Rory McVeigh and Kevin Estep, *The Politics of Losing: Trump, the Klan, and the Mainstreaming of Resentment*

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4 Since Trump has taken office, America has been enthralled by the idea of the rise of fascism. However, American fascism or ultra-nationalism is not a new phenomenon but has been lingering on the fringes of society in many forms. The leaders of these movements have mobilized white resentment amongst its members by stoking fear regarding the effects of globalization and migration on the American economy. This has led to an outbreak of fundamentalisms, nativism, nationalisms, and separatisms symbolizing the failures of liberal society as a direct threat on the white American middle-class.
5 Rory McVeigh and Kevin Estep provide an interesting historical comparison of the conditions that allow white nationalism to emerge from the fringes of society by analyzing the parallels between the 1920s Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and today’s right-wing movements. In the American experience, fascism has historical roots in anti-Semitic evangelical Christianity, which has allowed groups like the KKK and current right-wing movements to normalize themselves by developing formal national customs to shield the political and violent practices of their organizations. The KKK and other far-right groups have been strengthened by identity politics both on the left and right which has focused on the political debate about poverty and redistributive policies for marginalized groups. As the debate has intensified in the American conversation, the left has forgotten about the white middle-class by concentrating on other at-risk groups. This has placed left-leaning activist groups and the Democratic Party at odds with a white middle-class constituency that used to be at the foundation of their
success. As a result, and to advance its own white nationalistic agenda, the Trump administration has leveraged an anti-immigration and globalization discourse which can be compared to that used by the KKK in the 1920s.

6 The authors deliver a striking analysis by comparing the Klan's tactics of the 1920s to Trump's economic populism which has ignited a cultural resentment within the white middle class. This historical analysis tells a story of a white middle-class Protestant America in the 1920s directly impacted by an industrializing economy that depended on foreign and urban labor. As illustrated in the book, the declining privilege and perception of lost power was the tipping point to a political backlash to save the ideals of the white middle class. In this context, the analysis explains the conditionality for the control of organizational power in far-right politics that is the prerequisite for a sustainable movement.

7 Most importantly, perhaps, the book presents how Trump's rise to power is a convergence of circumstances rather than a foreign form of extremism that America has not encountered in the past. The organizational power of both the 1920s Klan and the Trump administration has been directly linked to election outcomes because of economic grievances. This can be seen in Trump's 2016 election that was an expression of resentment from the white middle-class against the cosmopolitan liberal elite. To prove this claim, the authors applied the power devaluation model that demonstrates the responsiveness in supporting white nationalism. This model strengthens the book's thesis by characterizing the power relationships between the political arena and economy in a competitive marketplace of ideas. Comparing both time periods highlights the fluctuations in value placed on white nationalism in relation to the rest of society. In demonstrating these fluctuations in time and space, this analysis incorporates the structural importance of economic issues (e.g. trade, globalization, labor, and migration patterns) in the conditions that are necessary for white nationalism to thrive. These economic issues linked to identity politics have allowed the 1920s Klan and Trump to capture the losing status of the white middle-class with protectionist policies.

8 The current political climate in America represents the first time that fascist discourse is so openly displayed in the White House. This is evident in Trump's politics during his first term as president and how the 2020 presidential elections have advanced a narrative of white nationalism. The Trump administration's inability to denounce far-right activist groups has put historical societal cleavages in identity and race at the forefront of the national conversation. “The Politics of Losing” demonstrates similarities between the 1920s Klan and the Trump administration in political power, capital, and organizations, and reminds us that fascism has historically been present in American politics. McVeigh and Estep brilliantly demonstrate the endurance of white nationalism in American politics by showing how Trump brought it back into the political mainstream. The comparison between the 1920s Klan and the Trump administration is too important to ignore.