

That What Most of Us Fail to Remember: Politics as a Neutralizing Game World Designed by Elites

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ABSTRACT

Concepts such as political framing and elite capture have never been thought of as part of the humanitarian foundation of politics. This is, however, not true of identity politics. Christened in 1977 by the Combahee River Collective, identity politics was originally meant to enable a group, composed mainly of black feminist women, to build their own political agenda. Striving to see the full complexity of their values and priorities leveled with those of other political movements, identity politics was looking to reveal limitations from inside groups and widen the scale and scope of problems tackled. Unity was meant to guide society towards a better world. Nevertheless, presently, identity politics often represents a normalized separation between societies whose identities are defined by past history. No longer meant to strengthen the voices of the unheard, it has become a political tool for those exercising significant impact on the political discourse of the present. Similarly, the integrities of both values and religion have, over time, subsided to power as well. With the basic foundations of the world's politics hijacked, a race against time has begun as society's justifications for climbing over people and exploiting the planet's limited resources have driven it to the verge of a disbalance so grave it might prove impossible to reverse. Thereupon, this text aims to analyze the scope of this twisted use of politics, explore activism as a countereffect, and examine the development of society under what can be defined as a never-ending match between "dark" and "light."

Introduction

Politics was created to structure society; it was meant to balance and assure the satisfaction of every individual's necessities, an endeavor that the government was charged with. As time has progressed, politics has undergone evolution as well, keeping up with the advancements of the modern world (press, technology, anti-racism movements) and the effect of those on human nature itself.

Politics is a system based on human nature that has its aims and tactics outlined by individuals's values and convictions. As the human being has globalized himself, there have been changes both in society (the masses) and in the political authorities (the elites). Citizens who had been deemed inferior for many decades (due to race, color, gender, etc.) were now calling out for equality. The government, at a loss as to how to respond to those demands without losing the power they already held over them, drew upon framing for guidance. Framing refers to limiting the view of a group of individuals to a chosen extent, such that they may only perceive the world to be true and function in the way the "designer" intended. The aim of this is to guide citizens towards the path the government needs them on and make sure they stay on it. In terms of politics, it meant reinventing the world from the masses eyes to ensure they would perceive themselves as being caught at an inferior level, meant to follow a different path (study, work, etc.), too distracted to question or remember the demands they had expressed to the government.

Driven by greed and eager to keep amassing power, the benevolent intentions of the human nature of the political leaders began to change. The “elites” forgot about ensuring overall satisfaction and imparting justice to all citizens and focused on continuing to develop the “reality” they wanted to inculcate in their citizens. People changed, their needs were no longer protected and ensured by the government, and human nature began to change amongst citizens as well. Self-serving reasoning was born. Now, there was a clear distinction established between the ruling elite and the masses. This has continued to be observed throughout history in the form of monarchies (during the French Revolution, kings and nobility feasted on excesses while the lower classes continuously starved) and governments (in countries that have a one-party system, it is prohibited to form alternate political parties that may serve better the necessities of their citizens; therefore, the government controls all resources and manipulates the state freely according to its own needs).

To counter, activists were born, concepts preaching freedom and equality were created, and revolutions were deep-rooted among those who felt forgotten. Politics transformed again to preserve itself. Representatives of these forgotten voices, too, were corrupted by the lure of power and turned their backs on their people. They learned to climb over and above them.

The aim of this text is to explore the foundations and scope of this twisted use of politics, follow the chain of reasoning behind the actions taken in its name, contrast resulting advancements (both positive and negative) through an action-reaction effect, and explore present as well as future possible consequences humanity as a global unity could be faced with.

Game World

There is an analogy that is often used to describe some aspects of the present day’s political system. This analogy compares the real world with a game world.

Carefully designed to influence the masses' decisions, the so-called "elite," the influential and rich, have created an environment meant to shape their beliefs according to their needs. They frame their reality, making use of the press, social media, and individuals perceived as knowledgeable and reliable.¹

When people refuse, they are surprised. While this is not exclusively racial prejudice, being applied to all citizens in general, one must admit that it is there where it is most noted, even to the untrained eyes and ears. The people in “charge” of the world seem to have forgotten that color does not represent intellect. They have failed to acknowledge the human capacity for independent choice for so long that they have forgotten it exists. They wish to will “minorities” inside the mold prepared for each of them, segregating humanity systematically by races and trying to buy each “group’s” support through bribes they think must appeal to them. This is a deduction born out of ignorance, of course. Ignorance towards understanding the delicate relationship that exists between ethnic identity and the influence it exercises over an individual's political decisions. Which is, as proven by the New York Times story “Black Voters to Black Candidates: Representation Is Not Enough” conducted in 2020, sometimes none.² It is ignorance towards their citizens' attitude, who refuse to vote on someone solely based upon racial lines, who also happens to be himself an exemplar example of elite capture, but ponder who represents their interests best.³ It is ignorance born out of the elite’s comfortable life, while the rest of the nation struggles and fights a variety of needs and obstacles.⁴ It is plausible to believe that, in time, they have forgotten their responsibility to ease human necessity and that society has become mere numbers for them to consider as part of their “business plan.”

Capturing Values and Religion

They claim they chase and represent democracy. One asks oneself how any of the voters can hope to make an autonomous decision when they take away so easily the basis of their very criteria. When they “capture” something as meaningful as a group's values, “simplifying”, turning them into hollow vessels now carrying whole new definitions. These carefully curated new meanings are meant to legitimize their actions. One can even observe a certain similarity with what is called a “straw man fallacy.” This refers to distorting someone else’s argument to make it easier to refute or attack.⁵ It is then possible to assume that they have found their simplified values easier to bend, as they are no longer the property of the idea that made people believe in them in the first place. In time, the old meaning will be forgotten, and their chosen one will be accepted as solid. Here is where one encounters the concept of “elite capture,” which refers to the theft by the well-positioned, be it by principle or effect, of political projects, public knowledge, attention, or values.⁶ As discussed, this results in the loss, or distortion, of their former meaning and their alternative distribution amongst the world's power structures. Specifically, in the past example, it was “value capture” that was meant.

“Value capture” is not the only “capturing” that exists. Throughout time, there have been many strategies used to persuade voters, but one that is considered essential to analyze is the one regarding religion. This is not just because of the considerable impact it has caused or the actuality with which it is used, but also because of the reasoning that has driven its use so extensively. Religion has an ideological and faith-based nature. This was often considered, mostly by past cultures, for example, Mexico's indigenous villages, to be incorruptible by definition. As such, there was a severe prohibition on the alteration of religion in service of any other matters, and some cultures even went so far as to have priests as political leaders. Sadly, humanity's moral integrity has seriously dwindled in the past centuries. As of the present day, the elite no longer seems to shy away from converting religion into a political tool, entirely to their own advantage. It may very well be the very reason it was so enthusiastically taken up. Some examples of this practice include, for instance, political leaders who have been known to claim legitimacy based on an altered holy text or who have built their offices on the alleged practice of a specific religion, all the while threatening devotees capable of exposing them as deceivers.⁷

The elite captures the world’s politics, treating the state as a ladder to their own goals rather than an institution of collective responsibility. And so, as the subgroup of individuals able to describe, define, and create change amongst societies is significantly different from the set of people who are affected by their decisions, working-class priorities are narrowed down to those shared by the people on top.⁸

The Lure of Reaching the Top

The way to the top, though, is a hard one. It often requires unhuman actions, fueled by unhuman reasons. One ascension usually leaves behind suffering for thousands of the masses, as their own trusted comrades and brothers, who once fought beside them against the same injustice, blinded by desire and opportunity, now climb past them. The same happens with some of the ones representing the voices of the unheard. As they collect power, they also do their best to overlook the destruction they leave behind and the trust of all those whom they are betraying. Chasing the promise of power and privilege, they climb over their fellow brothers without any regret, seeking a way to satisfy their inferiority complex, inflicted upon them by the very same elites they now aspire to replicate. But their transformation is not yet complete. To protect their newly-won status, they will think they find themselves in need of the same framing system they once denounced. “You have become the very thing you swore to destroy ” might have been meant as part of the science-fiction universe of Star Wars, but it can very well be applied to the present day’s society as well.⁹ It highlights most clearly the lure that power exercises on even the strongest members of society. And it also dramatically illustrates how the same once-tempting power can destroy everything one thought one had. As the new elite now likewise delimits the freedom of those who consider them kin, they become, knowingly or unknowingly, the exact same thing they once condemned.¹⁰ Is this not proof enough of the human capacity for inhumanity?

Such are the politics of the present day.

Matter of Color?

This is also true for black elites, which have in the past shown that they, having something to win, also conceived no fault in exploiting the black masses as ruthlessly as the white elites have done to their own white brothers.¹¹ Exemplifying this are the acts of 1900, where the possibility of a black economy was promoted as a realistic solution to disadvantages suffered by the black working class at the hands of their white employers by the black bourgeoisie. In 1957, sociologist E. Franklin Frazier exposed the reasons why this group of advantaged people had advocated for the spread of a false dream, despite existing data revealing the black-owned capital at the time was insufficient to generate an independent black economy. The resulting misguidedness was fueled by the desire to take advantage of employing themselves in white companies because of their alleged knowledge of the black consumer market potential.¹² Hence personal advantage.

This seems to prove that the problem does not lie in the color of man but in man's nature itself.

The Capture of Identity Politics

Taking a closer examination of one of the core factors behind the tendencies addressed above, one finds identity politics. These, in the current day, have been shaped to represent the normalized separation of societies where identities are defined by past history. Whether by chance or deliberately, this has enabled them to serve the narrow set of interests of the elite that deploys them rather than the ones of the vulnerable people they claim to represent.¹³ In other words, they too have been hijacked, "captured," by the elites.¹⁴ Identity politics are no longer meant for the unheard or ignored; they no longer strengthen those voices. Now, their existence is for powerful people to feel less guilty, as if they were doing something.¹⁵ They have become a tool for those who govern the media and news, those who have too much impact on the political discourse of the present.¹⁶ Exemplifying this, identity politics are employed to obstruct the clarification of organizations' purpose and ideals. They have grown a gap so big between ethnic groups that it has caused the failure of countless organizations pledging to stand up for human rights and peace, only to find themselves at a loss when confronted with the contradictory laws and regulations that are supposed to suppress racism.

This is how the elite has twisted identity politics into a tool for their own benefit.

The Rage of the Youth & Activism

But tampering with people's freedom has had side effects that were not considered. Anger. Many won't identify its source, but nevertheless, they will turn it into violence, often against their fellow companions instead of the guilty ones. The crime rates skyrocket, and the government asks why, but it fails to see the fury of the teenagers who, one by one, wake up to reality and find themselves in a broken world.¹⁷ The young are those who discern the injustice woven into society as they are forced to adjust to it. Now, no longer outraged but looking to rise up in society, they adopt the same pattern they despised: to climb over other human beings for personal advantage. And so the calling of the young is silenced by the distractions of "growing up." As their rage is persuaded into oblivion, the next generation of life support for the rich is ensured, but there is another group of people. Those who insist on seeing the injustice behind the sugar-coated lies fed to them. Those who never forget the feeling of impotence when they first discover the real world to be unfair. They are those who will greet frustration as a constant companion in their lives from a very early age. These remarkable individuals who are part of society will be the only ones to correctly identify their anger as the result of the constant sidelines and devaluation of their needs and hopes, both by society and the government.

And as every action tends to provoke a reaction, activists will be born. Exemplifying this, a relevant movement for the present topic emerged in 1974, when the Combahee River Collective called out the political system for its corruption and made its stand alongside all their brothers and sisters who had experienced the oppression of their voices and ideas. They built their own agenda where, for the first time, the full complexity of their values and priorities was in view, and they would be leveled with other political movements. Contrary to interpretation, they were not looking to segregate from other races but to reveal limitations from inside other groups and widen the scale and scope of problems tackled. To form a unity with anybody who had a voice to be heard, brought together by their shared oppression, towards a better world. This was the original concept that was christened identity politics.¹⁸

Doomsday

There is one more perspective on it that one should care to discuss. With its importance and crucial role in society proven by the recurrent and effective “capture” of it by the elite to their own means, religion continues to be an important pillar of every society on the planet. So what would happen if one were to look at the present topic from a religious viewpoint? For these purposes, it suffices to imagine the existence of a higher being, if that is something one should choose to believe in, to be able to acknowledge that there might be some metaphorical benefit, if not warning, to be gained from such an inquiry.

"Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence. God observed all this corruption in the world, for everyone on earth was corrupt. So God said to Noah, - I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth! - "(Genesis 6:11-13)¹⁹

This is an excerpt from the Catholic Holy Bible. It addresses a passage where God, tired of human inhumanity and cruelty, vows to destroy all living things that breathe through a devastating flood.²⁰ I offered this Catholic comparison as acceptable due to the fact that most societies agree on the existence of one or more higher beings, which, while named and represented differently, all remain beneficial to humankind.²¹

The passage itself retells a widely known story, but the proposed version focuses mainly on the distaste that God held towards the unkindness and violence that humanity had fallen into. Said disfavor was the catalyst that caused the destruction of humanity, which one could say was brought upon it by itself. As a remnant of the “indigenous” roots of many, even throughout the world's present societies, the concept of a higher being often continues to act as a guideline for what is and is not righteously accepted. Therefore, many religions’ attribution to their higher beings of a similar dislike towards what will be defined for these purposes as “negative” or “destructive” human behavior, which is frequently taken against the masses as a result of the elite’s twisted use of identity politics and the strategies with which the “rules” of the “game world” are established, may be a way of bringing the gravity of the problem closer to people's awareness. Religion in all its representations has proven a powerful tool, influencing, via its deep-running roots in devotees, personal convictions, as well as beliefs. It could now be used to “wake up”—to draw urgent attention to this matter that is intentionally dismissed by so many at the political top.²²

Further, if one refuses to conceive of the idea of religiousness, let it be treated from a historical angle. History, it is said, has to be learned and studied, so bad choices don’t get repeated. Humankind’s failure to avoid behaviors harmful to their own brothers has, in a metaphorical interpretation of the passage above, already once resulted in the destruction of humanity, in this case, through God’s hand. One could say tragedy was brought upon them by themselves. They had become self-destructive. This is a metaphor one can take into the real modern world. Self-destruction is an adjective one can and should use to describe human nature when turning one’s gaze towards what the endless strive for the accumulation of more and more power is doing to society’s environment. That quest for “progress” through the ranks, the promise of reaching the top, of making the choices—all that justifies the seeming need to exploit the planet's limited natural resources while striving to

accumulate those precious financial resources that promise to open the door to power. This has not only destroyed the masses that were climbed upon but also the planet, which is exploited in the fashion of "means to an end" without regard for the natural balance that sustains humanity's very own survival.

Such is the warning to take home from this: if society does not radically transform itself during the next few years, it may find itself on the verge of a natural disbalance so grave that it might not be possible to reverse it.²³ Such an environmental disbalance could very well be the end of human life as we know it.

As unpleasant as it is to consider, if human nature is in fact capable of all the terrible things it has been accused of at the length of the past pages, society might find itself at a place where it could leverage running such a risk as the one of suffering a tragedy the size of the one described in Noah's Ark. Instead of waiting for a damaged planet to deliver the doomsday to humankind that is of his own making, humanity may, metaphorically speaking, implement its own rebirth. Not like the passage through "destroying all living things that breathe," but by renewing itself from its very roots: the young.²⁴

The Political World of the Present Day

We have now pursued some of the concepts that, sadly, have been considered to shape the political world of the present day. We have searched throughout history for events that exemplify them and followed their trace all the way to the present. We have carefully disentangled a part of the foundation of today's society, both on the political side and on the human one. We have strived to understand the place human nature takes amongst the endless human quest for power. We have considered the function the media and press take as tools of the political strong. We have looked at the drastic transformation concepts like identity politics have suffered, "captured," and their use turned from liberation to neutralization. We have seen the integrity of both values and religion subside to power as well. We have seen politics turn into a matter of numbers, not people. We have looked at the consequences that are disregarded and remain untold about a political ascension. We have seen individuals have their voices overlooked by the government, and representatives of those voices trade their trust for power. We have discussed people being discarded due to social status, color, or race. We have seen brothers take advantage of each other. We have seen crime rates worldwide skyrocket. We have noticed the frustration of the youth and shared the rage of many after their first encounter with "reality." We have watched with anguish the anger of our future perish under outside pressure, adjusting to meet the standard. We have considered the disasters, both internal and external, that our society seems to be doing its best to create. We have seen humanity destroy both its people and our wonderful planet.

But we have also watched new information appear—evidence that is helping to break the rule of ruling politics through generalized assumptions. But we have also seen people demonstrate their capacity for individual thinking, refusing to follow the path laid out for them by elites. But we have also read about individuals who denied and bid halt to deceivry that was meant to circulate the masses, spreading ideas that favored the ones aspiring to climb up or already on top. But we have also seen new concepts rise, born out of the need to be heard, and seen them prevail together against oppression. But we have also watched individuals stand up side by side, following the call to equality and inclusion. But we have also heard voices denouncing the theft of liberation ideals, former property of political organizations, rising up against all odds, looking to be seen, heard, and respected as equals. But we have also seen individuals rectifying the content that was given to both values and religion to their original splendor. But we have also discussed the fight of some to assure consideration of the needs and priorities of many. But we have also heard powerful voices preaching for unity through social status and being heard through all of them. But we have also seen individuals who fight and resist to adjust to society, all with the same dream of a better world. But we have seen activists born, devoting their lives to a cause. But we have also seen the use religion's influence has and could be increased for waking up people's awareness all over the world. But we have also explored the possibility of a society reborn. But we have also seen the next generation as one of hope.

Such, we are told, is the political world of the present day. And then, we are told, there continue to be some who refuse to accept it. A never-ending match between “Dark” and “Light.”

Conclusion

Ultimately, the proposed analogy of a game world with our real world, which is used to explain in its most simple version the current concept of politics as a system, clearly conveys and exemplifies the use that the “elites” have given to politics to ensure it continues to serve as a tool for their own necessities. It is critical to understand this use when attempting to examine the concept as a whole, due to the particularity that this topic depends on such a context to provide the analyzer with some important reference points that have guided its modification through the ages. While politics has in the past adapted according to the world around it, it has also never left behind certain guidelines (characteristics that could not fail to be present in it). For example, the ones enabling the elite to use politics to their benefit.²⁷

Portraying how the rules of idea and possibility were so easily implanted and then developed by a small part of the population to ensure the majority of it would remain neutralized (caught up inside distraction after distraction), the idea of a game world is a complex concept. As such, it is bound to possess a considerable number of “variables,” if one may call them that. It could prove interesting to compare the “idea of the world” of individuals out of the masses who prevailed and achieved impactful self-made success, and if these were passed on to them by their parents or contained alterations made by themselves. Similarly, it could also provide an expanded perspective if one were to compare said variables to research on the “understanding of the world” that important political figures and their families (especially the ones they teach to their young children) use as a map to navigate a continuously changing world.

It remains a fact that there will always be “glitched,” remarkable individuals who find the spark in themselves that enables them to remain to see with clarity that tricked system that most others forget into adulthood. Many dedicate their lives to mending the broken world that enrages them, and society depends on its activists to remind them of the injustices existing and the efforts undertaken to prevent them from changing. Different countries have different issues, and humanity should face them with unity.

What would happen if more people chose to want a part in it?

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