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Fear as a Political Tool: A Critical Analysis of Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene’s Fearmongering Narratives

Abstract

This paper examines the fearmongering narratives employed by Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene from Georgia in her political strategy. By analyzing sources, such as campaign materials, legislative proposals, and press releases through a content analysis method, the paper identifies three primary fear-based narratives this politician uses: threats to the country, threats to freedom, and threats to children. Moreover, the impact of fearmongering in Rep. Greene’s electoral strategy and its success in Georgia’s 14th congressional district, known for its conservative leanings, are also explored. By understanding the effectiveness of fearmongering, this research

sheds light on the dynamics of contemporary political discourse in the United States and its potential consequences.

Keywords: Marjorie Taylor Greene, fearmongering, electoral strategies, fear, right-wing populism, campaign, USA, politics

Strach jako narzędzie polityczne: Krytyczna analiza użycia strachu w kampaniach kongresmenki Marjorie Taylor Greene

Abstrakt

Przedmiotem rozważań w niniejszym artykule są podsycające strach narracje stosowane w strategii politycznej przez kongresmenkę Marjorie Taylor Greene reprezentującą stan Georgia. W wyniku analizy źródeł, takich jak materiały wykorzystywane w kampanii wyborczej, propozycje ustawodawcze i komunikaty prasowe za pomocą metody analizy treści, w artykule zidentyfikowano trzy podstawowe narracje bazujące na poczuciu strachu, wykorzystywane przez tę polityk: zagrożenia dla kraju, zagrożenia dla swobód i zagrożenia dla dzieci. Badaniem objęto również wpływ działań obliczonych na szerzenie strachu w strategii wyborczej Greene i jej sukces w 14. okręgu kongresowym Georgii, znanym z konserwatywnych poglądów. W artykule podejmuje się próbę uzyskania wglądu w dynamikę współczesnego dyskursu politycznego w Stanach Zjednoczonych i jego potencjalne konsekwencje poprzez zrozumienie skuteczności strategii podsycania strachu.

Słowa kluczowe: Marjorie Taylor Greene, podsycanie strachu, strategie wyborcze, strach, prawicowy populizm, kampania, USA, polityka

Introduction

The Presidency of Donald J. Trump will undoubtedly be remembered as groundbreaking for several reasons. One of those is the number of lies and misleading statements a sitting president tells. During four years in office, according to the Washington Post count, Trump has made false claims 30 573 times, increasing his daily average of lies from 6 during his first year to 39 during his last (Kessler, Rizzo, and Kelly). While this political environment motivated many progressive individuals to run for office or simply vote, it also gave a sense of encouragement and safety to conservatives whose political views lie on the far-right side of the spectrum. Trump's presidency normalized controversy. It was in that type of political climate that misinformation could flourish. And just two years into his presidency, in a surprising electoral victory, Marjorie Taylor Greene, a CrossFit gym owner, gun enthusiast, rapid conspiracy theory believer, and a self-proclaimed non-politician, who prides herself in being a wife¹. A wife, mother, and Christian, above all, was elected as the U.S. representative for Georgia's 14th congressional district in a landslide win of 75%. Two years later, Rep. Greene won re-election with a large margin of 32% ("Marjorie Taylor Greene").

Interestingly, Greene's primary electoral strategy from the beginning was centred around villainizing leftist politicians, whom she labels as "socialists" and "communists", often interchangeably, and framing them as the biggest threat to America. That narrative has evolved, adding several major talking points and other villains. This type of electoral strategy can be classified as "fearmongering", sometimes known as "fear control", a tactic involving manipulating public sentiment deliberately through amplifying and exploiting fears and anxieties by a subject in a position of power. Politicians often employ this strategy to achieve various objectives, such as garnering public support, mobilizing voter bases, or advancing specific policy agendas. Fearmongering involves the strategic framing of issues so as to exaggerate potential threats, instil a sense of urgency, and portray opponents as dangerous or hostile forces plotting against the state's overall well-being ("Fearmongering").

Fearmongering seeks to shape public opinion and sway political outcomes through the skilful use of methods, such as emotionally charged language, vivid imagery, and selective presentation of information. Excessive use of this strategy goes hand in hand with political polarization. It can have severe consequences relating to the safety of vilified individuals or contributing to increased politically motivated violence, evidently seen at Capitol Hill on January 6th, 2021. Anxiety, fear of crime, general distrust, and belief in a dangerous world resulting from

¹ Identifying herself as a "wife first" was the focal point of her early campaigns, in which she evoked a specific Phyllis Schlafly type of (anti)feminism. As of 2022, that word disappeared from her websites after her husband filed for divorce, which was formalized later that year (Metzger).

successful campaigns of this type are also essential factors in high rates of gun ownership (Warner and Thrash 294), which in turn has an impact on gun violence rates.

This paper aims to identify and analyze the central tropes in Marjorie Taylor Greene's political narrative and determine how successful that type of strategy is. The methodology includes a content analysis of source materials in the form of Rep. Greene's legislative proposals, campaign materials, and press releases available on her official and archived websites. Elements of quantitative methods based on comparative statistical data, such as election results or results of elections, are also employed. Several data analysis tools, such as the Cook Partisan Voting Index, were used to provide an electoral context of the congressional district of this representative. Lastly, the implications of fear-based strategies on the democratic system, personal safety, and political polarization are stated.

The 14th Congressional District of Georgia analysis

Georgia's 14th Congressional area comprises rural and urban communities and spans several counties. This presents a distinctive political landscape. Recent years have seen a change in the demographics of the 14th Congressional District, particularly a rise in racial and economic diversity due to population growth. While the district's population is still predominantly white (as of Feb. 2023, 70% of active voters in the district were white and not of Hispanic Origin), there has been an increase in the number of people of colour. People who identify as African American or Black now constitute 12% of active voters but are still less than the overall percentage of Black voters in the state, which is 29% ("Election Data Hub | Georgia Secretary of State"). The political climate in the district may be impacted by this demographic change as candidates and campaigns increasingly tap into the racial tensions that can result from such diversification in a deeply conservative state. This racial tension is illustrated by 2021 data from the U.S. Department of Justice. The state of Georgia notes an annual increase in the number of hate crimes motivated by race, ethnicity, or ancestry, which more than doubled within the past few years – from 77 incidents in 2019 and 132 in 2020 to 164 in 2021 (U.S. Department of Justice).

The 14th Congressional District's predominately conservative leanings are one of its defining characteristics. Historically, the state of Georgia has continuously elected Republican legislators, making it a stronghold for the Party. For example, for the past 20 years, this state had only Republican governors. Since 1984, Democratic candidates have won in Georgia only twice out of ten presidential elections, including most recently in 2020, by a 0.2% margin, thanks to strong Democratic support in the urban and racially diverse Atlanta metro area.

The GA-14's voting habits reflect this conservative sway, with Republican candidates often drawing substantial support in both local and federal elections. For the past ten years, the district had only Republican representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives ("Georgia Presidential Election Voting History").

That is evident in the Cook Partisan Voting Index (Cook PVI), which "measures how each district performs at the presidential level compared to the nation as a whole." According to the newest report published in April 2023, GA-14 has a PVI of R+22, which means the district has performed an average of 22 points more Republican than the national average, coming 28th on the list of the most Republican districts in the country ("2023 Cook PVISM: District Map and List (118th Congress)"). Interestingly, in the 2017 report, GA-14 has a PVI of R+27 ("Partisan Voting Index Districts of the 115th Congress" 2A.3), meaning that Georgian voters from District 14 are now less likely to be voting for a Republican candidate than just a few years ago. That is reflected by the smaller margin of Rep. Greene's win during her re-election, compared to her first run for the office, which in 2020 constituted 50% and in 2022 32%. What is important to note is that Rep. Greene's 2020 win can be partially attributed to the withdrawal of the Democratic candidate, Kevin Van Ausdal, whose name, despite this, remained on the ballot, earning over 25% of the votes. Looking solely at the number of people who decided to cast their votes on her during her re-election, Rep. Greene's voter base decreased by about 26%, from 229,827 in 2020 to 170,162 in 2022 ("Marjorie Taylor Greene"). This means that Mrs Greene lost almost 60 thousand votes from her electoral base, indicating potential dissatisfaction among her constituents.

Overall, the 14th Congressional District of Georgia stands as an intriguing political entity, combining conservative values and evolving demographic trends. Its voting patterns, economic composition, and changing demographics make it a closely watched district during elections. Conservative principles prevalent in the area frequently align with concerns like little government intrusion, lower taxes, and a strong emphasis on individual liberty. The district's political landscape will likely continue to evolve as demographic shifts, economic developments, and evolving ideologies shape its future political trajectory.

Fearmongering narratives in Rep. Greene's political strategy

Researcher Davor Marko defines fear management as a subject of power's "ability to recognize the manipulative potential of fear, to define its content (the object of fear) and its scope, and to use various techniques to spread it in order to create a context of fear within which ordinary individuals will be easier manipulated and controlled" (Marko 201). To successfully exercise this type of strategy according

to Marko, one must define who or what is the object of fear or the “scapegoat” (various “others”, “enemies”), who is supposed to feel the fear and to be the receptor of the message and who is the mediator controlling the narrative and flow of fear in public space (Marko 202). Sociologist Barry Glassner identified three techniques of fearmongering – repetition, portraying isolated incidents as trends, and misdirection (Glassner 822).

During the past few years, the American public has noticed a significant increase in the popularity of right-wing populism, as voters are being increasingly attacked by fear-inducing narratives from the media, as well as from Republican politicians. A close look at Rep. Greene’s campaign materials, political statements, press releases, and introduced legislation shows a complex array of causes she is involved in that nevertheless form a complete picture. Her Congress campaign website showcases nine issues she put at the centre of her electoral strategy. She promises to: “Defund the FBI”, “Impeach Biden”, “Investigate [Anthony] Fauci”, “Protect children”, “End abortion in America”, “Protect the 2A [Second Amendment]”, “America First”, “Defend traditional American values” and “Secure the borders” (“Issues”). Her main website’s homepage highlights three initiatives: *Protect Children’s Innocence Act*, *Impeachment of President Joe Biden*, and *Protect America First Act* (“Representative Marjorie Greene”). These three acts are among thirty-nine she introduced during her term in office. Some of the others include the impeachments of Nicholas Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security, Merrick Garland, Attorney General, of Christopher Asher Wray, Director of the FBI, of Matthew Graves, US Attorney for the D.C., designating Antifa as a domestic terrorist organization, several acts, like *Protecting Mothers and Babies from Terrorism Act*, *21st Century FREE Speech Act*, *Justice for Vaccine Victims Act of 2022*, *Kyle H. Rittenhouse² Congressional Gold Medal Act*, *Fire Fauci Act*, and more. Her first-ever introduced legislation was to impeach President Biden for “enabling bribery and other high crimes and misdemeanours” (“House Sponsor”). Several tropes in MTG’s political narrative regarding fearmongering strategies can be detected. Most important can be divided into three categories: threats to the country rooted in the Red Scare era propaganda, threats to freedom, and threats to children.

The Red Scare refers to a period of intense fear and paranoia about communism, socialism, and leftist ideologies that swept across the United States during the early to mid-20th century. It emerged in two distinct waves: the First Red Scare related to the Russian Revolution, which occurred around World War I, and the Second Red Scare, which emerged during the Cold War era following World War II. Both periods were characterized by widespread fear of communist infiltration and espionage

² Kyle Rittenhouse is a teen who, during Black Lives Matter protests in Kenosha, Wisconsin, fatally shot two people and injured one more with his AR-15-style rifle. Claiming self-defence, he was later acquitted of all charges during a criminal trial. Subsequently, he became a rising star for Second Amendment rights defenders (Sullivan).

within the United States. This fear seems to take root deeply in the fabric of the U.S., as to this day, it can be, and still is, tapped into by conservative politicians. A lasting legacy like that can be easily abused. That is conspicuous in Marjorie Taylor Greene's campaign materials and political strategy in general. The most obvious example of that is her slogan: "Save America, Stop Communism", or a statement on her electoral site: "While the communist Democrat Party wields ever-more terrifying authoritarian power over the people of America, Marjorie Taylor Greene is leading the resistance" ("Marjorie Taylor Greene for America"). Of particular interest is her first campaign spot, now archived, which uses strong visual messages in the form of stark imagery of the so-called Squad (progressive Democratic representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Ayanna Pressley, and Rashida Tlaib, two of whom are first Muslim women sworn into the House), vivid red images, and drastic font. Rep. Greene tries to convey a sense of threat to the U.S., which these four women seemingly pose along with their dangerous ideas. On the same site, Marjorie positions herself "against the left-wing socialists who want to wreck our country" ("Home – Marjorie Greene for Congress"). What can be noticed is a shift from villainizing "socialism" in the early stages to "communism" later on. These two terms are often used interchangeably, seemingly synonymous to her and her voters, yet "communism" seems to bring more terror among Americans, and perhaps that could be the reason for that shift in terminology. Lately, journalists like David Graham have started to point out a new conservative bogeyman – "wokeness", a trend he backs up by the popularity of this theme in Fox News (a Republican T.V. channel) and Google search trends (Graham).

One of her resolutions was to declare the ANTIFA (short for anti-fascist) movement a domestic terrorist organization despite a lack of evidence that people affiliating themselves with this social front are in any way organized or interconnected or that they pose any significant threat to the country – in contrast with various far-right groups responsible for example for the January 6th attack on Capitol. Marjorie writes "Over the past several years, Antifa-affiliated groups and individuals have been burning down cities across the country, destroying property, assaulting police officers, beating innocent people, and causing billions of dollars in damages" ("Congresswoman MTG Reintroduces..."). This most likely refers to the chaos that followed some Black Lives Matter protests. While governmental data usually refrains from using terms such as "far-right" or "far-left" when referring to domestic terrorists, instead opting for terms like "racially motivated" or "anti-government", a significant increase in crime and terrorist attacks attributed to the conservative side of the political spectrum can be noted all across the board. According to the Department of Homeland Security and FBI's reports, between 2020 and 2021, the number of federal investigations into cases of domestic terrorism almost doubled, and most of these were related to the Attack on the Capitol, fueled by many Republican politicians (FBI and DHS). Moreover,

an analysis of data provided through the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Crime Data Explorer tool shows that each year, the number of hate crimes committed by white offenders grows, and this group still commits the most crimes of this type, which could be the result of fearmongering strategies (FBI).

A significant trope in her public statements is the idea of a global conspiracy of elites, which includes the Democrats. Many of her statements also reflected the popular online conspiracy theory, QAnon, that glorified former President Donald Trump as "the chosen one" who will unleash "the storm" or unmask all the most influential conspirators. In line with that idea of depravation in the White House and on Capitol Hill, Mrs Greene often uses a juxtaposition to show she has nothing in common with them – she claims not to be a politician, and therefore not corrupt but instead acting in the best interest of her constituents (as opposed to "the evil leftist elites").

Fearmongering based on leftover red scare fears is very closely connected to the idea of an outside threat to the country. With time, the direction of the threat moved inwards (i.e. a fear of Soviet nuclear attacks transformed into a general sense of espionage-related paranoia or of hostile conspiracy within the U.S. government), and now, while outside threats are still crucial in that discourse, the spotlight is on internal, domestic dangers. Except for the conspiracy of the elites, one of the core causes for Rep. Greene is related to immigrants and policies that regulate migration, specifically from the southern border with Mexico. As Ms. Greene says: "Joe Biden is rewarding human traffickers and coyotes who smuggle illegal aliens across the border" ("Protect America First Act"). Moreover, "On our Southern border, Joe Biden has allowed hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of illegal aliens into our country. His administration, along with Kamala Harris, has violated our immigration laws, deprived our Border Patrol of workforce and resources, and created a national security crisis by allowing unknown foreign nationals into our country who wish to harm Americans" ("Impeachment of President Joe Biden"). It is through the use of stigmatising language and narratives like this one, that Rep. Greene manages to tap into both types of fears still evident in the American society: of an administration with a sinister agenda, hostile towards their own people, and of an "unknown", "illegal", "alien" outside threat, in the form of "foreign nationals (...) who wish to harm Americans".

Right-wing fearmongering narratives in the USA often centre around threats to freedom, specifically in the context of the Second Amendment right to bear arms, free speech, and the often controversial during the COVID-19 pandemic issue of vaccination or mask requirements. These narratives exploit fears and anxieties by framing potential restrictions or regulations as encroachments on individual liberties. Proponents of Second Amendment rights often amplify concerns that gun control measures will lead to the erosion of personal freedoms and the government infringing upon citizens' ability to protect themselves. Similarly, mask or

vaccine-related fearmongering narratives invoke arguments around individual autonomy and personal choice, emphasizing the perceived threat of mandated vaccinations as an infringement on personal freedom. As a response to multiple bans on most social media platforms for repeated coronavirus misinformation, hate speech, and general violation of terms and conditions, Rep. Greene has introduced Bill H.R. 7613, *21st Century Foundation for the Right to Express and Engage in Speech Act* through which social media platforms would have a limited scope of control over the content.

These narratives tap into deep-rooted beliefs and values associated with personal liberties, fostering a sense of urgency and resistance to perceived threats while disregarding the broader public health implications or the enormous issue of gun violence, especially towards schoolchildren. Interestingly, the same bodily autonomy that must be respected regarding masks and vaccines is ignored whenever the topic of abortion is brought up.

The third theme of MTG's strategies is related to children, arguably the most powerful tool she employs, which attracts especially undecided politically parents into her base, in whom such causes tend to strike a chord. Within that narrative, one can find two causes – fighting against inclusive services and communities for transgender people and a fight against abortion. Marjorie says: "America's children are being systematically indoctrinated with perverse gender ideology by teachers, mental health counsellors, and on social media platforms." ("Protect Children's Innocence Act"), trying to evoke a sense of danger and evil, perverse forces that lure the children towards deprivation. On the issue of abortion, on the other hand, she uses terminology common among anti-abortion activists, such as "unborn child" instead of the universally used within the medical sphere "fetus", which convinces the recipient of that message to think of abortion as murder instead of a medical procedure. She states: "Unborn children should not be condemned to a painful death for being "inconvenient." ("Issues"). Such narratives often LGBTQ+ and especially transgender people as potential predators or threats to children's safety despite a lack of evidence supporting such claims.

Similarly, the rhetoric surrounding abortion centres on portraying it as a "heinous act that endangers the lives of unborn children", appealing to individuals' protective instincts and moral sensibilities. By emphasizing these threats, fearmongering far-right political campaigns seek to mobilize conservative segments of the population, amplifying their concerns and solidifying support for their agendas. In doing so, they also contribute to the growing problem of terrorist acts committed in abortion or women's health clinics, further perpetuating the issue of unsafe work environment of countless women's health physicians across the country. (U.S. Government Accountability Office).

Returning to Marko's fear management baseline, it is clear that Ms Greene's campaign narratives fit into his definitions. She consequently and relentlessly

points out those of whom to fear – immigrants, LGBTQ+ queer, trans and non-binary people,, liberal political elites, and what to fear – change of the *status quo*, demographical diversification, abortion, and governmental control. She does so while appealing to her voter base, whom she describes God and country-loving, brave patriots with superior moral compasses, who stand tall in the face of the societal collapse of the country. As the mediator, she positions herself as a group member, opposing “corrupt” politicians and representing the people above all else. In line with Glassner’s identification of fearmongering techniques, Rep. Greene uses repetition, portraying isolated incidents as trends and misdirection when addressing various social issues.

An important question is whether spreading fear or fear-induced anger is a good political strategy. Some studies confirm that feelings of both anger and fear do boost political participation and engagement significantly more than feelings of enthusiasm (Valentino et al. 166). Moreover, political ads that use fear appeals were found to “provoke information seeking” among exposed voters (Brader 401). At the same time, an anxious type of fear was found to decrease the electoral tendency to participate in voting (Valentino et al. 168), yet anxiety dominated by anger – in this particular study, anger targeted at the U.S. government monitoring procedures – is related to increased political engagement of voters (Best and Krueger 103). This means that fearmongering, if done correctly, can motivate certain types of voters. Notably, the type of voter on whom this strategy works best is usually politically conservative, with a so-called Right Wing Authoritarianism ideological attitude (Duckitt and Sibley 104). Furthermore, psychologists argue that

Several different epistemic motives (dogmatism–intolerance of ambiguity; cognitive complexity; closed-mindedness; uncertainty avoidance; needs for order, structure, and closure), existential motives (self-esteem, terror management, fear, threat, anger, and pessimism), and ideological motives (self-interest, group dominance, and system justification) are all related to the expression of political conservatism. Theoretical and empirical considerations lead us to conclude that virtually all of the above motives originate in psychological attempts to manage uncertainty and fear (Jost et al. 351).

In other words, a politically conservative voter usually prefers a simplistic explanation of complex issues and would like their candidate to clearly point out those responsible for all the problems in the world. That juxtaposition of “us versus them” fits into their idea of the world. Moreover, these feelings of uncertainty and fear, related to changing the *status quo*, can quickly turn into feelings of threat and even aggression.

Marjorie Taylor Greene's climb to power

During her first two years in office, most GOP members looked at her with disdain and treated her as a fringe minority of the Party and someone who undoubtedly will be out of office by the next election term. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell described her as the “cancer” of the GOP because of her “loony lies and conspiracy theories” (Graham). However, month by month, despite the seemingly never-ending string of controversy surrounding her, Rep. Greene has been gaining popularity while undoubtedly sparking controversy wherever she went. Her scope of power is undeniable just a few years later, as reflected by the constant support and the words of the Republican Speaker of the House, Kevin McCarthy – “I will never leave that woman. I will always take care of her” (Swan and Edmondson). Rep. Greene shifted from the fringes of her Party to the centre within one election cycle. That is most evident in her committee responsibilities. At the beginning of 2021, she was stripped of several committee assignments, namely from the Education and Labor Committee and the Budget Committee, for incendiary and violent statements from 2018 and 2019 regarding executing Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton (Foran, Grayer, and Diaz), and yet just two years later, in 2023 Greene took up assignments on some of the most important committees in the Congress – the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability and the House Committee on Homeland Security (“Marjorie Taylor Greene – Biography”). A YouGov poll from January 2023 states that 31% of respondents see her as very or somewhat favourable, while 37% are somewhat unfavourable or very unfavourable (Hall).

Interestingly, Rep. Greene has also been labelled by the FiveThirtyEight political analysis website as a “bogeyman” used by the Democrats to rile up their voting base. This claim is supported by T.V. News Archive data stating that “in January, CNN mentioned Greene in 472 15-second clips, MSNBC mentioned her in 393, and Fox News mentioned her in 31” (Rakich). This theory is confirmed by the most recent President Joe Biden campaign. Released on July 19th, 2023, a short clip of Marjorie Taylor Greene summing up presidential accomplishments in a clearly sarcastic tone of voice played over images of actual policies the Biden administration wanted to highlight. This video is one of his most viewed campaign materials ever released (Biden, 2023). So, in the end, one could say that Democrats also deploy fearmongering narratives – they put a spotlight on far-right politicians, like Rep. Greene, to underline the dangers that are characteristic of her conspiracy populism.

Marjorie Greene's immense popularity is reflected mainly in the number of small donations, which proves how efficient she can be. It might have seemed that after Trump's election loss, several controversies regarding Rep. Greene's highly controversial opinions, her expulsion from congressional committees, and the consequent weakening of her position in the House, far-right supporters would begin to chip away and retreat from controversial positions. Indeed, the Attack

on Capitol Hill has sobered some far-right Trump supporters, but there are still signs of support for Rep Greene. This is particularly evident in the ever-growing amount of funds she has raised for her activities and subsequent campaigns. In the first quarter of her term, she raised 3,2 million USD from over 100,000 individual donors, with an average donation of 32 USD. By comparison, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez raised 728,000 USD in the same time frame at the start of her term (Beavers and Zanona). Such a motivated voter response is most likely a response to MTG's removal from the Education and Budget committees. Only 17% of Republicans supported this decision, compared to 77% of Democrats. It also gained popularity, with her support rising from 25% to 40% among Republicans ("Republican Support..."). During the 2022 election cycle, Rep. Greene was one of the two top earners among right-wing House members in terms of total donations under 200 USD, having collected a whopping sum of 10,7 million USD. Interestingly, the most significant number of donations spikes occurred right after the January 6th, 2021, Capitol Hill insurrection. Three of those, as highlighted by David Byler from the Washington Times, can be noted during her first attempt to impeach Biden, around the time of her removal from committees, and around an attempt to expel Greene from Congress in March (Byler).

Although many Republican voters have become radicalized over the past year and turned to dangerous conspiracy theories, the GOP is resisting. Organizations have sprung up actively pushing for the removal of politicians who "disgrace the party's name", particularly those who did not end up questioning its legitimacy after losing the presidential election and those who did not disavow pro-Trump rhetoric after the Attack on Capitol Hill. Such organizations include Defending Democracy Together (DDT), which aims to nurture the Party's original conservative values while blunting authoritarian and conspiratorial leanings through grassroots attempts at education and activism. DDT has created several projects, such as Republican Voters Against Trump, a website with recordings of "anti-Trumpist" thoughts ("Republican Voters against Trump"), and the Republican Accountability Project (RAP), created as a response to the behaviour of some politicians during the peri-election period. RAP wants those inciting the "Trumpists" to attack through unsupported claims of election theft to be held accountable for their words as well as their actions, such as voting against approving the election results and voting against impeachment ("About"). The RAP has divided GOP politicians into two groups – the Brave and the Cowards, creating a list of "Defenders of Democracy" ("Courage") and a 'List of Shame' ("Cowardice"), which includes, among others, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene ("Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene"). Thus, attempts to resist a change in the policy direction of the Republican Party are evident, but to what extent they will prove successful – is difficult to assess.

Conclusions

Several major politicized issues spark fear in many conservative voters. Through a careful examination of Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene's rhetoric and narratives, three prominent themes have emerged: threats to the country rooted in the much older phenomenon of the Red Scare, threats to children, and threats to freedom. These fear-based strategies are designed to manipulate public opinion and consolidate support for her political agenda.

Greene uses fear tactics reminiscent of the Red Scare era to demonize politicians on the left, as well as immigrants. This fuels existing fears and divides the electorate, leading to unproductive political discourse and a climate of hostility and distrust. This approach can have disastrous consequences, putting the safety of targeted politicians at risk and undermining the democratic system as a whole. This is especially evident by the number of death threats received by leftist politicians targeted in Rep. Greene's campaigns, like representatives Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.³

Secondly, Greene leverages fear surrounding issues related to children, employing transphobic propaganda and advocating for a ban on abortions. By exploiting societal anxieties about morality, family values, and the well-being of children, she attempts to mobilize support from conservative segments of the population. This fearmongering tactic not only disregards the rights and dignity of marginalized groups but also contributes to a toxic and divisive social environment that further endangers the personal safety and often lives of LGBTQ+ communities people.⁴

Representative Greene also utilizes fear tactics that exploit the quintessentially American need for individual freedoms, including those related to vaccinations, masks, and gun rights. By portraying public health measures as violating personal liberties, she takes advantage of libertarian and anti-government beliefs. This approach not only hinders public health efforts but also promotes a culture of misinformation and opposition to necessary measures designed to protect the health and safety of the population.

Overall, Marjorie Taylor Greene's tactics involve exploiting public fears and creating a social division to strengthen her political power and promote her agenda. She does this by emphasizing threats to the country, children, and individual freedoms. In doing so, she tends to create a clear division of "us" vs "them", highlighting the otherness of groups like immigrants, sexual minorities or gender

³ Rep. Greene's attacks on Muslim members of the House, like Rep. Omar and Rep. Tlaib (Dodds), were tied to an increase in the number of death threats to these two representatives by Rep. Tlaib herself (Tlaib).

⁴ During the past few years, there has been a significant increase in hate crimes against LGBTQ+ communities in the U.S., which is related to Republican politicians' agendas focused on those marginalized groups (Gabbatt).

diverse people and leftist individuals, who, as she points out, are to blame for all that is wrong in the country. Additionally, framing herself as a “non-politician” but rather a member of “the people” standing up against conspiratory elites, Rep. Greene presents herself as a model far-right populist politician according to Jan-Werner Müller’s definition (Müller 101). Her fearmongering approach has proven effective, evidenced by her successful re-election and the substantial number of individual donations she has received, proving once again, that polarizing figures like Rep. Greene garner the most attention in the U.S. media, regardless of political stance.

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