

# The Conscious Suppression of Correction: Fantasy Attractors in Political Movements [A] (2026)

Robert Galida – June 2026 (Final)

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## Abstract

Why do intelligent people persist in beliefs that contradict clear evidence? The attractor framework offers a mechanism: **identity-constitutive, phenomenally felt commitment deepens the attractor basin**, making it resistant to corrective perturbations. A political fantasy attractor is a belief system whose adherents *detect* disconfirming evidence (they are familiar with counterarguments and experience them as genuine perturbations) yet the basin depth – maintained by conscious, identity-binding investment – exceeds the corrective force. (Section 7 specifies the three-level detection threshold that distinguishes this mechanism from automatic bias.) Cases where correction fails due to sub-personal, automatic processes are not yet fantasy attractors; the defining feature is the *conscious* suppression of an actively perceived error signal. This paper defines the mechanism, diagnoses three case patterns, offers falsifiable diagnostic criteria, applies the framework symmetrically across the political spectrum, and explicitly acknowledges the current empirical limitations in distinguishing Level 2 from Level 3 in practice.

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# 1. Introduction

Political discourse is filled with people who appear intelligent in other domains yet hold beliefs sharply at odds with available evidence. Standard explanations – ignorance, manipulation, cognitive bias – are incomplete. They do not explain why correction attempts often strengthen belief (the backfire effect) or why highly educated individuals can persist in demonstrably false claims.

The attractor framework provides a different lens. In *Intelligence Without Consciousness* (Galida, 2026), we argued that phenomenal investment can suppress intelligent navigation: a person committed to a fantasy attractor experiences a basin depth that exceeds corrective perturbations. The person detects the error signal (they are not stupid), but the identity-binding commitment prevents trajectory escape.

This paper applies that mechanism to political movements. A **political fantasy attractor** is a shared belief system whose basin depth, reinforced by conscious (phenomenally felt, identity-constitutive) commitment, resists correction even when faced with clear disconfirming evidence. The paper offers a diagnostic, not a partisan weapon. It applies symmetrically across the spectrum.

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## 2. Defining “Conscious Suppression” and Acknowledging the Detectability Problem

The term “conscious” is used in three overlapping senses:

- **Phenomenally conscious** – there is something it is like to hold the belief. The commitment is felt, not merely automatic.

- **Identity-constitutive** – the belief is held as a marker of selfhood and group membership. To abandon the belief would feel like a loss of self.
- **Experientially non-deliberative** – the suppression is not typically experienced as a deliberate choice (“I will ignore this evidence”). Rather, it is experienced as certainty, conviction, or moral clarity.

The paper adopts **Reading A**: a fantasy attractor requires conscious suppression in the sense above. Cases where correction fails because the error signal never reaches awareness – e.g., automatic motivated reasoning, selective exposure, unfamiliarity with counterarguments – are **not** yet fantasy attractors. They may be pre-conscious bias. The defining feature is that the person *detects* the perturbation but the basin depth prevents escape.

**A crucial honesty note:** The distinction between Level 2 (automatic bias, no detection) and Level 3 (detection with suppression) is definitional for the paper’s target, but it cannot currently be resolved from behavioral observation alone. Two people may exhibit identical external behaviors – praising gut-trust over experts, deploying sealing mechanisms, ostracizing defectors – while one is at Level 2 and the other at Level 3. The paper’s diagnostic criteria therefore identify *candidates* for fantasy attractors, not confirmed cases. This limitation is explicitly acknowledged; it does not invalidate the framework but requires domain-specific methods (e.g., fine-grained interviews, reaction time measures, physiological markers of doubt) to operationalize detection in practice.

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### 3. Empirical Grounding

The paper's claims are empirically testable. Relevant literature includes:

- **Backfire effect:** Nyhan & Reifler (2010) found that corrections sometimes increased misperceptions among ideological groups. However, subsequent research (Wood & Porter, 2019) failed to replicate backfire across a wide range of issues. The effect is contested and may be context-dependent. This paper treats backfire as one possible indicator of deep basin depth, not a universal law.
- **Identity protection:** Kahan's cultural cognition theory (2012) shows that individuals process evidence in ways that protect group commitments. Kahan emphasizes that this mechanism can operate automatically and does not necessarily involve conscious deliberation; he has also shown that higher analytical ability can *increase* motivated reasoning. The present paper's focus on *conscious* suppression is a distinct claim, not a direct extension of Kahan's framework. We use his empirical findings as partial support for the existence of motivated reasoning, not for the specific detection-suppression mechanism.
- **Festinger's cognitive dissonance:** When prophecy fails, believers often intensify commitment (Festinger, Riecken, & Schachter, 1956) – a classic case of apocalyptic attractor dynamics, often accompanied by conscious rationalization and identity reinforcement.

The paper does not claim that conscious suppression is the *only* mechanism. It claims that conscious, identity-constitutive commitment is a *sufficient* condition for basin deepening in many political contexts.

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## 4. Three Case Patterns (Illustrative, Not Exhaustive)

### 4.1 Conspiracy Theory Attractor

**Mechanism:** A central narrative of hidden malevolent agency. Evidence against the conspiracy is reframed as evidence of its cunning.

**Examples:** QAnon (right); Soviet-era “doctors’ plot” conspiracy (left-authoritarian).

**Suppression signature:** Adherents can articulate counterarguments but dismiss them as part of the conspiracy. The basin is sealed by narrative closure.

### 4.2 Populist Strongman Attractor

**Mechanism:** Loyalty to a leader perceived as sole authentic representative of the people. Disconfirming evidence about the leader is reframed as elite persecution.

**Examples:** Certain Trump-loyalist circles (right); left-nationalist leader cults (e.g., Chavismo under Hugo Chávez).

**Suppression signature:** Adherents exhibit high corrective permeability in other domains but near-zero for leader-related evidence.

### 4.3 Apocalyptic Meta-Attractor

**Mechanism:** A belief that a definitive, world-transforming event is imminent. Repeated prediction failures are explained away as delays, tests, or misinterpretations.

**Examples:** Millenarian movements (Millerites, Jehovah’s

Witnesses); some revolutionary eschatologies (Stalinist “world revolution imminent” framing into the 1930s).

**Suppression signature:** The basin is maintained by social solidarity and identity fusion.

The examples are illustrative, not exhaustive. The diagnostic is intended to be politically symmetric, but the paper does not claim equal prevalence across sides.

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## 5. Symmetry Demonstration

To avoid the appearance of partisan selection, we provide contemporary and historical cross-ideological examples.

**Contemporary – MMR-autism persistence in progressive communities.** Despite the complete retraction of Wakefield’s 1998 study (and subsequent findings of fraud), some otherwise science-oriented progressives continue to express concern about vaccine safety – often citing “corporate pharmaceutical influence” as a sealing mechanism. This meets the paper’s criteria: clear scientific consensus, ability to articulate counterarguments, identity-constitutive suspicion of establishment science.

**Another contemporary – Facilitated communication persistence.** Facilitated communication (FC) for non-speaking autistics has been repeatedly discredited in controlled studies; many professional organizations have issued statements against its use. Yet FC continues to be promoted in certain progressive / disability-rights circles, often with sealing mechanisms (“critics don’t understand non-speaking minds”). This is a clean case of a fantasy attractor operating on the left.

**Historical – Stalinist apologism in Western intellectual**

**circles (1930s–1950s)**. Highly educated individuals (Sartre, Hellman, many fellow travelers) persisted in believing that Stalin's USSR was progressive despite evidence of the Great Purge, show trials, and Gulag system. Identity commitment to socialism and anti-fascism suppressed correction.

These examples show the framework applies regardless of ideological valence. The paper does not claim equal prevalence; it claims symmetric applicability.

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## 6. Falsifiable Diagnostic Criteria

A movement is a **candidate** political fantasy attractor if it meets **three or more** of the following **and** does **not** meet the counter-criterion. (The word "candidate" flags the detectability problem acknowledged in §2: behavioral criteria alone cannot definitively distinguish Level 2 from Level 3.)

1. **Low corrective permeability ( $\kappa \rightarrow 0$ )** for core beliefs despite repeated, clear disconfirming evidence. "Clear" means *scientific consensus* on empirical claims (e.g., National Academies, WHO, IPCC) or, for historical cases, documented factual findings accepted by non-partisan experts. Consensus determination is a social process, but the criterion is falsifiable when consensus exists.
2. **Backfire effect** – correction attempts measurably increase belief strength and group cohesion (requires empirical measurement).
3. **Identity fusion** – observable proxies: social ostracism of defectors, language of betrayal, insistence that abandoning the belief would make one a "different person."
4. **Conscious valorization of resistance to evidence** – adherents explicitly praise *ignoring disconfirming evidence* as a virtue (e.g., "I trust my gut over the

experts,” “Facts are propaganda”). This criterion distinguishes *resistance to evidence* from *resistance to social pressure to conform* – a scientist who resists social pressure to abandon a well-evidenced theory is valorizing fidelity to evidence, not resistance to evidence.

5. **Sealing mechanisms** – internal rhetorical strategies that explain away all counterevidence (conspiracy, enemy deception, tests of faith). These are observable in discourse.

### **Counter-criterion (falsification condition):**

A movement is **not** a fantasy attractor if it demonstrates any of the following:

- Updates core beliefs in response to disconfirming evidence within a timeframe proportional to the clarity, repetition, and expert consensus on that evidence.
- Tolerates internal dissent and allows open criticism of core claims.
- Abandons false claims when decisively refuted (retracts, corrects, or disavows).

The timeframe specification avoids the earlier vagueness by linking the expected update speed to the evidential context. A movement that updates only after decades of accumulating consensus may still be a fantasy attractor; one that updates within a reasonable period given the evidence is not.

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## **7. Intelligent Navigation: A Three-Level Taxonomy**

The paper claims that fantasy attractor adherents *detect* error signals but suppress correction. To avoid conflating this with

automatic bias, we distinguish three levels:

- **Level 1 – Unfamiliarity:** The person has not encountered counterarguments. No suppression needed.
- **Level 2 – Familiarity without detection:** The person can recite counterarguments but has cognitively neutralized them; they never experience a moment of doubt. This is driven by automatic, sub-personal processes (e.g., selective exposure, motivated reasoning). These are **not** fantasy attractors on the paper's definition.
- **Level 3 – Detection with suppression:** The person experiences the counterargument as a genuine perturbation – a moment of doubt, a recognition of plausibility – but overrides it through conscious, identity-binding commitment. These **are** fantasy attractors.

Thus, the paper's target is Level 3 cases. For many political movements that *look* like fantasy attractors from the outside, the dominant mechanism may be Level 2. The diagnostic criteria are designed to identify candidates where Level 3 *might* be operating, but definitive classification requires methods beyond behavioral observation (see §2).

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## 8. Why This Matters for Politics and Media

- **Correction backfires when it attacks identity.** Calling a fantasy attractor “stupid” or “evil” deepens the basin. The correct diagnostic question is: *What reinforces the basin depth?*
- **Decoupling evidence from identity** is the only known exit path. Some movements exit when the social cost of

membership exceeds identity benefit – not when they receive a fact sheet.

- **High-profile debunking** may backfire by signaling threat, triggering defensive solidarity. The framework predicts this effect is real but not universal; context matters.
  - **Interventions** should focus on reducing identity threat, providing safe off-ramps, and decoupling core moral values from factual claims. These are testable hypotheses.
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## 9. Open Questions

- **Can a movement be partially a fantasy attractor?** Yes – gradient of  $\kappa$ . The diagnosis is not binary.
  - **What interventions increase  $\kappa$ ?** Reducing identity threat, safe off-ramps, and decoupling moral values from factual claims are candidate mechanisms.
  - **How does collective basin depth scale with group size?** Social coupling likely amplifies depth nonlinearly. Untested.
  - **Are all political fantasy attractors harmful?** The paper makes no claim. The mechanism may sometimes provide resilience against genuine disinformation.
  - **How can we empirically detect the Level 2 / Level 3 transition?** This is the open frontier implied by §2. Methods could include subjective doubt scales, reaction time measures, or physiological markers. The paper does not solve this; it identifies the problem.
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## 10. Conclusion

The conscious suppression of intelligent correction is a real political phenomenon, but it is narrower than often assumed. Political fantasy attractors are not failures of intelligence; they are successes of identity-constitutive commitment that operates *after* the error signal is detected. Cases where correction fails due to automatic bias are not yet fantasy attractors by this definition.

The diagnostic criteria identify candidates, not confirmed cases. Distinguishing Level 2 from Level 3 remains an empirical challenge. This honesty does not weaken the framework; it clarifies what further work is needed.

Fact-checking alone fails against a fantasy attractor. Interventions must address the conscious commitment that creates the basin depth. The dance of politics is not only about truth. It is about who you are, who you trust, and what you will not abandon. Intelligence navigates; conscious commitment anchors the basin.

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# The MAGA Attractor: Fantasy, Colonization, and the

# Terminal Phase of a Sealed Basin

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## Abstract

The MAGA movement is a colonizing fantasy attractor exhibiting the structural features the attractor framework predicts: a destabilizing perturbation, a dopamine-rich sealed narrative, near-zero corrective permeability ( $\kappa$ ), active colonization of rival basins, and a terminal phase characterized by attacks on reality-delivery institutions. This paper applies the  $\kappa$  diagnostic—a set of observable indicators measuring a belief system's willingness to update on contradictory evidence—to MAGA as a case study. We include a minimal comparative sketch applying the same indicators to a left-aligned movement to demonstrate symmetric applicability. We engage disconfirming instances within the MAGA case, define the terminal phase formally, and ground the attractor framework in established dynamical-systems and motivated-reasoning literatures. The paper does not offer predictions. It identifies structural tendencies and leaves empirical validation to future work.

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## 1. Introduction: The Diagnostic Stance

The attractor framework (Galida, 2026) defines a fantasy attractor as a belief system with low corrective permeability ( $\kappa$ ): it resists updating when confronted with contradictory evidence, reframes error signals to protect its core

narrative, and often seeks to colonize or destroy neighboring basins. The framework draws on dynamical-systems theory (Strogatz, 2018; Kelso, 1995), which characterizes attractors as regions in state space toward which trajectories converge and remain unless perturbed. A high- $\kappa$  attractor absorbs perturbation and updates; a low- $\kappa$  attractor resists perturbation and seals. This paper applies that diagnostic to the MAGA movement.

The framework predicts that sealed attractors exist across the political spectrum. A fully symmetric analysis would examine movements of all orientations using the same  $\kappa$  indicators. The present paper is a single-case application, supplemented by a brief comparative sketch in Section 6. It does not imply that MAGA is unique or uniquely sealed. It demonstrates the diagnostic method on a prominent and well-documented case.

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## 2. Operationalizing Corrective Permeability ( $\kappa$ )

Corrective permeability is not a single number. It is a composite of observable indicators. A movement's  $\kappa$  can be estimated—qualitatively, not metrically—by examining its responses to disconfirming events. The indicators below are applicable to any political or social movement.

### $\kappa$ Indicators

Indicator	High $\kappa$ (reality-aligned)	Low $\kappa$ (fantasy attractor)
Electoral loss response	Concedes defeat; analyzes reasons; adapts strategy	Rejects outcome as fraudulent; seeks to overturn result

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>High <math>\kappa</math> (reality-aligned)</b>	<b>Low <math>\kappa</math> (fantasy attractor)</b>
Legal defeat response	Accepts ruling; appeals within system; adjusts behavior	Delegitimizes courts; portrays defeats as persecution
Internal dissent tolerance	Debates openly; allows factional disagreement	Purges dissenters; enforces narrative loyalty
Media coverage response	Engages with critical reporting; distinguishes bias from fact	Labels all critical media as "enemy"; constructs alternative media ecosystem
Policy failure response	Acknowledges failure; revises approach	Blames enemies; reframes failure as sabotage
Leader criticism response	Evaluates criticism on merits; holds leaders accountable	Treats all criticism as treason; leader is beyond reproach

A movement that scores low across most or all indicators has  $\kappa$  approaching zero. A movement that scores high across most has  $\kappa$  approaching one. The assignment is comparative and qualitative, not computational.

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### **3. The Initial Perturbation: A Basin Destabilized**

The MAGA movement emerged from a genuine, large-scale perturbation to the personal and social attractors of millions of Americans. For decades, the post-war American basin was stable for its primary beneficiaries: manufacturing jobs provided middle-class security, cultural norms were broadly shared, and the United States enjoyed unchallenged global

dominance. Over several decades, that basin was progressively destabilized. Deindustrialization eliminated millions of stable jobs. Globalization shifted economic power away from domestic manufacturing. Cultural norms around race, gender, sexuality, and religion shifted rapidly. Demographic projections showed a future in which the previously dominant group would become a minority. Each of these was a perturbation. Cumulatively, they shattered the old basin.

The attractor framework does not judge the legitimacy of the grievances. It notes that a destabilized attractor seeks a new basin. The question is always: *What basin will replace the old one?*

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## **4. The New Basin: Narrative, Dopamine, and Motivated Reasoning**

The core narrative of the MAGA attractor is well-documented: the adherent is the authentic voice of the nation; their loss is a theft by corrupt elites and internal enemies; the leader will restore greatness. This narrative is an ontological rescue. It replaces a confusing, painful reality with a simple, morally charged story.

The dopamine dynamics are well-established. Certainty, righteous anger, and tribal belonging activate the mesolimbic reward system (Olds & Milner, 1954). But dopamine alone does not distinguish fantasy attractors from reality-aligned movements—all high-commitment groups generate reward. What distinguishes low- $k$  attractors is the *impermeability* of the reward loop: the system prevents corrective information from entering, so the dopamine cycle never encounters disconfirmation.

The motivated-reasoning literature provides a well-established

parallel. Individuals process information in ways that protect identity-congenial beliefs (Kahan, 2013). Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) predicts that group membership becomes a source of self-esteem, making threats to the group's narrative feel like personal attacks. The MAGA attractor operates at the intersection of these dynamics: a highly salient group identity, a narrative of victimhood and restoration, and a reward system that fires on certainty. The basin is psychologically satisfying and neurochemically self-reinforcing.

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## 5. Applying the $\kappa$ Indicators to MAGA

When we apply the six  $\kappa$  indicators to the documented behavior of the MAGA movement, the pattern is clear.

- **Electoral loss response:** The 2020 election was rejected as fraudulent. Over 60 court cases were dismissed, yet the “stolen election” narrative persisted. Electoral officials who certified results have been purged and replaced.  $\kappa$  is near zero on this indicator.
- **Legal defeat response:** Criminal and civil indictments against the movement's leader are framed as “witch hunts” and “election interference.” Courts are delegitimized.  $\kappa$  is near zero.
- **Internal dissent tolerance:** Republicans who criticized the leader have been primaried, censured, or forced from office. Internal debate is treated as disloyalty.  $\kappa$  is near zero.
- **Media coverage response:** Mainstream media are labeled “enemies of the people.” A parallel media ecosystem delivers only narrative-congruent information.  $\kappa$  is near zero.
- **Policy failure response:** Trade wars that harmed farmers

were reframed as necessary sacrifices, not policy failures. Promised infrastructure and healthcare reforms that did not materialize were blamed on opponents, not acknowledged as unfulfilled.  $\kappa$  is near zero.

- **Leader criticism response:** Criticism of the leader is treated as treason. The leader's statements, even when contradictory or demonstrably false, are accepted by adherents without correction.  $\kappa$  is near zero.

## 5.1 Disconfirming Instances and Complexity

The assignment of  $\kappa \approx 0$  is a pattern judgment, not a uniform claim. Several behaviors complicate a blanket zero- $\kappa$  diagnosis and must be acknowledged.

- Some MAGA-aligned officials did certify the 2020 election results under intense pressure, including figures such as Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger and Arizona's Republican governor Doug Ducey, who faced threats and political retaliation for doing so. This is evidence of  $\kappa > 0$  among individuals within the movement's orbit.
- The movement's policy agenda did shift in notable ways relative to prior Republican orthodoxy, including trade protectionism, pharmaceutical pricing reform, and infrastructure spending. These represent genuine policy adaptation, even if they served the broader narrative of economic nationalism.
- Internal dissent, while punished, has not been eliminated. Some Republican figures continue to criticize the leader from within the party, and factions with incompatible interests (economic libertarians, Christian nationalists, working-class populists) persist.

These instances suggest that the movement is not a perfectly

uniform basin. Some members and subgroups exhibit higher  $\kappa$  than others. However, the overall pattern—sustained across multiple years, multiple domains, and the movement’s dominant institutional responses—remains one of extremely low corrective permeability. The dissenting officials were purged, not elevated. The policy shifts occurred within a sealed narrative that did not acknowledge prior error. Internal critics were marginalized. The diagnostic is a structural assessment of the attractor’s dominant dynamics, not a claim about every individual within it.

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## 6. Comparative Sketch: A Left-Aligned Case

The framework’s symmetry requirement demands that the same  $\kappa$  indicators be applied to movements of other political orientations. A full comparative analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, but a brief sketch demonstrates the method’s applicability.

Consider the progressive wing of the Democratic Party’s response to the 2016 election loss. On the  $\kappa$  indicators:

- **Electoral loss response:** The loss was accepted, though accompanied by narratives of Russian interference and Electoral College illegitimacy. The outcome was not rejected as fraudulent, but external factors were invoked to explain defeat—a partial but not complete  $\kappa$  signal.
- **Legal defeat response:** Progressive legal setbacks (e.g., on immigration policy, voting rights) have generally been accepted within the system, with strategy adjustments rather than court delegitimization.  $\kappa$  is moderate-high.

- **Internal dissent tolerance:** The progressive coalition contains vigorous internal debate between moderates and left factions. Primary challenges are common and openly contested.  $\kappa$  is high on this indicator.
- **Media coverage response:** Progressives engage with mainstream media but also criticize it for bias. An alternative media ecosystem exists but has not fully sealed; cross-pollination with mainstream outlets is common.  $\kappa$  is moderate.
- **Policy failure response:** Failed progressive initiatives (e.g., certain criminal-justice reform measures, housing policies) have generated internal debate and strategy revisions, though blame-shifting also occurs.  $\kappa$  is moderate.
- **Leader criticism response:** Progressive leaders face significant internal criticism. Figures such as Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez are both celebrated and challenged from within the movement.  $\kappa$  is high.

This sketch suggests a moderate-to-high  $\kappa$  for this movement, with some indicators showing partial sealing. The exercise demonstrates that the  $\kappa$  indicators do not automatically classify one's political opponents as fantasy attractors and one's allies as reality-aligned. The diagnostic discriminates based on behavior, not affiliation.

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## **7. Colonization: “You Must Join or Be Destroyed”**

A fantasy attractor does not peacefully coexist. It colonizes. The MAGA movement demands that other basins submit to its narrative or be treated as enemies. This operates at interpersonal, institutional, and electoral levels. Families are fractured by loyalty demands. The judiciary, civil

service, and military are to be purged of “disloyal” elements. Election administration is being restructured to place loyalists in positions of authority over vote counting and certification. Colonization is a structural necessity: a sealed attractor cannot tolerate rival basins that might deliver a fatal perturbation.

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## **8. Beam and Sliver: Internal Contradictions as Diagnostic Features**

All political coalitions contain tensions between stated values and enacted policy. The diagnostic question is not whether contradictions exist, but whether the attractor can acknowledge and address them. High-k movements can name their own tensions. Low-k movements cannot.

The MAGA attractor exhibits several severe, structurally unresolvable contradictions:

- **Liberty vs. Authoritarianism:** The movement claims to defend freedom while supporting a leader who attacks the free press, demands personal loyalty, and threatens to use state power against opponents.
- **Law and Order vs. Criminality:** The movement claims to uphold law and order while its leader faces multiple felony convictions and indictments.
- **Populism vs. Plutocracy:** The movement claims to be a working-class revolt while its policy agenda primarily benefits the wealthy.
- **Christianity vs. Cruelty:** The movement claims Christian values while supporting policies that separate migrant families and mock the vulnerable.

What makes these contradictions diagnostically severe is not

their existence—all coalitions contain tensions—but their structural unresolvability within the current basin. The movement's dependence on a single leader whose personal legal exposure is inextricably linked to its narrative makes acknowledgment of criminality equivalent to basin collapse. The contradiction cannot be resolved; it can only be suppressed by attacking the legal system itself. This dynamic is distinct from the ordinary policy tensions of a political coalition, where compromise, leadership change, or platform evolution can absorb and resolve contradictions over time. In the MAGA basin, the leader cannot be replaced without dissolving the attractor, and the criminal charges cannot be acknowledged without invalidating the narrative of persecution. The beam is locked in place.

The sliver is projected outward with equal force: every fault is hung on the opponent. The movement cannot name its own contradictions, so it names everyone else's—real or invented—with relentless intensity.

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## **9. The Terminal Phase: Formal Definition and Observable Signs**

Within the attractor framework, a **terminal phase** is reached when a sealed attractor, facing sustained and credible existential threats, shifts its primary behavior from narrative self-maintenance and colonization to the active dismantling of the external correction mechanisms that could deliver a fatal perturbation.

**Transition conditions include:**

- 1. Loss of institutional control:** The movement no longer reliably controls the executive or legislative branches through normal electoral means.

2. **Credible legal jeopardy:** Leadership faces prosecution, incarceration, or removal from ballots.
3. **Narrowing coalition:** The movement's demographic base cannot reliably produce majorities in national elections.
4. **Elite messaging shift:** The movement's leadership explicitly frames institutional destruction as the only path to survival.

When these conditions are met, the attractor is no longer merely sealed. It is actively destroying the sources of perturbation.

#### **Observable signs of a terminal-phase political attractor:**

1. **Rejection of electoral outcomes** as illegitimate unless the movement wins.
2. **Purge of dissenting officials** from election administration and party structures.
3. **Preparation for institutional override** through legal theories that would allow loyalist bodies to override popular vote counts.
4. **Normalization of violence** as patriotic self-defense.
5. **Attacks on truth-delivery systems**—media, science, intelligence, courts—to neutralize their corrective function.

The MAGA movement currently exhibits all five signs. The transition conditions are partially met (credible legal jeopardy is present; electoral losses have occurred; the coalition faces demographic challenges) and partially contested (the movement retains significant institutional power through the courts and state legislatures). The terminal phase is not an all-or-nothing category; it is a trajectory along which the movement has demonstrably moved.

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## 10. Trajectory: Structural Tendencies, Not Predictions

The attractor framework identifies structural tendencies, not certainties. Three trajectories are possible for a terminal-phase fantasy attractor, and they are not mutually exclusive.

**Escalation.** If the leader faces incarceration, removal from ballots, or definitive electoral defeat, the movement may escalate. Violence is the final defense of a sealed basin that cannot tolerate reality. Escalation risk is elevated when institutional pressure intensifies.

**Fracture.** The movement contains factions with incompatible interests. If the central figure becomes unavailable, the attractor may fracture into competing sub-basins, each claiming legitimacy. This is a common post-charismatic trajectory.

**Slow Fade.** Some fantasy attractors fade as the promised restoration never arrives, adherents age, and younger generations find the narrative less compelling. This trajectory requires sustained institutional resilience and an absence of triggering crises.

The current structural conditions—ongoing legal pressure, sustained institutional attacks, and the centrality of a single figure—make escalation and fracture the highest-concern scenarios. The slow fade remains a possibility only if institutions hold and no major crisis intervenes. No probability is assigned. The framework names the tendencies and leaves empirical validation to events.

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## 11. Conclusion

The  $\kappa$  indicators, applied qualitatively, suggest that the MAGA movement exhibits near-zero corrective permeability across multiple domains. The movement colonizes rival basins, cannot acknowledge its internal contradictions, and exhibits the observable signs of a terminal-phase attractor. Disconfirming instances complicate but do not overturn the overall pattern. Symmetric application of the  $\kappa$  diagnostic to movements of other political orientations is methodologically required and has been briefly sketched; full comparative validation remains necessary. The framework provides structural tendencies, not predictions. The methodological limitations are acknowledged. The analysis is offered as a diagnostic contribution, not a final determination.