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## **REPUBLICANS, DEMOCRATS, CONSERVATIVES, AND LIBERALS**

“Liberal” and “Conservative” now don’t mean what they originally did and don’t mean what they should. I like the ideals of original Conservatives and original Liberals but I hate how the words are used now and how the ideals were gutted. This essay first describes Democrats and Republicans. I dislike both. Then it explains what “Liberal” and “Conservative” meant originally and how they changed.

If you wish only depiction of Democrats and Republicans, read the material that begins at the first stars below (\*\*), and then go to the second stars. If you wish to read more “straight through” but don’t like the length, I marked with a hash tag (#) a lot of material that you might skip. The term “state” usually does not mean a state in the United States such as Oregon but government in general. The term “Party” refers to a major political party in the United States such as Democrats or Republicans. The term “party” refers to any political party in the political process.

This essay is my opinions. The point is to help you think. I don’t assess many particular issues such as the Iran nuclear deal. I give general Republican and Democratic views. Other essays of mine do assess issues. This essay is not a diatribe or academic article. I do not support points with citations. I do not intend to be rude but my annoyance shows. I repeat often for convenience.

The real issues behind all the silly games: (a) whether enough true democracy can survive; (b) whether Americans can do enough good, through politics, to keep America good enough for decent people; and (c) whether enough Americans can think well enough to be adept good citizens.

Neither the Democratic nor Republican stance is enough. You have to accept that both sides have good and bad ideas. Don’t accept propaganda because it lets you feel righteous, enables your anger, or says you will be better off. You have not done your duty because you bothered to vote for the lesser evil.

Think out your deep values. Think where you got them, how realistic they are, and how good they are for our times. How do they apply to politics or should apply? See the world realistically yet hold on to idealistic hopes. This essay is more about getting you to do all this than about Parties.

## PART 0: BACKGROUND

First Stars: \*\*\*\*\* Read all sections except what is marked with # to show optional.

### **Briefly.**

*Briefly (1): Patrons and Clients.* Democrats, Republicans, and the American people play a political game of patrons and clients, a game at least 5000 years old. Some gaming happens in all governing including democracy, and a good democracy can survive much gaming, but not too much. We are on the edge of too much.

The core of the Democratic Party: (1) People who see themselves as modern, hip, cool, sympathetic to all people and especially people unlike them, humanists, kind, and smart, such as some business people, academics, professionals, artists, and homemakers. Since World War 2, the core has been educated. At least since John Kennedy in the early 1960s, most of the core has come from the secure middle class and upper middle class. The biggest client group of Democrats used to be working people but many left for the Republican Party in the 1970s. Democratic clients now: (2) groups that are hard up, marginal, feel fear, or feel discriminated against such as the poor, Blacks, women, Native Americans, LGBTQ people, Hispanics, and immigrants. Some Democratic clients have half-way good jobs but they still feel insecure, fear falling into the hole of poverty, and don't trust Republicans to give them more security; for them, Democrats are the lesser of two evils.

The Republican core: (A) big business owners, wealthy people, powerful people, and upper class people. The original clients were: (B) upper middle class people, professionals, medium sized business owners, secure middle class people, and many White people. All Republicans see themselves as tough, realistic, civic minded, willing to sacrifice for the whole, disciplined, and knowing better what is morally good and practically good for the nation. They know the value of wealth and power, and think they know decency better than other people. Republicans now have clients from groups that once had little in common with the core but gained common cause after the turmoil of the 1950s to 1970s: (C1) working people, middle class people, many Whites, and many Asians, all with steady jobs; (C2) working people and middle class people who have half-way good jobs but fear falling into the hole of poverty, think Democrats will undermine what security they have, and hope Republicans give them enough security; (C3) people who feel they pay more in taxes than they will ever get in services, especially taxes to support rivals such as immigrants and Blacks; (C4) successful immigrants mostly from East Asia and South Asia; (C5) people who fear Blacks, Hispanics, and immigrants; (C6) people who fear the poor, people with bad jobs, and people with only half-way good jobs; (C7) and people who believe fervently in their version of traditional religion, mostly Christians.

Parties help clients with tax breaks, welfare, corporate welfare, entitlements, harsh drug laws, lax drug laws, allowing abortion, fighting abortion, trade protection, free trade, stopping immigration, helping illegal immigrants, suppressing gays, allowing gay marriage, etc. Clients return favors with money and votes. Democrats and Republicans help clients not only through direct positive help but by hurting the

other political Party and its clients, in particular by hurting rivals of clients such as other families, other ethnic groups, and other religious groups.

Both Parties offer ideologies that attract some clients and exclude others such as for and against all abortion or choice. Despite claims, the ideologies have little to do with ideals or with a realistic picture of the world. The ideologies do not say what the Parties really do. The ideologies distinguish Parties and signal to voters how a Party can help them and can hurt rivals. Both Parties claim the roots of their stances in revered books such as the Bible and in thinkers such as John Locke, Edmund Burke, Adam Smith, and John Stuart Mill. In fact, their ideologies have little to do with such respected sources.

Democrats claim descent from Liberals while Republicans claim descent from Conservatives but neither Party really is like its claimed ancestors. “Liberal” and “Conservative” should not be used for current Parties. Partisans use the terms only as code and they misuse the terms. Whenever someone says “as a Liberal” or “as a Conservative”, almost always he-she does not know what the terms really meant.

I use socio-economic class and ethnicity as the most important feature of clients. Socio-economic class and ethnicity form the backdrop against which other identities play out. Women, Gens X, Y, and Z, and “Millenials” will get more active in politics but that shift won’t strongly affect politics for a while. When changes come, still changes will act mostly through class and at least somewhat through ethnicity.

By carefully looking at issues and situations, often we can see how politicians and Parties have helped the country as a whole. Our National Park system is a great gem of human history. Often, in real life, it is hardly possible to do better than what was done, and any shortfall come not because of greed but because politicians have to slog through a bog that was there long before they stepped in it. An essay on how politicians salvage goodness would be worthwhile but this essay is not that essay. This essay is needed first. This essay uses broad strokes, big groups, and simplistic attitudes. This essay criticizes and complains. This essay does not use “perfect” as the one standard by which to judge but it does openly lament. If you don’t like my limited view, my tone, then dig deeper into what really could be done to make America and the world better.

*Briefly (2): Parties and the Future.* Both Parties claim that all their policies aim at the greater good of America and only at that goal. “If our programs do help a client, the needs of the client coincide with the welfare of America. Double help, to the client and America, shows the wisdom of our basic stance. If gain to a client did not also help America, of course our Party would not help that client at the cost of hurting America. Helping clients is an indirect but sure way of helping America, usually the only way to help in particular real situations.” Both Parties claim the other Party is killing America: “Our programs stop the other Party from killing America, and so we save America”.

In fact, for both Parties, more important than America are success, gain for clients, thwarting the other Party, and thwarting the clients of the other Party. They use ideas such as “America”, decency, realism, practicality, and social justice, as ploys. Neither Party has a clear idea of what helps America as a whole. Both Parties throw money at their clients without regard for what happened in the past from throwing

money and without regard for the country. Only if the good of America by luck coincides with gain to a Party and its clients does America really benefit. That is a slim thread on which to hang the future of America, and it has frayed noticeably since 1981.

Despite many voters moving to the Republican Party in the 1970s and despite its success in elections, the Republican Party is the minority party. Most people are not Republicans. Al Gore beat George W. Bush in the popular vote, and would have won the Electoral College if the voting in Florida had not been hinky. Barack Obama won the popular vote. Hilary Clinton easily won the popular vote despite Donald Trump's crazy claims. Trump won the Electoral College with strategy. Republicans since Reagan have been great at nasty strategy. Both Parties gerrymander but Republicans took the art to its lowest level, and Republicans win many offices due only to gerrymandering. (If you don't know how Republicans do not have the most votes but still win most offices, see my other essays or email me.)

Many (likely most) young people don't wish to vote Republican because they don't believe that wealth, big business, a giant house, a trophy spouse, and a lot of gadgets, alone can make us all happy; they wish to do something for the world besides personal success; and they sense sexism, racism, class-ism, and moral hypocrisy. The Republican Party has not been "the party of decency" for a long time. People of all ages don't vote Democrat because they don't believe Democrats can offer anything realistic and comprehensive, do believe Democrats will spend hugely on clients to get almost nothing back for the nation as a whole, and do believe Democrats will burden us with more confusing PC and regulations. People vote Republican from default rather than choice.

Neither Party has a vision of a better America, better world, and a better America in a better world, a vision that Americans can believe is remotely true. (1) Neither Party has a realistic and inspiring vision because: (a) neither Party accepts all the relevant facts, both parties pick and choose to make up a fake reality that suits narrow needs; and (b) neither Party has much of any vision at all anyway. (2) The old leadership lost control over clients, and clients can't accept the whole picture, clients won't accept all the facts, and clients have little vision beyond their particular issues. See "Briefly (3)" below. Both Parties happily push distorted visions so as to entice clients to win elections and keep power.

The world has changed much since 1961 (Happy Days), 1974 (silliness and chaos), 1981 (Reagan), 2001 (9/11 and Bush), and 2008 (Obama). The world will change much after Trump, and not as his followers wish. So far, America has not faced up to changes and the new world. The "new normal" will not return to the American Dream of the 1950s or 80s. America has enough wealth to make a better new normal than almost anywhere in the world - if we can learn to use capitalism and politics to bring about near fairness and to reward people tolerably well by merit. We can't get perfect fairness but we can be fair enough. People will have smaller houses, and many will live in apartments (clean, quiet, safe, efficient, friendly-to-nature). Young Americans seek a new normal that gives reasonable fairness, acceptance of non-harmful social diversity, hope to raise a family securely, and hope that their children can do as well or a little bit better. This is not too much to ask.

America has not done what is needed to make the best of our huge human and natural resources so we can have a reasonably fair and secure new normal. We squandered. As long as Parties seek victory by catering to clients, rather than face the real world and help America as a whole find a better reasonable fairer new normal, then political Parties will continue to make it all worse. We will not find a new normal and our place in the new normal.

It is not clear if voters who “went Republican” in the 1970s and 1980s can accept a new normal that is not like their old wrong dreams, if they can accept new more realistic dreams. Even if they can’t, their offspring can. I do not expect Gen X, Gen Y, Gen Z, and Millennials to rise up and save us alone but they can do better than their ancestors, if only because they have no specific political ax to grind. They want a clear idea of the new normal even if the new normal is not up to the dreams of 1962 and 1986. They don’t care which Party gives an accurate honest picture of the new normal as long as the picture is true enough. They want a reasonably safe and fair new normal. They don’t expect a paradise of Left or Right. They want a new normal that is workable for them and most people. They know they need an honest picture of America and the world to find their best place in the new normal. Party propaganda and terror fantasies don’t work for them anymore. For them to seek their new normal might be exactly what America needs.

As always, the near future depends on whether fear, anger, desperation, striking out, and “my group” prevail or if realistic goals, modest ideals, and some sharing prevail. The future depends on how the political baton gets passed and if the new generations can make a good new normal.

Democrats can lead if they can find a coherent realistic vision of the new normal, a better America, better world, and a better America in a better world; undo Republican strategizing; convince people that Democrats will not spend like crazy on clients while doing little long-term good; and convince people that Democrats can help nature, help needy people, and promote justice without miring everyone in regulations and hyper PC. If Republicans come up with a similar realistic vision, and Democrats do not, then Republicans can win, but they will have to give up many voters that entered the Party in the 1970s and have to give up many Republicans who simply have an unrealistic vision of the world now and of our place in the world now. Whichever Party comes up with the new vision, the vision is likely to be the same in essence as if the other Party dreamed it, and likely to look much like the middle ground that both Parties now disdain.

*Briefly (3): Don't Let Clients Run the Show.* Neither Party is angelic but the leaders of both Parties were fairly adept from World War 2 until 1970 at guiding clients to the best interests of America as a whole. Especially since 1980, traditional leaders have not been able to guide clients. Any particular client bloc doesn't need a majority to control a Party if the Party must have that client to win, for example as Democrats have needed Blacks and Republicans now need the followers of Trump. Clients are the tail that wags the dog. Clients “double down” and “push single issues”. What they wish for often does NOT coincide with the best for America as a whole. Leaders know all this but have to go along anyway.

From World War 2 until about 1970, labor controlled the Democratic Party but leaders of the Party could guide labor along lines that helped the whole nation. After about 1970, as working and middle class Whites and Asians left the Party, Blacks came to control the “swing vote” for Democrats. Democrats have had to cajole Blacks for fifty years. Loss of mass Black support was not the only reason Hillary Clinton lost the Presidential election but was one of the biggest. The coalition victory of Barack Obama might have been the last big hurrah of Blacks nationally. Starting in 2024, Hispanics likely will replace Blacks as the swing voters for Democrats in many places. Because Hispanics assimilate better than Blacks, the policies of the Democratic Party might become more middle, mainstream, and fiscally sound – maybe might.

Since 1980, after Reagan, a coalition of White and Asian working and middle class people, along with the Religious Right, has wagged the Republican dog. Backed by rich people, using skillful tactics, they have elected local officials, Senators, Representatives, and Governors. George Bush 1 lost in part because he was not their man. They were the power behind Newt Gingrich. They almost got President Bill Clinton removed over a trifle compared to Donald Trump. They blocked John McCain from the Republican nomination for President in 2000 and they elected George Bush 2 instead. Sarah Palin was their darling. They keep Rightist cable TV channels and radio going. They stopped George Bush’s brother, Jeb, in his bid for the Republican nomination. Donald Trump believes in nothing but he can convince them that he believes what they do and he will fight for them. The old Republican guard lost nearly all control when Donald Trump won. The coalition that formed in the late 1980s keeps the US out of global accords on climate and the environment, keeps us out of trade agreements, gnaws constantly on abortion, and ignores reality in trying to deal with drugs, crime, and immigration.

It is in the nature of clients always to have a grievance and often to have a grudge as well. Clients want something really bad that they are dead sure they are entitled to and-or they desperately want to protect what they have against “greedy others” who are “set on taking it”. Clients feel entitlement, fear, anger, and hate. Even people fighting against abortion (for the unborn) and people fighting for various positive rights such as for LGBTQ (gay) rights follow this pattern. When clients succeed, they feel righteous, invincible, and eternal. When clients don’t get enough, they “double down” on entitlement, fear, anger, hate, and greed. Even clients with a genuine need and who otherwise are good moral people act like this.

Since 1980, entitlement, fear, anger, hate, and greed have been the biggest forces in American politics – even if Americans are good people apart from politics. Those emotions in others make me fearful and angry, feel entitled to more wealth to make sure my wife and I are secure, and make me ready to lash out. That is what mutual bad feelings do to all people and all groups, in a vicious circle.

Clients, no matter how just their grievance and how good they are otherwise as people, rarely can place their situation in perspective and see beyond themselves to what is best for America. Think of groups that you love and you despise. Do you really want your favorite group by itself to run the country based on its agenda and its leaders alone? Do you really want feminists, Blacks, rich people, intense believers of any religion or of atheism, business people, or upper middle class pseudo-Liberals, to run the whole

show all by themselves? How would you get clients to cede control to good leaders? How do you get people to accept all relevant facts? How do you get good leaders, especially leaders who can stand up to clients and the Party? What are your visions?