

Trump's Cult: The Republican Party

Mike Pence's recent announcement that he wouldn't endorse Donald Trump in his third presidential run was perhaps due to their ideological divergences.

Or maybe he could still hear the echoes of Trump-fueled rioters chanting "Hang Mike Pence!" the day he chose the Constitution over Trump three years ago.

Trump's nomination as the official 2024 GOP presidential nominee solidifies that the Republican party no longer plays by the rules of the people, the Constitution, or even democracy. The Republican party plays by the rules of Donald Trump.

When Trump started out, in 2015, he didn't fit the Republican mold. Firstly, he was a self-proclaimed Democrat, his two divorces demonstrated his lack of family values, and his many sexual assault allegations painted him as a dishonorable man. Moreover, he wasn't acquainted with the issues, didn't have experience, and just wasn't very nice. Traditional Republicans, like John McCain and Lindsey Graham, dismissed his outlandish campaign platforms and refused to support him. Understandably, he was the underdog candidate.

Still, at rally after rally, Trump supporters crammed into stadiums in a furor to hear Trump insult the other candidates' wives and ramble on about how, as president, he would get Mexico to pay for the wall to keep out criminals and ban Muslim immigrants. People loved his unhindered "honesty" and "tough-guy" attitude. Put simply, he *was* different. It was that difference that won him the presidency.

Public humiliation of his dissenters helped him assert his dominance over the party, and he had a direct channel to the people: Twitter. Trump's aides attempted to limit this, but his insults weren't only against Democrats or his critics in the media. In private, he fired several members of his own staff who disagreed with him. Mike Flynn, Reince Priebus, and Anthony Scaramucci were all appointees who had notoriously short stints in the White House due to disagreements with Trump. This created a culture of fear in the West Wing. All hail Trump.

Or you're out of a job.

This pressure to follow Trump's lead widened beyond the scope of the White House. President Trump created great political movements based on his lies. Cue the pandemic's beginning in March of 2020. Trump at first publicly dismissed COVID-19 as a serious threat, encouraged people to drink bleach instead of wearing masks, and discouraged people from getting the vaccine. Trump's ideological grip on his supporters across the country had his fellow Republican politicians worried that if they didn't follow suit, Trump wouldn't endorse them, and they'd lose their seats in Congress in the general election later that year. All hail Trump.

Or you're out of a job.

Not nine months later, Trump pulled the same stunt with the 2020 presidential election, which he lost. Even though it was proven to be the most secure election in U.S. history, and that Trump failed in his many legal endeavors to contest the results, he still claimed the election was stolen. His supporters believed him and parroted his slogan "Stop the steal!" across social media.

On January 6th, 2021, Trump's most loyal supporters invaded the U.S. Capitol Building to stop Vice President Pence's official certification of Biden's win. They walked through the

halls, narrowly missing Pence's evacuation route, taunting "Hang Mike Pence!" Who knows if they meant it, but thank goodness they were never given a chance to follow through. Whether you want to call January 6th a peaceful protest or a democracy-threatening insurrection, the rhetoric surrounding the rioters' activities had upped the ante. All hail Trump.

Or you're *dead*.

One might have thought or even hoped that Trump's election lie had serious enough consequences for Republicans to break out of their haze and unite against him. But, no. They failed to do so.

Since Trump left the White House, he's retained a death grip on the Republican party. Nine years ago, Trump was the underdog in the primary and was projected to lose the general election. This year he not only easily won the primary without attending any of the debates but is also awaiting several trials, totalling 91 counts of criminal wrongdoing, for which the Republican National Committee is funding his legal defense. The Trump cause is now synonymous with the Republican cause.

Now we wait for November 5th. The general election won't be a matter of whether the Republican party can withstand Trumpism. They lost that battle during the primary. Instead, it will be a test of whether Trumpism will consume the rest of the American political sphere like it did the Republican party.

And if he is in fact elected again, enemies of Trump look out. You might find a mob knocking at your door, calling for your head.