

MSNBC's *The ReidOut*

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JOY REID: Good evening, everyone. We begin *The ReidOut* with a warning. This could be it. We may be in the waning years of America as a democracy. I know. I know. I know. That sounds like hyperbole. But just hear me out. One of the two major parties, the Republican Party, has surrendered completely to a narcissistic autocrat, Donald Trump and the cancer of the big lie has spread throughout the Party's ranks. We now have Republican members of Congress openly musing about civil war with Marjorie Three Names of Georgia polling her supporters as to whether they'd support a national divorce. Spoiler alert. They do. And what the Republicans hope to turn this country into is so unthinkable — think Texas except everywhere — with the garish and despicable Donald Trump as the maybe permanent president completely unleashed with full control, once again, of the Justice Department, the military, the CIA, the FBI, et cetera, et cetera, plus the nuclear codes. Even as we speak, Republicans when they're not banning books about race or putting abortion bounties on women or nuking the right to vote for anyone who isn't on their team are hurriedly installing hand-picked Trump loyalists into every realm of government, packing local election with partisan foot soldiers and purging opposition forces. When fascism arrives in America, as congressman Adam Schiff warned this morning, the fix is in.

[SCHIFF CLIP]

REID: Anybody who doubts the risk that we face, need only look at the Eastman memo. Trump lawyer John Eastman literally put in writing a blueprint for stealing a presidential election. And once Trump gains control of state election boards, don't kid yourself into thinking that he won't try it again. Now, the conservative think tank that employs, the Claremont Institute, is, no surprise, trying to whitewash his role in the attempted coup and we'll get to that tonight too. For better or worse, this country long had a two-party system which, although sometimes messy, has managed to honor the will of the voters. The problem now is one party decided they don't have to do that anymore. In his column, Michael Gerson, former speech writer to George W. Bush, plainly says what should be evident to every American who cares about their future: "Trump has strengthened his identification with the seditious forces he unleashed on January 6th. He has shown even less stability, humanity, responsibility, and restraint. And his support among Republicans has grown." Gerson warns that: "It is increasingly evident that the nightmare prospect of American politics — unified Republican control of the federal government in the hands of a reelected, empowered Donald Trump in 2025 — is also the likely outcome." As the only party left that actually supports democracy, it's incumbent that Democrats prevent that outcome because Republican victories in 2022 and 2024 could literally mean the end of free elections. And yet, for Democrats, the challenges of winning and retaining office is two-fold. They'll have to overcome the built in disadvantage at the ballot box that are baked into the system to advantage rural voters, the apportionment of electoral votes, gerrymandered districts, and voter suppression just to name a few. That's why a number of rational, pro-democracy Republicans have spoken out in support of electing Democrats. As conservative author Max Boot

writes, "I'm a single issue voter. My issue is the fate of democracy in the United States." He says: "Simply put, I have no faith that we will remain a democracy if Republicans win power. Thus, although I'm not a Democrat, I will continue to vote exclusively for Democrats...until the GOP seizes to pose a threat to our freedom." [INTRODUCES PANEL] And Max, you know, it is this weird thing where you and I started out on very opposite sides of the world in terms of our beliefs about things like the Iraq War and we are now on the same side. I have lots of critiques of Democrats myself, but, you know, walk us through how you got to the point where you're saying just vote exclusively for Democrats because I know in Virginia right now, there's a Republican that tried to put himself forward who, when I look at him, I see another guy to get pressured to go along and also do whatever it is Trump wants in 2024 and throw out votes. So are you where I am?

MAX BOOT: Absolutely, Joy. I mean, I think this is a time when everybody who is a small-d democrat has to unite in support of the big-D Democratic Party and I mean, kind of the premise of my column was, you know, we're hearing so much about the debates in Washington about the Build Back Better bill. Should it be \$3.5 trillion? Should it be \$2 trillion? Whatever. Honestly, I'm agnostic. I'm not sure what the size ought to be but what I do know for sure is that we should not get so wrapped up in that that we lose sight of the larger stakes here and I'm hearing people say, oh, you know, if Joe Biden can't get this big bill through Congress, then the Democrats are going to be in big trouble next year and that may be true but it shouldn't be true because anybody out there who cares about the fate of our democracy has to realize that there is no way you can support Republicans under the present circumstances because this is a party a lot of which already went along with the coup attempt in January of this year and since then, all the Republicans who didn't go along with the coup, they're all being purged. You know, being part of the Big Lie is now becoming a litmus test for the Republican Party. Even though we see new revelations almost every day about Donald Trump's attempt to overthrow our democracy, more than 60 percent are Republicans still supporting him and the only Republican office holders that don't support him are in danger of losing reelection. They — you know, Liz Cheney lost her leadership position in the House. So, there is no way I can look at the Republican Party as it is currently constituted and have any confidence that, if they win power in 2022, in 2024, that American democracy will survive. And that's why I'm saying we have to vote for big-D Democrats until the threat to our democracy passes.

REID: You know, and Maya, it kind of is like a political Jonestown, right, where you may have had some people that taught — in my late mother's former country Guyana where these Americans came down there. They had this charismatic, cult leader and there were some people that questioned maybe this isn't right. Maybe I shouldn't drink that kool-aid but they were bullied or injured or killed and in the end, most people just went along, even though they saw what was happening. There is this sort of aspect to the Republican Party now where it is a full-on cult now and if you're not — I look at Brad Raffensperger in Georgia who started off doing the right thing and now is peddling back so fast he and Brian Kemp can't pedal back fast enough from where they were last fall, which means if those two men are in power in any way, next time, they're going to go along with it because they have been completely bullied and beaten down. Are you — do you think the Democrats are — are afraid enough? Because I see them out there arguing whether it's going to be another billion there, another billion there on their bill like that's going

to matter if we don't have a democracy.

MAYA WILEY: Yeah, I want to just say I don't think Democrats are concerned enough and I think we do have some hope about democracy because of Max Boot and he's not the only one who's standing up and saying what saves a democracy is the protection of its institutions and I think that is what Democrats are focusing on with the January 6th committee. Let's just — let's be clear. It's not that Democrats aren't doing work and hard work right now to do that but there's not — there's been nothing clear for the past five years that our institutions have been under attack. And I — when you were speaking, I was just reflecting, Joy, on how it was Officer Harry Dunn on the first day of the January 6th committee who said why is it so hard to tell the truth? This is a black man who was also called the n-word several times as someone trying to protect the Republicans that were sitting in that building and traumatized for it. And I think all those things come together, right? Whether it's a President who was trying to get the Department of Justice [to] politicize it on multiple occasions, not the least of which was leaving office trying to get it to investigate things that it, in terms of voter fraud, that it said didn't have any evidence for. But I also want to call another thing out and you already reflected on this, Joy, is there is nothing new here. Because this started, you know, as early as 1980 when you had a conservative activist in the form of Mr. Weyrich say, I don't want everyone to vote and by 2010, it had become a national legislative strategy to make it harder for citizens to vote despite their legal rights. And so, I think many people have been calling this out, frankly, for over a decade and that what we're seeing now is really that hard anti-democratic work bearing real fruit and Democrats are fighting on that front and we need more Republicans to do the same.

REID: I mean, the John Birch Society is back, Max. I mean, I think that what Maya said is absolutely true. Some of the forces that we thought had been beaten back inside of conservatism that have been trying to take it over for a very long time are all back and it's from the thugocracy side, the people who are crapping in the capitol literally to try to bully members of congress into stealing an election. All the way up to the sort of faux-intellectual side. The Claremont Institute. A nondescript think tank, which has this guy, John Eastman, they're now trying to defend it and try to defend what he did, he wrote a memo how to steal an election. Wrote it down. Was not afraid to put in writing. This is the same guy who tried birtherism, published a piece doing birtherism against Kamala Harris, essentially making the argument that this woman, because she's of — of immigrant heritage, black immigrant heritage isn't qualified to be president. So, there have been creeping pieces of it before but just Trump crystallized it. What do you think it is about him that made him the perfect vehicle to take what were decades long forces and crystallize them into this cult?

BOOT: Well, I think you're right, Joy and Maya. I think you're both right that these forces have been there in the Republican Party for a long time but there are also countervailing forces in the establishment-wing of the Republican Party and, Joy, you mentioned the John Birch Society. And yeah, these folks were looney toons. I mean, they thought that fluoridation was a communist conspiracy but remember, they rose in the '50s and '60s when you had Republican leaders like President Eisenhower or President Nixon who were standing up to them and pursuing a much more moderate path. And I think what happened with Trump is he has basically destroyed any kind of elite resistance to the most extremist, conspiratorial, white supremacist, just plain nutty

elements of the Republican Party. There's nobody like a Mitt Romney or John McCain who can lead the Republican Party in a saner direction right now. Anybody who has tried like Liz Cheney has been kneecapped and so all the — this is — in my view, joy, this is really monumental failure of Republican elites, truly shameful what's happened because there have always conspiracy mongers, these racists, these nuts at the grass roots of the party but you've never had Party leadership that has welcomed them with open arms and driven out the moderates while embracing the extremists and that's what Donald Trump has done and he has maintained his hold on the Republican Party even after presiding over the worst pandemic and the worst recession in — in — in multiple decades even after trying to overthrow our government, none of that seems to matter.

REID: Yeah.

BOOT: And we see new revelations like the Eastman memo. Republicans don't care about that. They don't care about that guy that they are following tried to overthrow the government and right now, I think there is pretty much general consensus in political circles if Donald Trump runs again, he'll win the Republican nomination again and, frankly, it's not impossible that he could win the presidency because even though President Biden won by a huge popular vote margin, this margin in the electoral college was very, very small —

REID: Yeah

BOOT: And it could be reversed. So, this is just as alarming as it can be and it comes down really, bottomline to the complete moral application of the Republican Party leadership.

REID: And I would add the weakness of the courts, Maya. I mean, we just had somebody sentenced, one of these Capitol insurrectionists, what she got? 14 days in — in jail. These sentences have seemed very light. The resistance from the DOJ has seemed very weak. Is part of the problem here is that — and Donald Trump is still walking around. He's got cases, you know, maybe pending in Georgia. Is part of the problem is that our legal system and the Democratic Party are reacting to it to — too gently, too delicately?

WILEY: We have to remember two things, Joy. And one is that our judiciary is made up by people appointed by people who win public office. So, when we start to talk about partisan gerrymandering, about voter suppression, about all things that resulted in a Trump administration that could, frankly, design the courts, when we watched Mitch McConnell deny Barack Obama his constitutional right to get hearings on his judges, to slow walk judges, to use that power of office to actually really rebuild the courts and we saw it in 1980 also with Ronald Reagan. I mean, what we get is a much more ideological courts in ways that we should acknowledge. But I think it's something else, too. I mean, the truth is and this is why the January 6th committee is so important. Part of the job of Congress is to identify where it has to strengthen legislation and find new laws that are important to protect democracy, to protect the rule of law, but if Congress itself is gridlocked, politicized, and not functioning with democracy in mind, in the way that Max is talking about, it does also have an impact on the powers of the court.

REID: Yeah.

WILEY: And so, unless we're willing to do the truth-telling that Officer Dunn called us to —

REID: Yeah

WILEY: — we also aren't going to get the lawmaking we need.

REID: Indeed. We got too many Vichy Republicans like McConnell and Kevin McCarthy who are willing to play along. But a few Democrats are the Vichy side, too because I'm thinking about a couple of them who are willing to let this democracy just so that they can cut the size of a — of a — of an infrastructure bill. I don't know for who or for whose benefit. Maya Wiley, Max Boot, scaring is caring. It's what we say on this show. Thank you both very much.