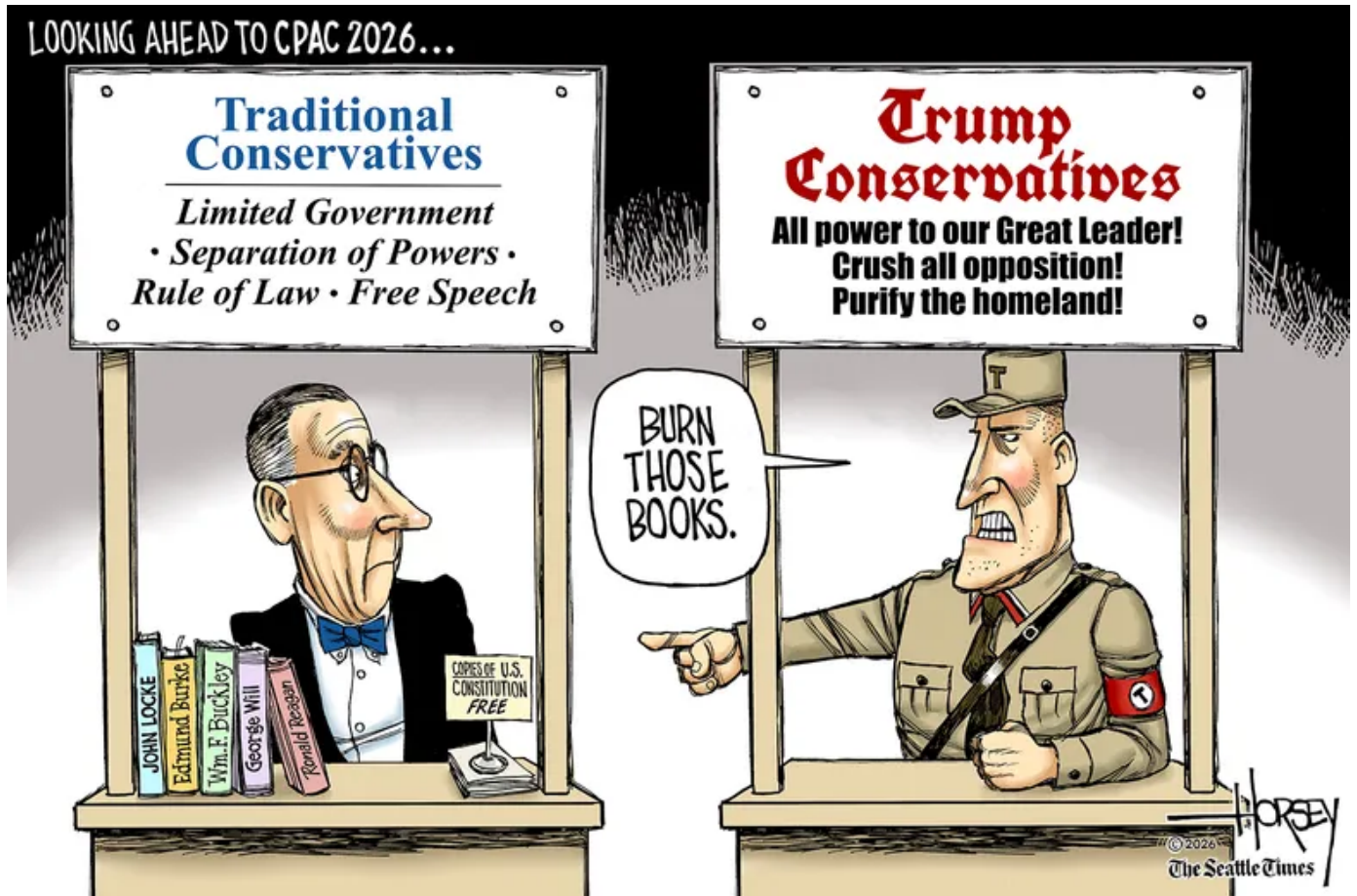


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Conservatism, Trumpism and the F-word

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By
[David Horsey](#)
 Seattle Times cartoonist

When is it correct to use the F-word? Not the four-letter one that has become so common it barely raises an eyebrow, the seven-letter political word: fascist.

[The term arose with the early 20th-century European political movement that gave us Hitler and Mussolini](#), so it weighs heavy with the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust. But arguably, there are 21st-century fascist regimes, even if they do not brand themselves with the term. Hungary's leader, Viktor Orban, qualifies as a fascist. Russian President Vladimir Putin certainly does. Even the supposedly communist regime in China is more fascist than Marxist.

Broadly defined, what is a fascist? Here are some key characteristics: A fascist supports a charismatic nationalist leader who seeks total or near total power. A fascist is a member of a party or a movement that supports that leader without question. Fascists believe political opposition is illegitimate and subversive and that perceived enemies of the state — whether in the news media, in popular culture, in academia or in competing political parties — must be suppressed or, if it is the leader's wish, prosecuted and tossed into prison. A fascist believes private industry, the courts and elected officials should all be in thrall to the leader. And a fascist has no objection to the leader's quasi-military secret police committing acts of political violence and rounding up alien groups perceived to be a detriment to the homeland.

Traditional conservatives are as anti-fascist as any liberal. Their political vision is derived by libertarian thinkers of past centuries, such as John Locke and Edmund Burke. Their modern philosophy was articulated by erudite commentators like William F. Buckley and George Will. Their political heroes are men like Ronald Reagan and John McCain.

Today on the right, there are plenty of folks who call themselves conservatives — they are all over social media, they fill every time slot of Fox News and they dominate the Republican Party. [Yet, these claimants to a long tradition that favors limited government, the rule of law and the advancement of liberty are unquestioning supporters of a president whose actions are those of a lawless, aspiring dictator.](#)

These people who claim to be conservatives yet enthusiastically cheer for a man who violates the core tenets of traditional conservatism every day should stop pretending they are something they are not and simply accept the better description of what they have become. It is a word that starts with F.

See more of David Horsey's cartoons at: st.news/davidhorsey