

## Postscript

When I submitted my manuscript for peer review in May 2024, I concluded with a warning: the catastrophic mishandling of the Covid response and the refusal of the establishment to acknowledge, let alone address, their own failures could pave the way for the extreme right in several countries. Since then, far-right parties have won or made significant electoral gains in France, Hungary, Italy, Austria, Slovakia, the eastern provinces of Germany, the Netherlands, and Romania, while Donald Trump won the US election.

The liberal left has yet to reckon with the consequences of its contempt for the lower half of society. Mainstream media narratives and social media feeds have attributed Donald Trump's reelection to racism, sexism, and the stupidity of the American electorate, while they studiously avoid contemplating their own responsibility in the Democrats' debacle. A few American colleagues have openly resorted to labeling students they suspect of supporting Donald Trump as "fascists."

The journal *Scientific American* exemplifies the politicization of science and the erosion of professional boundaries that have become characteristic of the Covid era. On election night, its editor-in-chief, Laura Helmuth, posted on Bluesky: "Solidarity to everybody whose meanest, dumbest, most bigoted high-school classmates are celebrating early results because fuck them to the moon and back. I apologize to younger voters that my Gen X is so full of fucking fascists."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Maya Yang, "Scientific American Editor Steps down after Calling Trump Supporters 'Fascists' and 'Bigoted,'" *The Guardian*, November 16, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2024/nov/16/scientific-american-editor-steps-down>.

She resigned after the backlash her remarks generated, yet her statement encapsulates the left's tendency to blame voters for failing to meet its expectations, rather than the other way around. This attitude has left many progressives struggling to comprehend why segments of the Democrats' traditional base—including many Latinos and African Americans—opted to vote for Donald Trump over a Black woman.<sup>36</sup>

Such a reaction reminds me of Bertolt Brecht's famous quip in "The Solution," written in 1953 after the East German Communist Party blamed the people for rebelling against their rule: "Some party hack decreed that the people had lost the government's confidence and could only regain it with redoubled effort. If that is the case, would it not be simpler if the government simply dissolved the people and elected another?"<sup>37</sup> As with communism studies, we would do well to adopt a social perspective on Covid rather than a political one. It would allow us to understand the present developments through the lived experiences of individuals and communities, rather than be constrained by political dogma and ideological frameworks.

While Bernie Sanders and Chris Cuomo have made commendable efforts to confront the Democrats' "betrayal of the working class" and their "mass delusion,"<sup>38</sup> "limousine liberals"

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36 John Harris, "From Trump's Victory, a Simple, Inescapable Message: Many People Despise the Left," *The Guardian*, November 10, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/nov/10/donald-trump-the-left-social-media-rightwing-propaganda-progressives-woke>.

37 See the entry "Die Lösung," *Wikipedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Die\\_Lösung](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Die_Lösung).

38 See Bernie Sanders' Twitter post (@BernieSanders), "It should come as no great surprise that a Democratic Party which has abandoned working class people would find that the working class has abandoned them," Twitter, November 6, 2024, 10:14 pm, <https://x.com/BernieSanders/status/1854271157135941698>, and Chris Cuomo's (@ChrisCuomo), "So, we learned last night a political truth," Twitter, November 7, 2024, 2:59 am, <https://x.com/ChrisCuomo/status/1854342764722364569>.

remain far from questioning whether their “sneering condescension” and “exclusion” of ordinary voters has been a productive strategy.<sup>39</sup> Instead, they appear intent on already preparing their defeat in 2028. Comedian Bill Maher, known for his left-leaning sympathies but also for being an unabashed critic, remarked how amazing it was that an electoral disaster of such magnitude “still doesn’t put a dent in the thinking that lost it.”<sup>40</sup> On his HBO show *Real Time*, Maher added:

The reason I’m so mad at the Democrats is because as a voter, the issues that were important to me were democracy and the environment. And now there’s no one to champion or defend either of them because you, with your aggressively anti-common sense agenda and shitty exclusionary attitude, blew it. You lost everything, the House, Senate, White House, Supreme Court, and left us completely unprotected and ready to be violated.<sup>41</sup>

One word that Democrats and liberals worldwide have rarely uttered in the wake of their electoral defeats is “lockdown.” Their indignation has failed to spark reflection on the lockdown policies that proved to be economic insanity for a working class whose livelihood depended on going out to work. The inflation caused by months of paying people to stay

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39 I borrow these expressions from Bridget Phetasy, “Lectures from Limousine Liberals,” *Tablet*, October 19, 2022, <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/lectures-from-limousine-liberals>.

40 See Bill Maher’s Twitter post (@billmaher), “It’s amazing how an election loss, even as big as this one, still doesn’t put a dent in the thinking that lost it,” Twitter, November 16, 2024, 5:03 am, <https://x.com/billmaher/status/1857635615031934984>.

41 Zachary Leeman, “Bill Maher Goes Scorched Earth on Dems for ‘Doubling Down’ on ‘Anti-Common Sense Agenda’ after Losses: ‘Stop Digging!’” *Mediaite*, November 16, 2024, <https://www.mediaite.com/tv/bill-maher-goes-scorched-earth-on-dems-for-doubling-down-on-anti-common-sense-agenda-after-losses-stop-digging/>.

home pushed the middle class toward financial instability and drove many in the lower middle class into outright poverty. Economic inequality has reached new levels in both the West and the developing world, reversing decades of progress.<sup>42</sup> While liberal media outlets find moral gratification in criticizing figures like Elon Musk for “spreading disinformation,” and while they make a show of abandoning Twitter for Bluesky, they seldom reflect on how pandemic-era economic policies dramatically increased Musk’s fortune and influence. As for the idea that a less invasive approach, such as focused protection, might have been a better response to Covid, it remains anathema.

Such moral posturing has hindered liberals from addressing the deep-seated corruption surrounding the pharmaceutical industry in the Covid vaccine rollout. One glaring example is the conflict of interest involving Anthony Fauci, who led a public institution that co-owned the patent for the Covid vaccine while ostensibly offering impartial guidance to the public. This concerning overlap remains either ignored or suppressed by mainstream media. Moreover, the combined forces of censorship and self-censorship—arguably the most extensive since World War II—are still partially intact. Kamala Harris, during her campaign, even pledged to reinforce censorship. For those not swept up in self-righteous narratives, the so-called “mystery” behind Trump’s appeal becomes less perplexing.

While Trump’s campaign promises are unreliable, the Covid narrative has been rapidly unraveling in the fall of 2024. One of the president-elect’s most discussed prospective cabinet appointments is Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as Secretary of

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<sup>42</sup> See Kevin Bardosh, “How Did the COVID Pandemic Response Harm Society? A Global Evaluation and State of Knowledge Review (2020-21),” SSRN, May 24, 2023, [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=4447806](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4447806).

Health and Human Services (HHS). This department wields significant influence, overseeing key health agencies that were central during the Covid crisis, such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and its division—the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). The possibility of Kennedy taking charge of HHS has sparked outrage in liberal circles. Yet, his commitment to confront the entrenched power and influence of Big Pharma is difficult to dispute.<sup>43</sup>

Two recent documentaries involving figures of the Covid dissent movement have critically examined the pharmaceutical industry and its profound influence on healthcare. Aseem Malhotra's *First! Do No Pharm*, released in September 2024, sheds light on how Western healthcare systems have been commandeered by profit-driven pharmaceutical corporations.<sup>44</sup> The film delves into controversies surrounding statin-type drugs, Vioxx, Zoloft, and Ozempic. It also highlights the immense pressure exerted on physicians who challenge the status quo, including Malhotra himself: he publicly questioned the safety of mRNA vaccines after his father suffered a fatal heart attack following a Covid vaccine booster and he was shunned for it.<sup>45</sup> The documentary, however, also showcases figures of integrity, such as Fiona Godlee, the former editor-in-chief of the *British Medical Journal*. Godlee's decision to publish and defend Paul D. Thacker's article critiquing Pfizer's Covid vaccine trials in 2021 that I discussed in

43 Jay Bhattacharya and Kevin Bardosh, "RFK Jr Will Disrupt the US Medical Establishment," *UnHerd*, November 15, 2024, <https://unherd.com/news-room/rfk-jr-will-disrupt-the-us-medical-establishment/>.

44 See <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt33511587/>.

45 Frank Chung, "British Cardiologist Calls for mRNA Vaccines to Be Suspended Due to Heart Risks," *News.com.au*, June 9, 2023, <https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/health/health-problems/british-cardiologist-calls-for-mr-na-vaccines-to-be-suspended-due-to-heart-risks/news-story/7ced98559a-790d325afc44ceb9cc2b95>.

Chapter 2 was a rare act of courage in a field dominated by corporate influence.<sup>46</sup>

A second noteworthy documentary, Jenner Furst's ironically titled *Thank You, Dr. Fauci*, premiered in November 2024.<sup>47</sup> One of its most striking revelations comes from Robert Redfield, head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as the Covid outbreak unfolded. Redfield now openly supports the lab leak hypothesis, stating, "My own view is that this virus was not of natural origin; it was an act of scientific arrogance."<sup>48</sup> Also this film scrutinizes a number of missteps by the pharmaceutical industry and the health agencies tasked with overseeing them. It highlights the troubling conflict of interest surrounding Peter Daszak, the president of EcoHealth Alliance, who directed research on high-risk viruses at the Wuhan Institute of Virology thanks to a grant approved by Anthony Fauci's NIAID.<sup>49</sup> In a startling case of cronyism, Daszak also led the 2021 World Health Organization delegation to Wuhan assigned to investigate the lab leak theory—unsurprisingly concluding that the virus was of zoonotic nature, not a lab leak, and thus exonerating himself and his organization.

Another significant figure featured in the film is Marty Makary, who also embraces the lab leak theory, describing it here as "the biggest industrial accident in the history of mankind." A vocal critic of Anthony Fauci,<sup>50</sup> Makary is also known

<sup>46</sup> Thacker, "Covid-19: Researcher Blows the Whistle."

<sup>47</sup> "Thank You, Dr. Fauci," <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt34361382/>.

<sup>48</sup> See also Jess Thomson, "Trump's Former CDC Chief Suggests US Origin for COVID: 'Can't Prove That,'" *Newsweek*, November 19, 2024, <https://www.newsweek.com/covid-19-lab-leak-theory-united-states-north-carolina-cdc-head-robert-redfield-trump-1987571>.

<sup>49</sup> See Sharon Lerner, Mara Hvistendahl, and Maia Hibbett, "NIH Documents Provide New Evidence U.S. Funded Gain-of-Function Research in Wuhan," *The Intercept*, September 9, 2021, <https://theintercept.com/2021/09/09/covid-origins-gain-of-function-research/>.

<sup>50</sup> See Jay Bhattacharya and Bryce Nichols, "Conversations with Jay Bhattacharya:

for his no-nonsense positions against the pharmaceutical industry, detailed among others in his latest book, *Blind Spots*, a striking analysis of medical groupthink and arrogance.<sup>51</sup> What is relevant for us here is that he has been selected by the Trump administration as the next Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).<sup>52</sup>

Even more consequential is the appointment of Jay Bhattacharya as director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).<sup>53</sup> Bhattacharya, a scientist of polite and graceful manners who co-authored the Great Barrington Declaration and who has been a leading critic of the Biden administration's Covid response, has also gradually espoused the lab leak theory.<sup>54</sup> Prior to this potential nomination, he had actively refrained from taking any political stance. In fact, as mentioned above, he confessed to having opposed the consolidation of the censorship lawsuit of which he is a co-plaintiff, *Murthy vs. Missouri*, with the lawsuit led by Robert F. Kennedy Jr. vs. Biden. By being associated with RFK Jr., so to speak against their will, Aaron Kheriaty and Jay Bhattacharya discussed in August 2024 how they precisely feared the politicization of

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Dr. Marty Makary (author, health care expert)," *Science from the Fringe* (podcast), November 4, 2024, <https://sciencefromthefringe.substack.com/p/conversations-with-jay-bhattacharya-cc3>.

51 Marty Makary, *Blind Spots: When Medicine Gets It Wrong, and What It Means for Our Health* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2024).

52 "Trump Nominates Marty Makary, Who Opposed COVID Vaccine Mandates, to Head FDA," *CBS News*, November 22, 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-marty-makary-fda-administrator/>.

53 "Trump Picks Covid Lockdown Critic to Lead Top Health Agency," *BBC*, November 27, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cvg4yxmmg1zo>.

54 See in particular Jay Bhattacharya, "How Did COVID-19 Originate? Ft Steven C. Quay," *The Illusion of Consensus* (podcast), October 5, 2024, <https://www.illusionconsensus.com/p/how-did-covid-19-originate-ft-steven>, as well as the fourth panel, "COVID-19 Origins and the Regulation of Virology," at the conference he convened at Stanford on October 4, 2024, "Pandemic Policy: Planning the Future, Assessing the Past," <https://healthpolicy.fsi.stanford.edu/events/pandemic-policy-planning-future-assessing-past>.

their case while the issue of censorship should remain apolitical in their view.<sup>55</sup> The irony is that Jay Bhattacharya and his friend Marty Makary found themselves, three months later, no doubt at the behest of the same RFK Jr., members of the Trump administration, where they will doubtless find it more challenging than ever to resist the politicization of science. While motivated by a noble aim, their mission is a gamble. Communist history does not bode well in this regard: individuals who tried to reform the system and serve the public good as insiders (in this case from within the communist party) lost credibility no matter their good intentions, while the dissenters who chose to retain their independence from politics eventually came out on top. We can only hope that, in this case, Bhattacharya's and Makary's integrity and vision of an apolitical science policy will prevail; time will tell if, to echo Dr. Fauci, it was a risk worth taking. Were they to succeed, it would be a momentous step forward in curbing the pharmaceutical corporate influence on the American state.

Finally, Republican Senator Rand Paul, a persistent critic of Fauci and of federal pandemic measures, is set to chair the Senate Homeland Security Committee as of January 2025. He has already vowed to focus on what he describes as “the Covid-19 coverup.”<sup>56</sup>

Together, these appointments underscore a realignment in how the US may approach public health governance and accountability in the post-Covid era, unfortunately under

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<sup>55</sup> Jay Bhattacharya and Aaron Kheriaty, “The Worst Violation of Free Speech Rights in US History ft: Aaron Kheriaty,” *The Illusion of Consensus* (podcast), August 6, 2024, <https://www.illusionconsensus.com/p/new-the-worst-violation-of-free-speech>.

<sup>56</sup> Dan Diamond and Rachel Roubine, “Rand Paul Vows to Investigate ‘Covid Coverup’ as Senate Panel’s New Chair,” *The Washington Post*, November 14, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2024/11/14/rand-paul-covid-origins-senate-oversight-committee-chairman/>.

Trump rather than Biden. They suggest that investigations into the pandemic's origins and policy decisions will remain a high-profile issue in the coming years. A significant reassessment might include a deeper investigation into the lab leak theory, into the potential risks associated with the Covid vaccine, and into Anthony Fauci's role in what can be seen, at the very least, as a minimization of both issues. The hypothesis that China's initial lockdown in Wuhan might have been less a response to the virus itself and more an effort to obscure a lab leak; the notion that Western countries might have been so dazzled by this dramatic overreaction that they sought to emulate it, while all it did was attempt to hide a blunder of historic proportion; the perspective that an American public health agency might have funded the research that caused the "biggest industrial accident in the history of mankind" while financially profiting from the vaccine that resulted from this research; and the prospect that Western liberals might have embraced censorship to avoid discussing their espousal of incompetence, authoritarianism, and corporate greed, are almost too painful to contemplate.

November 28, 2024

