

“The Ministry has fallen”: Voldemort’s Policies and Project 2025

A paper presented at the Chestnut Hill College Harry Potter Academic Conference

By Beth Sutton-Ramspeck

Author of [*Harry Potter and Resistance*](#)

Unless you only read *The Daily Prophet*, you’ve probably heard of Project 2025, also called *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Project*, a 900-page publication of the right-wing Heritage Foundation. Project 2025 contains plans for the “2025 Presidential Transition”—if Donald Trump is elected. The plans entail a complete overhaul of the federal government. After negative publicity, Heritage Foundation president, Kevin Roberts stepped down. Is Project 2025 therefore dead? To quote Hagrid, “Codswallop”! While Trump has (publicly) disavowed the project, the Heritage Foundation has deep ties to his Presidency, “providing a [staffing pipeline](#) for his administration” (Homans, Mahler). Moreover, according to a CNN analysis, “at least 140 people who worked in the Trump administration” had a direct hand in writing Project 2025, including six of Trump’s Cabinet secretaries, his first deputy chief of staff, four people Trump nominated as ambassadors, and “several enforcers of his controversial immigration crackdown.” That’s 78% of its contributors (Rattner). One of Project 2025’s authors, Russell Vought, said in secretly recorded footage that Trump privately “blessed” the work and is “very supportive.” Vought served in Trump’s administration, helped write the formal 2024 Republican platform, and is rumored to be under consideration for chief of staff in a second Trump administration. History also tells us that Trump will follow the document’s advice: “In 2016, ahead of Trump’s first term, the Heritage Foundation released the seventh edition of “Mandate for Leadership.” One year into his presidency, Trump had embraced 64 percent of its policy recommendations” (Rattner).

So what does this have to do with the world of *Harry Potter*? You won’t be surprised that

I am going to argue: plenty. To be sure, it's not possible to show direct parallels between the Potterverse and some widely publicized aspects of Project 2025: for example, there's nothing in the *Potter* series about outlawing abortion, denying climate change, delaying the retirement age, or eliminating overtime. However, Project 2025, as a blueprint for "reforming" government, echoes changes to the Ministry of Magic under Voldemort in five ways:

- Completely overhauling staffing and thus the mission of government programs
- Undermining the criminal justice system
- Encouraging racist policies.
- Undermining education, and
- Undermining what we in America would describe as First Amendment freedoms

This paper will focus on the Ministry of Magic in Book 7 (cited as DH).

Ministry Staffing:

When Lupin visits the trio at Number 12 Grimmauld Place and Hermione asks whether those who raided Bill and Fleur's wedding were "Death Eaters or Ministry people," Lupin replies, "A mixture, but to all intents and purposes they're the same thing now." He explains, "What you've got to realize . . . is that the Death Eaters have got the full might of the Ministry on their side now"(DH 206).

Similarly, at the core of Project 2025 is replacing career civil servants with people loyal to Donald Trump. As one chapter of the Mandate puts it, "personnel is policy"(Devine, Kirk, Dans 69). According to Don Moynihan of Georgetown University, "The idea of purging the ideologically suspect . . . extends to career civil servants as an entire class. *Mandate for Leadership* enshrines" something called Schedule F, a policy instigated late in the first Trump presidency that allows "career civil servants to be fired [and replaced] at the will of a President. . . This strategy ignores that these employees are recruited on the basis of merit, that they are

charged with upholding the law, as written and overseen by Congress.” Under Schedule F, “Anyone with a policymaking . . . role can be included,” based solely on their politics. Perhaps 50,000 government employees could be reclassified as political appointees, and could include human resource specialists and cybersecurity specialists (Moynihan). These new bureaucrats could carry out everything else in Project 2025.

This is precisely what is at work after the fall of the Ministry of Magic, when department heads loyal to Voldemort use blood purity, which could be seen as a stand-in for ideological purity, to threaten others’ employment. An example is Yaxley, the Death Eater who bullies Ron when he is disguised as Reg Cattermole. Having a Muggle-born wife has nothing to do with Reg’s competence at Magical Maintenance, but Yaxley uses it to threaten Reg: “if *my* wife were accused of being a Mudblood,” said Yaxley, “—not that any woman I married would ever be mistaken for such filth—and the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement needed a job doing, I would make it my priority to do that job, Cattermole.” (DH 244).

Similarly, Albert Runcorn, the Ministry official Harry impersonates, supervises investigating Muggle-borns. Runcorn has ousted Dirk Cresswell, not for incompetence in the Goblin-Liaison Office—Arthur Weasley tells Runcorn (Harry) that Cresswell is “ten times the wizard you are.” No, Cresswell is fired for being Muggle-born, which opens his position for another, corrupt bureaucrat (DH 245).

Meanwhile, Arthur Weasley himself is one among many pure-blood wizards whose “security status” is “TRACKED. All movements are being monitored” (252). Arthur’s file in Umbridge’s office describes him as “ Pureblood, but with unacceptable pro-Muggle leanings. Known member of the Order of the Phoenix” (251). Arthur is in danger of losing his Ministry job because “blood traitors are as bad as the Mudbloods.” This, inarguably, is about Arthur’s opinions and loyalty to the government’s leader.

Much of the greatest alarm about Project 2025 concerns its impact on the Department of Justice. Under Schedule F, Justice Department prosecutors and other personnel could be fired

for being disloyal—not to the Constitution but to Trump. According to Professor Moynihan, “Trump and his appointees object to the idea that the Department of Justice should have enough independence to credibly investigate him. *Mandate for Leadership* also rebuts the idea of DOJ independence. . . . [Furthermore], Failure to follow the President’s agenda should result in disciplinary action. And if the President’s agenda is to protect the President from the consequences of his crimes, or use the DOJ to spearhead his efforts to overturn an election, so be it” (Moynihan). Moreover, Trump has repeatedly threatened to send the DOJ after his political enemies.

“Project 2025 also calls for federal prosecutors to circumvent local district attorneys and to charge people for crimes when local prosecutors do not. . . . Reproductive rights [could receive] this kind of aggressive federal enforcement “ (Lartey). “Drug crimes are huge areas of criminal law where federal prosecutors could have a marked impact on mass incarceration by pursuing more cases, and seeking longer sentences” (Lartey). Conversely, the DOJ would discontinue investigations into systemic police misconduct.

To be sure, one could argue, like Susan Hall, that, throughout the Harry Potter series, “The wizard world is not governed by the rule of law” (“Justice” 72). In *Deathly Hallows*, the Voldemort-controlled Ministry deploys its already-problematic judicial system—by allowing Magical Law Enforcement to deploy mercenaries, called Snatchers, to round up supposed enemies, in part by responding to the taboo on Voldemort’s name—pursuing people for their opinions--because it was “only people who were serious about standing up to him, like Dumbledore, who ever dared use it.” Thus it is a “quick-and-easy way to find Order [of the Phoenix] members”—the resistance to Voldemort (DH 390).

Racist policies:

Nearly every *Harry Potter* fan understands that wizard responses to Muggles and Muggle-borns represent what we Muggles call racism. Thus, what the Snatchers do—seeking

not just political opponents but also Muggle-borns—resembles immigration policies based on assumptions about people of color. Under Umbridge’s Muggle-Born Registration Commission, Muggle-borns are stripped of their wands, applying the same logic as clause three of the Code of Wand Use: “*No non-human creature is permitted to carry or use a wand*” (GF 132).

Muggle-borns are reduced to “non-human creatures,” automatically guilty of a crime and sent to Azkaban. Equating the Other to animals or “vermin” is a standard ploy of racists and fascists.

Under Project 2025, ICE will step up “enforcing civil immigration regulations, including the civil arrest, detention, and removal of immigration violators . . . , without warrant where appropriate” (Cuccinelli 142). Project 2025 proposes preventing U.S. citizens from qualifying for federal housing subsidies if they live with someone who is a noncitizen (Figeroa). “Mass deportation now!” is a catchphrase for the Trump presidential campaign, a policy that could affect 15-20 million people. Of course deporting British Muggle-borns would obviously be problematic, which is why Muggle-born witches or wizards, are sent to Azkaban. Similarly, Project 2025 recommends imprisoning suspected undocumented immigrants: Indeed, detention would become mandatory: “Congress should eliminate ambiguous discretionary language in Title 8 that aliens “may” be detained and clarify that aliens “shall” be detained” (Cuccinelli 150). As with U.S. immigration, Ministry of Magic policy separates parents and children, the Cattermole family being one instance.

Project 2025 repeatedly targets all policies favoring diversity and inclusion, which, self-evidently, will lessen diversity and inclusion in all government and civilian offices. But there’s more. To quote the section about the Department of the Treasury: “participation in any critical race theory or DEI initiative. . . [is] per se grounds for termination of employment.” (Walton, Moore, and Burton 708). “It is not enough to end efforts to facilitate diversity, equity and inclusion. Anyone who participated in them in the past shall be exposed and fired” (Moynihan). Similar employment proposals are described throughout the document. This is yet another instance of the analogous view that “blood traitors are as bad as the Mudbloods.”

Education:

Hogwarts's admissions criteria always had problems, excluding magical species like goblins, centaurs, and house-elves; and squibs (who might excel in Herbology, potions, Muggle Studies, or Care of Magical Creatures). Under Voldemort, that exclusion extends to Muggle-borns. In the past, Muggle Studies was an elective, and severely flawed, but under Voldemort, Alecko Carrow "teaches Muggle Studies, which is compulsory for everyone. We've all got to listen to her explain how Muggles are like animals, stupid and dirty, . . . and how the natural order is being reestablished."

Not surprisingly, Project 2025 not only dismantles DEI and what little Critical Race Theory actually occurs in schools, at all academic levels; it also, alarmingly, ends efforts to towards merely fair treatment of students of color. Project 2025 advocates not questioning schools where students of color continue to experience harsher disciplinary measures such as detentions, suspensions, and expulsions at higher rates compared to white students. Project 2025, with some astonishing doublespeak, advocates that, as a matter of "civil rights," the Federal government should eliminate "affirmative discrimination in all aspects of its operations," including in education. With Muggle-borns excluded from Hogwarts, one might imagine that race-based discrimination would cease there, but Neville Longbottom reports that "They don't want to spill too much pure blood, so they'll torture us a bit if we're mouthy but they won't actually kill us" (574), a consideration obviously not extended to Muggle-borns.

Censorship:

Book banning is so central to Project 2025 that it appears in the book's forward. The primary target is so-called "Pornography," meaning "the omnipresent propagation of transgender ideology and sexualization of children." In the words of Kevin Roberts, "Educators and public librarians who purvey [this 'pornography'] should be classed as registered sex offenders"; "people who produce and distribute it should be imprisoned" because they are "child predators."

(Roberts 5). It should be noted that Roberts condemns this “pornography” alongside “woke progressivism” (4) and proposes that “The noxious tenets of “critical race theory” and “gender ideology” should be excised from curricula in every public school in the country.” (Roberts 5). While the document mentions no titles, a reasonable guess is that they include the most challenged books of recent years: this slide shows the most challenged books of 2023. So much, obviously, for parental control.

Little imagination is required to recall Dolores Umbridge’s textbook, and Educational Decree Number Twenty-seven: “Any student found in possession of the magazine *The Quibbler* will be expelled” (OP 581). Under Voldemort, school censorship goes even further. Consider the murdered Muggle Studies professor Charity Burbage, whose supplanted curriculum Voldemort describes with language of filth, contamination—and Nazi propaganda: Voldemort says, “Not content with corrupting and polluting the minds of Wizarding children, last week Professor Burbage wrote an impassioned defense of Mudbloods in the *Daily Prophet*. Wizards, she says, must accept these thieves of their knowledge and magic.” Words like “corrupting” and “polluting” echo Project 2025’s calling “woke ideology” “noxious” and “poison.”

Project 2025 threatens freedom of information, more broadly. In hidden camera footage, Project 2025 contributor Russell Vought revealed a secret “playbook” for the transition to a second Trump administration, including pre-written executive orders and guidance to use law enforcement and the military against protesters. To keep the plans secret, they are to be disseminated among loyalists on private email, prior to the inauguration “so they won’t have to converse over government work emails—which means journalists and the public cannot request information about [them] through a Freedom of Information Act request” (Durkee).

Similarly, in the Wizarding World, most people don’t realize what’s happened at the Ministry because, Lupin explains, “The coup has been smooth and virtually silent” (DH 207)—kept out of the *Daily Prophet*. As a result, people “are scared to speak out.” (208).

Donald Trump repeatedly advocates retribution against journalists whose reports he dislikes, including imprisonment, and Project 2025 advocates defunding NPR and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting—as “leftist opinion” (246). While this does not rise to the level of “Death Eaters have taken over the *Daily Prophet*,” Roxana Muenster of the Brookings Institution notes that “The authors also suggest the next administration should reconsider ...whether journalists should even be granted space on White House grounds. This plan could encourage an administration to grant access only to journalists who favor its agenda [Rita Skeeter!], not those who will question or push back.

So, What would Dumbledore’s Army Do?

According to the *Wizarding World* website, “The Minister for Magic is democratically elected, although there have been times of crisis in which the post has simply been offered to an individual without a public vote (Albus Dumbledore was made such an offer, and turned it down repeatedly)” (“Ministers”). Abandoning democracy any time a purported crisis occurs seems a precarious way to maintain a stable and fair government. Timothy Snyder, in *On Tyranny*, quotes the Federalist Papers: “where annual elections end, tyranny begins” (30). The warning is apt. On July 26, Donald Trump told an audience, “Christians, get out and vote, just this time. You won’t have to do it anymore. ... You got to get out and vote. In four years, you don’t have to vote again. We’ll have it fixed so good you’re not going to have to vote.” Perhaps Trump was joking, though he has as much sense of humor as Cornelius Fudge—or He Who Shall Not Be Named. Either way, *Project 2025* codifies plans and policies embraced by Trump and those he will appoint to positions of power.

Most of the *Harry Potter* series, especially the last three volumes, concerns how the Order of the Phoenix and Dumbledore’s Army resist such policies. They collaborate with one another to strategize, organize, and recruit. They speak up and share accurate information in the face of censorship. Confronting worse challenges than our own (at present), they break the

rules: they spy, burgle, use a couple of unforgivable curses, and battle to the death. Their most extreme methods might have been avoided had the Ministry of Magic not been permeated by policies of an unelected government.

They didn't have the opportunity to vote, but we do. So if nothing else, VOTE!

Works Cited

Contorno, Steve. "Trump claims not to know who is behind Project 2025. A CNN review found at least 140 people who worked for him are involved." 11 July 2024.

<https://www.cnn.com/2024/07/11/politics/trump-allies-project-2025/index.html>

Dans, Paul and Steven Groves, Editors. *Mandate for Leadership, The Conservative Promise: Project 2025 Presidential Transition Project*. The Heritage Foundation, 2023.

https://static.project2025.org/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf

Durkee, Alison. "Democrats Attack Project 2025 Agenda at DNC—But There's Still Another Plan under Wraps." *Forbes*. 22 Aug. 2024.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/alisdurkee/2024/08/22/democrats-attack-project-2025-agenda-at-dnc-but-theres-still-another-plan-under-wraps/>

Figueroa, Ariana. "Trump Promises Mass Deportations of Undocumented People. How Would That Work?" *Missouri Independent* 23 Aug. 2024.

<https://missouriindependent.com/2024/08/23/trump-promises-mass-deportations-of-undocumented-people-how-would-that-work/>

Hall, Susan. "Harry Potter and the Rule of Law: The Central Weakness of Legal Concepts in the Wizard World." *Reading Harry Potter: Critical Essays*, edited by Giselle Liza Anatol, Praeger, 2003, pp. 147–62.

Homans, Charles. "Vance's Links to the Project 2025 Leader Complicate Trump's Attempts at Distance." July 31, 2024.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/31/us/politics/project-2025-vance-trump.html>

"How Will Project 2025 Affect Me?" <https://www.25and.me/?topics=>

Lartey, Jamiles. "How Project 2025 Plans for Trump to Have Unprecedented Power Over the Justice Department." The Marshall Project. 7 July 2024.

<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2024/07/20/trump-project-2025-crime-prosecutors>

Mahler, Jonathan. "How One Conservative Think Tank Is Stocking Trump's Government." *New York Times*, 20 June, 2018.

Moynihan, Don. "What "Mandate for Leadership" Says About the GOP's Governing Philosophy: Replacing Checks and Balances with Authoritarianism." *Can We Still Govern?* 6 Mar.

2024. <https://donmoynihan.substack.com/p/what-mandate-for-leadership-says>

Muenster, Roxana. "Project 2025: What a second Trump term could mean for media and technology policies." 22 July 2024.

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/project-2025-what-a-second-trump-term-could-mean-for-media-and-technology-policies/>

Rattner, Steven. "How Project 2025 Would Change the Country." *New York Times* 9 September 2024. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/09/opinion/project-2025-trump-change.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare&sgrp=c-cb>

[d=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare&sgrp=c-cb](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/09/opinion/project-2025-trump-change.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare&sgrp=c-cb)

Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. Scholastic, 2007.

---. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. New York: Scholastic, 1998.

---. "Ministers for Magic." *Wizarding World*, 10 Aug. 2015.

www.wizardingworld.com/writing-by-jk-rowling/ministers-for-magic. Accessed 22 May 2019.

Snyder, Timothy. *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*. Tim Duggan Books, 2017.