

OPINION | BUSINESS WORLD

If Trump Wins in 2024, Then Who Threatens Democracy?

Democrats need to stop lying to themselves and acknowledge they are part of the problem too.



By

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Donald Trump at a rally in Perry, Ga. Sept. 25.

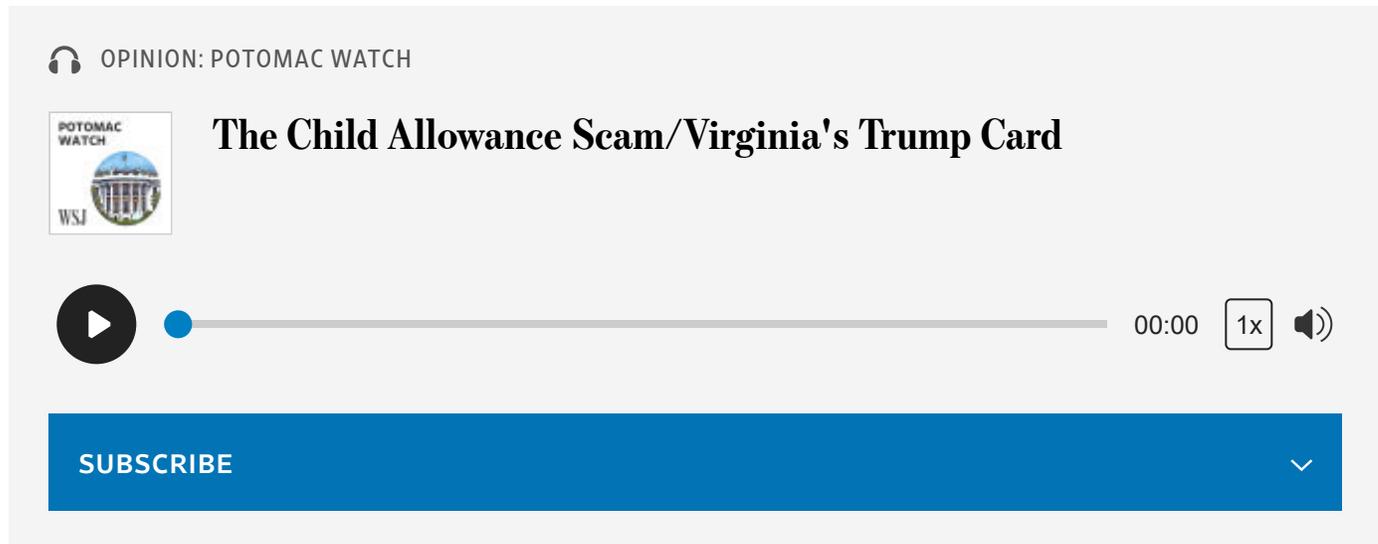
PHOTO: BEN GRAY/ASSOCIATED PRESS

But what if Donald Trump *wins*? I'm referring here to the widely circulated Washington Post [essay](#) by Robert Kagan, a neoconservative pundit associated with the Brookings Institution and the Council on Foreign Relations, warning that “we are already in a constitutional crisis” because of the certainty that Mr. Trump and his voters will reject his defeat in the upcoming 2024 election and trigger the worst crisis “since the Civil War.”

The alternative outcome goes unmentioned thanks to a giant lacuna that exists in half of America's mental landscape, and in the mental landscape of 99% of the media. Mr. Kagan relies on some just-so oversimplification, but we'd be foolish not to see the risk of civil disorder and legal shenanigans as high no matter who loses in 2024. Downtowns were boarded up on the eve of the 2020 race not against angry and aggrieved Trump voters.

Rural riots are hardly a thing. It was in deeply blue areas that local officials feared mass violence if the election didn't turn out the way Democrats wanted.

OPINION: POTOMAC WATCH



The image shows a podcast player interface. At the top left, there is a headphones icon and the text "OPINION: POTOMAC WATCH". Below this is a small square logo with "POTOMAC WATCH" and "WSJ" text, and a circular image of the White House. To the right of the logo is the title "The Child Allowance Scam/Virginia's Trump Card" in a bold, black font. Below the title is a play button icon, a progress bar with a blue dot, and a "00:00" timer. To the right of the timer is a "1x" speed control button and a speaker icon. At the bottom of the player is a blue bar with the word "SUBSCRIBE" in white capital letters and a small downward-pointing chevron icon on the right side.

The Child Allowance Scam/Virginia's Trump Card

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Ask yourself these questions: What was the voting-rights Kabuki of the past eight months all about, concerning a House bill with no chance of becoming law, if not to create talking points to delegitimize future election outcomes? Joe Biden, with premeditation, falsely hid behind the claim that his son's laptop was Russian disinformation. Would he somehow transcend Hillary Clinton and not resort to the same dodge if he lost to Mr. Trump? Why did MSNBC just give Rachel Maddow a new \$30-million-a-year contract through the 2024 election? As punishment for her relentless and uncritical flogging of the collusion story?

You can't analyze realities you refuse to see. Take a recent podcast with the Democratic campaign guru Joe Trippi that borders on the neurotic. He's alarmed not because 75% of voters say they fear for the future of democracy, but because *Republicans* are saying this, since in his mind only Democrats are allowed to feel democracy is under threat (from Republicans, of course).

Listen to most any podcast of David Axelrod or David Plouffe, the former Obama handlers, or any of their professional kin. All talk around the Russia hoax, which consumed three years of the country's life, as if it never happened. The Mueller report, multiple reports by the Justice Department inspector general, now the two Durham indictments are missing in their universe even as half of America is riveted by the story they tell of one of the most consequential political dirty tricks in history.

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At least Republicans can be found who deplore Mr. Trump's postelection antics; on paper, a possibility exists that one could be nominated to office. No such possibility exists on the Democratic side, for an obvious reason: To criticize the collusion hoax would be to cut oneself off from the institutional gravy train of the entire Democratic and media establishment, since all are implicated, with the exception of a handful of left-wing reporters who are dismissed as cranks for seeing what's in front of their eyes.

Remember, it was Stacey Abrams, not Donald Trump, who invented a successful modern career model by rejecting the legitimacy of her election defeat. Mr. Kagan's blind spot is how our national establishment disempowered itself as an upholder of the constitutional and democratic "norms" he now calls on it to defend. What the public sees is liars and frauds in every direction. More alarming, to a certain part of the public, Mr. Trump appears as one man doing his lying and fraudulence in the face of the lying and fraudulence of a near-monolithic establishment. Indeed, a disturbing historical question might cross the minds of those remaining Americans who haven't yet lost theirs. Is it worse to have a leader whose lies and conspiracy theories are refuted by the entirety of the establishment? Or is it worse to have one whose lies and conspiracy theories the establishment reflexively adopts and echoes?

I don't know the answer. It would obviously be better if the question never arose. It would be better, I think, if Donald Trump patriotically announced he won't be taking part in the 2024 election, because he's become too much of an incitement to too many people.

Mr. Kagan and many others refuse to see reality in full. Mr. Trump and his supporters are not the sole authors of our mess. Rewrite the past five years without the Russia collusion fraud and we're living in a different world. Not to admit as much is a gross intellectual dereliction and here's one more: If any of Mr. Trump's disapprovers really cared to take

the fury out of 2024, it would pay to confound the stilted tropes that so many voters live by. All it would take is for Democratic leaders and the media to endorse the Durham investigation, which of course is a giant ask because of the personal and careerist cowardice that would have to be overcome in the process.

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