MAGA hat.

On the other hand, Trump supporters can’t match such behavior. If anything, they have a lot more to lose by openly supporting Trump or criticizing his critics. Any high-level supporter who ends up disgruntled, such as Scaramucci, can be sure that media elites will bestow upon them darling status and even perhaps a plum stint as CNN commentator as a result of their criticism.

Leftist leaders are also far more intolerant of criticism, and far more punitive to their critics. If you speak your mind about any of their sacred cows, you are liable to be socially punished by mobs in all of those circles and even lose your job.

So what exactly does Trump do about criticism of him except to criticize back in a tweet or a press statement? As for ordinary Trump supporters, the closest they come to a “mob” is perhaps to attend a Trump rally as though it’s a rock concert, after which they generally go home to live their lives.

3. A Cult Leader Aims to Control the Lives of His Followers and Keep Them Utterly Dependent

So let’s look at Trump in this context. And let’s also look at his elitist opponents in this context. When Trump calls someone like Sen. Mitt Romney a “pompous ass” on Twitter, is that authoritarian? Or is it simply the “buffoonery of one man,” as suggested above? (Romney even joked about the comment after having a “delightful” lunch with Trump.)

Is Trump showing narcissism in his tweets? Or was there just something in the water in Queens that contributed to his personality? Maybe he’s just a dogged and stubborn kind of guy from Queens, rough around the edges, whose biggest crime in the eyes of his critics is to get elected and then stand firm on his promise to drain the swamp.

And what has Trump really done that seems authoritarian to his detractors, other than exercising executive privilege to fire deep staters who seek to undermine him, like former FBI Director James Comey? Or to tweet his displeasure?

On the other hand, those who run the deep state—the actual swamp Trump was elected to drain—have shown merciless streaks of authoritarianism from using the IRS to punish political opponents to weaponizing the intelligence community against Trump himself.

Consider also that Trump’s domestic policy agenda is aimed largely at ending dependency in the relationship of citizens to the state. We saw how the left promoted womb-to-tomb dependency to the Daddy State in the Obama campaign’s 2012 “Life of Julia” infographic. Rather, Trump’s policies have promoted self-reliance that comes from having a job and building an independent life.

His policies have also focused on helping people overcome substance addictions, particularly the opioid epidemic that has ruined so many lives. That’s a far cry from the agenda of dependency that have been promoted for generations by leftist elites who run the media. We see the results of those policies in broken families, widespread welfare dependency, and the cultivation of ignorance in both K12 and higher education.

Of course mass dependency and ignorance allow for an elitist class to perpetuate their power. And that is the essence of a cultic relationship. Socialism generally requires that sort of relationship between the individual and the mass state. No similar relationship exists between Trump and his supporters. If his supporters show a lot of admiration for him, that is likely because he is trying to fulfill their demands—an extreme rarity in modern American politics.

And what if Trump were to change his tune and play along with his detractors, to renege on his promises? Then game over. His supporters would desert him. So, if anything, Trump is beholden to his supporters, not the other way around.

4. Cults Are Interested In One Thing Only: Amassing Power and Recruits

In order to meditate on this last point, we need to consider how each camp—pro-Trump or anti-Trump—views the consolidation of power. Trump’s detractors are on board with building a mass administrative state, run by unelected bureaucrats accountable to no one but those who will keep the mass state bloating.

They plan to abolish the Electoral College that allows every state to be represented in presidential elections. They hope to secure a “permanent majority” (their words) by gaining recruits (voters) through dependency programs, open borders, and the continuing cultivation of ignorance in education. These practices reflect an unquenchable appetite for power that exactly parallels the operations of cults.

Furthermore, if the controllers feel their perches are threatened by anyone duly elected, they have shown their willingness to destroy them, disregard elections, and to dispose of due process. We can see in the push for socialism the same aim: the total centralization and consolidation of power.

Trump’s policies, on the other hand, are aimed at limiting the power of the mass state, at *de-centralizing* power. He appoints judges who respect those limits and understands that unelected bureaucrats who operate in the shadows should not cancel out the will of the voters.

Sure, Trump criticizes his opponents and calls out their hypocrisy. But he doesn’t suppress the process of governance. He doesn’t spy on reporters or use federal agencies like the IRS to threaten perceived opponents. That was the Obama administration.

Look also at the general landscape of the institutions in this country, and what do you see? Singer noted that cults always look to expand their power by taking over institutions. Indeed, there has been a Borg-like absorption of many institutions in society by leftist elites.

The media is more than 90 percent controlled by the left. Academia is probably at least 95 percent controlled by the left. Popular culture is nearly 100 percent controlled by the left. K12 education, the unions, medicine, psychiatry, the corporate world, and more—all are now controlled by the left through its lobbies. Even the co-ed “Boy” Scouts have been Borged in cult-like fashion.

‘Thought Reform Is Not Going to Go Away’

In the end, it seems that nothing short of 100 percent control of society and total one-party rule will satisfy our wannabe overlords in the media and among leftist elites. There is indeed a method to their madness. And it is urgent that Americans learn more about the methods that lead to total control because, as Singer cautioned, “the psycho-technology of thought reform is not going to go away.”

We can see that psycho-technology at work in a lot of current practices that easily promote a cult mindset: the inducement of self-censorship and isolation through political correctness; the polarization of people through identity politics; the use of ritual defamation and other forms of social punishment intended to coerce thought reform; anti-family policies that promote state dependency over self-reliance. The list goes on. So it’s ironic, but not unpredictable, that those who promote such practices would accuse others of being cultists.