

## THE POWER OF NARRATIVE IN POLITICS WHY IT HAD TO BE TRUMP

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The following work examines the way voters are influenced by a desire to make reality conform to a familiar narrative. First, the 2024 GOP Primary is reflected upon, with a focus on comparing the merits of the two frontrunner candidates, Donald Trump and Ron DeSantis. A reason why Americans preferred the former is that letting Trump attempt to return to the Presidency would provide closure for the main narrative arc in US politics of the past decade. Next, this narrative arc is examined in detail, covering Trump's rise in 2016 and his fall in 2020. A parallel is then drawn to similar episodes from English-speaking history and mythology. A powerful narrative driving events in the history of the English-speaking people is a desire to return to an idealized past, real or fictional. Trump's 2024 campaign harnesses the power of narrative in two ways: by playing into this desire, as well as providing closure for those who feel like Trump's political story should not have ended in 2020.

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### Narrative Trumps Reason: Last Year's Primary

For eight years now, Donald Trump has been at the receiving end of a never-ending stream of negative press coverage. There is probably no other person in recent American history who had been this thoroughly maligned, attacked from every possible angle, from the left and from the right. If you are someone who hates Donald Trump, then no matter what your political leanings are, you will find a media outlet that shares your perspective and from your own perspective will tell you why Trump is a horrible person. Few men in history have such a voluminous, diverse body of work written for the sole purpose of tarnishing their reputation. It would be impossible to make a complete list of attacks and accusations made against Trump – there's just too many. Everything has been said already – and none of it did any real damage to his 2024 presidential campaign.

Now, some of Trump's biggest haters sit in the Republican Party establishment. They have been seething with anger after being overrun by the MAGA movement in 2016. Since then, the vener-

able gentlemen occupying senior party positions were forced by their voter base to at least pretend like they don't absolutely despise this upstart, this outsider, this orange barbarian, hoping that support for him will eventually blow over and they can go back to business as usual. And if they can help it blow over more quickly somehow – well, that's even better. To that end, they were willing to concede on any policy position. The 2024 GOP primary was basically an attempt to lure the MAGA voter base away from Trump, by offering them a slew of candidates, each trying to capture a facet of Trump's appeal as well as they could manage. Some took it too far: Vivek Ramaswamy tried to be more Trump-like than the original – with mixed success.

But of course, the most convincing alternative to Trump by far was Ron DeSantis. Here you had an arguably perfect candidate on paper. First of all – flawless MAGA credentials. DeSantis, some people may remember, was once called Trump's man in Florida<sup>1</sup>. With him, you would get Trump's policies, but this time implemented by someone who is not a novice when it comes to politics, who

knows how to pass things through the legislature<sup>2</sup>. Because anything Trump decrees through an executive order, can be undone just as quickly by the next administration. Hard to build a lasting legacy on that. DeSantis is very well-educated, a veteran, unlike Trump, a family-man with three children and zero divorces, a Christian who actually knows his bible. Policy-wise, he has everything a conservative would want on paper. He is fighting the culture war, banishing gender ideology from schools, using all kinds of tricks to combat illegal immigration in his state, and most importantly, keeping his state open during COVID. If you remember, that was his main claim to national fame, keeping Florida a free state, as he called it. Ron DeSantis had brought back Civil War era rhetoric, separating America into Free States and Unfree States – except this time, the conservative South is the one that is free, and thus has the moral superiority firmly in hand<sup>3</sup>. And he did all that while being just a governor. Great. There is just one problem. He is not Donald Trump.

If somebody said that DeSantis was a better candidate than Trump in every way, they would have a case to make. He is less naive, and more politically savvy, less of a narcissist, and much less susceptible to flattery. Even hardliner Trump supporters admit that while in office, Trump undermined his own agenda by appointing people like Jared Kushner or Steve Mnuchin to key positions. But as far as the Republican primary was concerned, all these arguments didn't matter - no one really cared about all that. Something more important was going on.

By the way, it's interesting to look at the nature of the criticisms leveled at DeSantis by Trump supporters. Let's see, what didn't they like? They couldn't really attack him on his policies or his character, or his political record. Instead, we have heard attacks like this: "He wears shoes with lifts in them!" "He is short!" "His smile looks weird!" "He is socially awkward!" "His face – looks like a Meatball!" – it doesn't really matter how true or not these statements are, they all sound like someone is trying to find an excuse for opposing Ron DeSantis. All of them would go entirely unmentioned if he didn't run against Trump. But instead,

saying that DeSantis is wearing lifts in his shoes was much more devastating to his campaign, than it was to Trump's campaign when Trump had 91 criminal indictments brought against him.

These criticisms (in quotation marks) of DeSantis were obviously not the real reasons why someone would oppose his candidacy. But the fact that people had to resort to these shows that the real reason they preferred Trump was not that easy to articulate. Though every now and again, you would hear it said about Ron DeSantis that it is simply not his time. He should wait till 2028. Can't he read the room? Does he not sense that the current grand narrative gripping the American public demands that Trump has his attempt at a comeback?

The truth is that more than anything Americans love a good story. And Trump has been at the center of the main political story unfolding over the last eight years. Most Americans are invested into the story, supporting one side or another. It is a story full of plot twists, and dramatic reverses for both sides, and the stakes could not be higher – the fate of America, and of all the Free World, hangs in the balance. And it is still ongoing. In fact, we are in its third act, and approaching an epic finale. The showdown between the forces of good and evil, whether you're on the left or the right! Really? You want to interrupt this now, by exchanging Trump for a different candidate, because what, you think your policies are better? Don't you see that this is so not what this is about? Too many people's hopes, dreams, fears, predictions of doom have been put on one man, and this man was not Ron DeSantis. It could only be Donald Trump.

### **Unfolding Narrative: The Last 10 Years**

How did he find himself in this position, at the center of an epoch-defining narrative? In the run-up to the 2016 Presidential Election, as Obama's second term was running out, the Democratic Party apparatus produced his political heir – Hillary Clinton. Presumptive nominee from the moment she announced her campaign, Hillary accrued an ungodly amount of political influence. She enjoyed favorable coverage by most establishment media outlets, inexhaustible reserves of campaign fund-

ing were put at her disposal, a well-oiled machine of a campaign staffed by the best advisors and political professional's money could buy - her victory was guaranteed from the outset, a defeat was unfathomable. I hope it's no longer controversial to talk about the Democratic National Convention email leaks, which revealed how much power the Clinton campaign really wielded in internal Democrat politics. In 2008, Hillary lost to the young, charismatic, and likable Barack Obama, so this time, she would have this thing on lockdown.

By 2015 the Clinton campaign was in near-total control of the Democratic Party, paying the DNC's debts and keeping it on a financial allowance, keeping it on a leash<sup>4</sup>. Was a Democratic primary even necessary? Everyone knew who was in charge here. It would be a coronation, giving Hillary nothing but the formal blessing to be the nominee. Then the Republicans would surely put up some wealthy, out-of-touch businessman, and America would cheerfully vote for the competent woman instead. Just like you saw on Parks and Recreation, and that one episode of Community. America would have a woman president, directly following the first black president in 2008.

The terrible power of the Clinton campaign was on full display when they dealt with the Bernie uprising. When Bernie Sanders declared his intentions to run he was spoiling what was meant to be Hillary's perfect coronation. Bernie led a people's campaign, unique in that it was funded not by large donors, but by millions of private contributions, averaging \$27 a person. His 2016 campaign is a fond memory to every American progressive. A true populist campaign, which made public debate revolve around issues like universal healthcare and free college education. And at every turn, it made Hillary look like the less idealistic, less progressive candidate. Now, what followed, was the most disgusting, dishonest smear campaign ever seen, where mainstream media outlets tried to convince you that Bernie Sanders, this most sweet and kindly man, the most progressive senator in America, was actually a vicious sexist and a bigot.

And then there was the whole matter of the Super delegates, this antiquated, undemocratic element of the Democratic Party – where roughly one

sixth of all primary delegates were senior party officials who were free to cast their vote for any candidate. Naturally, all of them with the exception of one, supported Clinton from the start, giving her a solid advantage before any votes were cast, and allowing the media to treat her as the established frontrunner. Clinton also received debate questions ahead of time, and colluded with the Democratic Party officials to make sure she is the nominee<sup>5</sup>.

Whether all that is enough to say that the 2016 primary was necessarily rigged against Bernie is a different topic – though it really was – but it is brought up here just to demonstrate the amount of power concentrated around the Clinton campaign – enough to set all these things in motion. It was a political juggernaut of never-before seen proportions. Bernie never stood a chance.

Meanwhile, something completely different was happening on the Republican side. That is not to say that the Republican primary process was somehow less corrupt or more morally pure. Some people may remember that the GOP establishment tried all the same shenanigans during their primary as the Clinton campaign. Only the outcome was different. If the story of the 2016 Democratic Primary is one of a populist movement getting crushed by a political machine, then the story of the GOP Primary is one of a man going up against an organized system – and gaining victory. One hero, alone against the marshaled forces of the Republican establishment. They threw everything they had at Trump – hostile debate moderators, millions of dollars in negative ads – will he be crushed like Bernie?

The thing is – he probably would have been crushed – had he at any point backed down, if he had chosen a more conciliatory approach with Republican Party leaders. It's difficult to say what happened, maybe it was calculation, and maybe it was Trump's natural disagreeableness that made him commit to a total defiance against the Republican old guard. He defined himself by their opposition to them. "I support him because he makes all the right people upset!" is a thing people would say. This opposition instantly made Trump look like the main character in the game. And the fact that he was self-funding his campaign, in addition

to small private donations – like Bernie – gave him the mantle of populism, and set him apart from the rest of the field. Sixteen establishment candidates, standing in the way of one Donald Trump, who is fighting through them one by one.

The first obstacle, the beginner level boss, was Jeb Bush. Before Trump jumped into the race, Jeb was somewhat of a favorite, with the most donor money behind him, as well as the influence carried by the Bush family name. The weakest and least charismatic member of that powerful and venerable clan, Jeb was reduced to being just a warm-up opponent. Poor Jeb's character made him look like he was created for the sole purpose of getting bullied by Trump. And like the Shakespearean foil, against Jeb's weaknesses Trump's strengths shone that much brighter.

Next, the two mid-level bosses, Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz, the schemers, who tried to team up against Trump. But Marco Rubio made a mistake in strategy. He thought: Trump sounds boorish and vulgar – so if I behave in a boorish and vulgar manner myself, it will maybe dispel some of his charm. At a rally, he attacked the size of Trump's hands, possibly implying ...something? But because he is a stuck-up career politician, he could not just say directly what he means – what of it if Trump apparently has small hands? What does that mean? Luckily, Trump, who was not a career politician, was there to explain: "*He hit my hands. Nobody has ever hit my hands. I've never heard of this one. Look at those hands. Are they small hands? And he referred to my hands – if they're small, something else must be small. I guarantee you there's no problem. I guarantee you*"<sup>6</sup>. Foolish Marco Rubio – he tried to out-wrestle the pig in the mud! He thought he could compete with Trump on who can say the most vulgar things – he could not foresee that Trump was going to discuss how well-endowed he is on a national debate stage.

Meanwhile, Ted Cruz picked a different angle. Trump is a New York billionaire, and Cruz thought it's a good idea to attack Trump for being from New York, and supposedly representing New York values. Aside from the fact that it is generally silly to attack a large group of people like that – especially if you're trying to eventually win their sup-

port – there is also an American cultural context to consider. The natural predator Trump saw the obvious mistake immediately: "*New York is a great place, it's got great people, and it's got loving people, wonderful people. When the World Trade Center came down, I saw something that no place on Earth could have handled more beautifully, more humanely than New York.*" Look at how Ted Cruz has to clap along, he realizes that his attack has backfired.

"*You had two 110-story buildings come crashing down. I saw them come down. Thousands of people – killed, and the cleanup started the next day, and it was the most horrific cleanup, probably in the history of doing this, and in construction. I was down there, and I've never seen anything like it. And the people in New York fought and fought and fought, and we saw more death, and even the smell of death. Nobody understood it. And it was with us for months – the smell, the air. And we rebuilt downtown Manhattan, and everybody in the world watched and everybody in the world loved New York and loved New Yorkers. And I have to tell you that was a very insulting statement that Ted made*"<sup>7</sup>. Ted Cruz clapping along, and looking defeated, and not immediately responding was probably the most devastating part of this.

And that was it. The conquest of the Republican Party was complete. At the convention, the Republican establishment bent the knee to Trump – except those who went into political exile or joined the Democrats. The stage was set to face the final boss – Hillary Clinton, placed at the center of the gargantuan political organization which had grown around her, and of which the Democratic Party apparatus was but a part. In addition to copious amounts of funding and positive press coverage, the Clinton campaign now carted out celebrity endorsements. Anyone who was anyone, who was not a complete political outcast, even some mainstream Conservatives, endorsed Clinton. Seldom before was the American political system united to such an extent behind one single individual. Mr. Trump, armed with nothing but his charisma, and the hopes and dreams of millions was going up against Clinton's political leviathan. Thor was go-

ing up against Jörmungandr the Midgard-snake - invincible, and mighty in its wrath.

A part of the strategy of the Clinton campaign at this point was to make Trump supporters despair. If they believe that victory is impossible, they will stay home, and won't bother to vote. Favorable polling agencies kept putting Clinton ahead, to the extent that on the day of the election, the predictions gave Trump a 98% chance of defeat<sup>8</sup>. Trump himself, it is widely rumored, did not expect to win that day<sup>9</sup>. But if you look at his campaign schedule, you will see five separate rallies in five different states, just on the last day alone! It was an effort without hope – only a fool's hope perhaps. And when the results started to come in on November the 9th, Trump supporters were as surprised as Hillary's legion of professional campaign advisors.

It would be difficult to overstate the significance of Trump's victory that day, if for no other reason than simply because of the sheer number of people who made the wrong prediction of its outcome. Everyone thought Hillary would have it. More importantly though, is the number of people who suddenly regained their faith in the system. Especially among right wing circles, a dark kind of cynicism had been growing for a while before the 2016 election. The general liberal trend in politics seemed unstoppable, and the conservative side seemed doomed to fight a long defeat, forever yielding their positions bit by bit. In such a system, does democracy even matter? Aren't you simply choosing the speed at which the country moves in the same, inescapable direction? Trump of course, fed into this sentiment, by saying in advance that the 2016 election would be rigged.

The people Trump proved wrong the most on that election night were not his opponents, but his own supporters. Millions of disillusioned individuals suddenly learned that if they really want, they can elect someone whom the system hates. People who thought that all elections are a sham suddenly got the suspicion that democracy might have been real all along. Millions of disaffected voters were brought back into the political process, and began to engage again with electoral politics and public debate. And on the liberal side, people learned that

if you don't watch it, you may get a racist sexist fascist bigot president – elections have consequences! It is fair to say that nothing has been as invigorating for our democracy – for both sides! – As the election of Donald Trump.

Every great myth is born out of a great victory, and the mythological image that has grown around Trump solidified itself in the wake of that great victory in 2016. But as we all know, this is not where the story ends. It was just the end of Act I. And the subsequent Act II, following the rules of a classical trilogy, has to feature the antagonist – Trump's antagonist in our case – retaliating against the hero. The Empire Strikes Back – and strike back it did. By means fair and foul – depending on how conspiratorially minded you are – the Democrats dealt Trump a decisive defeat in 2020. It doesn't even matter if you believe that the election was fortified, as they say, and that the COVID pandemic was blown out of all proportion by the media in order to damage Trump. The fact remains, that the 2020 election was an absolute rout for the American right, perhaps made even worse by Trump's character, and his unwillingness to concede – like a general, who refuses to make a tactical retreat in time and ends up blundering his whole army. Trump's most zealous supporters foolishly let themselves be trapped, implicated in the US Capitol riot on January 6th, and prisoners were taken. Hundreds have been sentenced to prison, hundreds are still awaiting their sentence. Trump's reputation was in tatters, he looked at that moment dangerously close to an outright traitor to the Republic, an outlaw robbed of all legitimacy.

All attempts to challenge the election in the courts were dismissed – those who have spent some time studying American electoral law know how much leeway individual states have when it comes to organizing elections within their state – even federal elections. If, hypothetically of course, Pennsylvania Democrats fortified the election proceedings in their state, Texas would not have standing to sue them over it. In short, it was a total Democrat victory, a legal victory, a political victory, a moral victory in the eyes of the broad public. Trump went into exile to his Florida estate, not attending Joe Biden's inauguration. Meanwhile, in

the capital, Republicans of all stripes were quickly distancing themselves from their President, disavowing him where they praised him a month before, professing that they were never really on his side in the first place. Legal cases were being drawn up to finish Trump, with charges of sedition being supplemented by older, suddenly surfacing claims of business malpractice. Lawyers are a predatory breed, and Trump's billions now seemed ripe for the taking. This is the end of Act II, and the lowest point of Trump's fortunes. How on Earth can he come back from this?

### **Historical Perspective:**

#### **The Last 1000 Years**

The King in Exile is an old and popular trope in countless stories told in the English-speaking world. The idea that one day, the rightful King will return and restore order and justice keeps coming up in our history. This theme is present in our literature to this day, in Strider from *Lord of the Rings* and his return as Aragorn to the throne of Gondor, or Thorin from *The Hobbit*, or Simba from *The Lion King*. It has been with us for centuries, with King Richard Lionheart returning to the throne in the legend of *Ivanhoe*, same as King Arthur from the ancient Arthurian legend. And of course, our own Bible prophecies in the Old Testament that one day, the Messiah, rightful heir to King David's bloodline will return, and restore the Kingdom of God – today we know him as Jesus Christ.

Just to mention, even people like George RR Martin, an author who is hell-bent on subverting every single narrative trope we know and love in the English-speaking World, can't escape! He can't help but make the King in Exile trope a central narrative in *Game of Thrones* and the *A Song of Ice and Fire* books, with Daenerys Targaryen gathering a court of counter-elites around her in her exile in Slaver's Bay.

Now one may say, what does this have to do with Donald Trump? Actually, this perfectly describes the message of the Trump campaign, the way it presents itself. Its central promise is to return America to a past Golden Age, whether real or imagined. And now that Trump is an actual President-In-Exile, seeking to return to his office, that

message gains new strength as it fits the ancient King-In-Exile narrative trope more and more easily. Trump's campaign now portrays his first term as a Golden Age, the blessed reign of the Golden-headed King, who was unjustly robbed of his office by a conspiracy of crooked schemers and their doddering, senile puppet Joe Biden. Make America Great Again! Trump didn't come up with this campaign motto, of course. Ronald Reagan had it first, and Trump just used it to build continuity to the previous great conservative icon.

However, this continuity goes back much further than the 1980es. In fact, an honest survey of the history of the English-speaking people would reveal that a desire to return to an idealized, mythological past is the main driving political force behind most, if not all, pivotal events in English-speaking history, from the present, going back at least a millennium to 1066 when William the Conqueror brought with him continental European bishops and tax collectors, and a French-speaking court. Ever since, it seems, political advocacy in the English-speaking world revolved at least in some form around returning to an idealized past – when there was trust between men and we were not ruled by foreigners. This of course includes the United States, an English-speaking country, who in the War of Independence fought to preserve their ancient English way of life, which was being encroached upon by a foreign King – George IV was, of course, a ethnic German, and when he sought to suppress the American rebellion – a rebellion of Englishmen – he sent in German mercenaries from the state of Hesse, who felt more kinship to him than to the English colonists, the American founding fathers. The American Civil War of course, was a struggle to preserve the existing order that was the Union, while on the other side the Confederates, in their own view, fought to preserve their own old way of life.

It doesn't even matter, by the way, if the mythology glorifying the past is entirely removed from reality. Advocates for British independence during the Brexit referendum promised a return to the good old days, before Britain had joined the EU, when policy was not dictated to Britain from continental European Brussels. No one seemed to

remember that before Britain joined the EU in 1973, the British economy was in a completely dilapidated state, with worker strikes crippling the country, electricity being rationed, and national confidence being at an all-time low.

Even revolutions against the current order were habitually justified by a desire to return to a better past. In the English civil war the Catholic Scotsman Charles I aspired to rule England like a continental European autocrat, the way he could rule in Scotland. When the English parliament raised its forces in lawful rebellion, the sole aim was a restoration of the sacred ancient order, which had existed in England for centuries, before a foreigner King decided to plague the simple Englishman with his ideas of change and of being more like the rest of Europe. After the parliamentarians won the ensuing English Civil War, they eventually restored the monarchy, the House of Lords, and other institutions, making the so-called English Revolution the most conservative revolution in history.

In fact, so strong is our desire to follow the pattern of righteous restoration that we retrofit our own history to suit it better. The story of the very real King Richard Lionheart, and especially that of his return to the throne, has been shaped by Walter Scott's *Legend of Ivanhoe* and the tales of Robin Hood to form a coherent semi-mythological narrative. The reader may even recognize some parallels to the topic of this essay. After all, King Richard Lionheart, one of the greatest Kings of England, was a huge orange narcissist with a quick temper and natural charisma, who was beloved by his supporters, but who made lots of unnecessary enemies and often, at least in his first term as King, entrusted positions of power to individuals who ended up betraying him.

As soon as Richard became King, he started raising money for the Third Crusade. It is on that Crusade where he got the byname Lionheart, and became famous all over Europe for his martial prowess. However, the less advantageous sides of his character showed themselves as well: When storming the Muslim fortress of Acre, the Duke of Austria had taken a section of the wall with his men, and planted his banner on top of a tower. Richard, feeling somehow injured by this, went up

there and threw the banner down, planting his Royal standard instead. Feeling justifiably disrespected, the Duke of Austria went home, and the crusader army lost a contingent of its forces on account of Richard's Trump-like behavior.

The Third Crusade is a massive topic in itself, so we'll jump ahead to when Richard Lionheart hears troublesome news from home – a group of false barons, in conspiracy with the French King Philip, who had abandoned the Crusade earlier, have proclaimed him to be dead! The barons had crowned Richard's little brother, Prince John Lackland, to be King of England, while the French began assailing English holdings in France. Richard Lionheart hastened home, disguised as a Knight Templar. However, when traveling through the lands of the Duke of Austria, the one whom he had previously offended, he was recognized by the Royal Ring he still wore on his finger. The Duke took him prisoner and locked him up in a castle. Nobody in England knew where he was, if he was alive or not. It never seemed so over.

Not everyone in England accepted Prince John's rule. Holding on to a hope that the true King may one day return, some began to organize a resistance. People went into the woods, into the hills, to evade John's tax collectors. This is where the legend of Robin Hood is born. The story of Robin Hood is the story of a 12th century MAGA loyalist, a man who refuses to accept the rigged coronation of a false King, the unjust taxation by the local sheriff, and the overbearing morality policing done by corrupt bishops. Instead, he becomes an outlaw, and leads his merry band of archers to steal back tax revenues collected by the sheriff's henchmen, all while helping the poor and even saving a local knight from bankruptcy by paying off his debts. Robin Hood's efforts all serve the same higher purpose, however - the restoration of the way things used to be, when there was justice and prosperity in the land under the rule of good King Richard. One day, a rumor reaches England – the King still lives! He is being held prisoner somewhere in Germany. A search begins, and a troubadour who used to sing at Richard's court begins going from castle to castle in order to find him. Outside castle Dürnstein, he sings the first

verse of one of Richard's favorite songs – and out of a tower window there comes the second verse sung by a familiar voice. The King is here!

The Germans demanded a lot of money for his release, and all England gathered two years' worth of tax revenue to pay the ransom for the Lionheart. Despite all attempts made by Prince John to prevent it, the ransom was paid and the King returned to England. He came back clandestinely, dressed as a knight in black. With the help of Robin Hood, so the legend says, and others loyal to him he regained the throne, was crowned a second time, and punished and pardoned those who conspired against him. Richard Lionheart's second term as King was marked by efficient rule, and reforms that laid the foundation for modern governance, though he personally spent most of it outside of England, defending the crown's French possessions.

King Richard's story seems to be a narrative blueprint for Trump's second campaign, because unlike in 2016, it is no longer just about returning to a glorious past, to Make America Great Again. In 2024, it is specifically about the return of one person, of Trump himself – not just *some* right-wing government. In his own view, Trump was robbed of his office by a conspiracy of the modern equivalent of false barons, who have installed their puppet King Joe. In this narrative there is even a place for various pro-Trump activists as the Robin Hoods who organize on the ground while their King is in exile. After all, it was not by his own effort that Richard Lionheart returned, but by the enthusiastic support of the people of England, who wanted their King back.

### Discussion

Humans are by and large narrative-driven creatures – especially Americans, it seems. When Donald Trump is preparing to reclaim the White House, calling Joe Biden illegitimate, and promising a return to a glorious past, he is playing into an ancient narrative, much older than the United States itself. Historically, it has been the narrative behind most, if not all, successful political campaigns in the history of the English speaking peoples – and it is especially effective if the Demo-

crats are refusing to adopt some form of it themselves.

Right now Trump is being hit with court judgments forcing him to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in fines. It would not be at all surprising if in response, millions of right-leaning Americans make additional donations to Trump's campaign – sparing nothing to pay the ransom for their King.

### Conclusion

As we see, there are two powerful narratives driving the Trump 2024 campaign. The first narrative is the need for closure, the sense that a story needs to come to a conclusion. The first act was his win in 2016, the second act was his fall in 2020. Now in 2024, if Trump wins, it will be a tale of a great comeback, and it already seems like all America is preparing for that. The second narrative is the restoration of a great past, the most powerful political slogan in the history of the English-speaking peoples. In this case, it is even stronger, because the return of a righteous order is associated with the return of one specific person, which really makes it sound like a story from medieval England.

Against the power of the narrative, all arguments fall flat. Trump's age did not matter, Trump's character flaws did not matter, and putting up a strictly better right-wing candidate in the primary had no effect. Even striking him with 91 criminal indictments, almost declaring Trump an outlaw, will have no effect against him. In fact, it will likely end up giving him more votes in the end, given America's longstanding tradition of glorifying outlaws, from the heroes of the Old West, to movie heroes like Han Solo, to modern urban culture.

The question is, what if next, they put him in prison, like Richard Lionheart was in Castle Dürnstein. Will Trump's base waver in their support? Or will they follow him to whatever end may come? Looking at Anglo-American history, it seems that they just might. And looking at how various media outlets are frantically bracing for a second Trump term, it seems evident that the currently unfolding narrative in US politics demands a Return of the King.



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