

Article From The Daily Kos
I researched every attempt to
Stop Facism.
The Sucess Rate is 0%
by Christopher Armitage

In 1933, German conservatives thought they could control Hitler. Two years later, they were being executed in their own homes. I spent weeks researching this question, desperately looking for counter-examples, for hope, for any time in history where people successfully stopped fascists after they started winning elections.

Here's what I found: Once fascists win power democratically, they have never been removed democratically. Not once. Ever.

I know that sounds impossible. I kept digging, thinking surely someone, somewhere, stopped them. The actual record is so much worse than you think.

Let's start with Germany because everyone thinks they know this story. Franz von Papen, the conservative politician who convinced President Hindenburg to make Hitler Chancellor, said "We've hired him" in January 1933. He thought he was so clever. Within 18 months, the Nazis were machine-gunning von Papen's allies in their homes during the Night of Long Knives. Von Papen himself barely escaped to Austria with his life. Every single conservative who thought they could "control" or "moderate" Hitler was either dead, in exile, or groveling for survival by 1934.

Italy was even dumber, if that's possible. October 1922, Mussolini announces he's marching on Rome with 30,000 blackshirts. Except here's the thing: they were poorly armed, disorganized, and the Italian military could have crushed them in about three hours. The King had his generals ready. He had martial law papers drawn up. The military was waiting for the order. Instead, he invited Mussolini to form a government. Just handed him power. Twenty-three years later, partisans hung Mussolini's corpse upside down at a gas station while crowds beat it with sticks. The king died in exile. Hundreds of thousands of Italians died for that moment of cowardice.

Spain might be the worst because everyone saw it coming. Three years of escalating fascist violence. Actual assassination attempts. Then in 1936, Franco and his generals launch a straight-up military coup. The Spanish Republic begged for help. France said "not our problem." Britain said "both sides are bad." America declared neutrality. The result? Franco ruled for 39 years. He died peacefully in his bed in 1975. They're still finding mass

graves in Spain. Still. In 2025.

Want something more recent? Look at Hungary. Orbán won democratically in 2010. By 2011 he'd rewritten the constitution. By 2012 he controlled the media. By 2013 he'd gutted the judiciary. It's 2025 and he's still in power. The EU has been "very concerned" for fourteen fucking years. They've written strongly worded letters. They've held meetings. Hungary is now a one-party state in the middle of Europe and everyone just... accepts it.

Okay, but surely someone, somewhere, stopped them?

Finland 1932 is the only clean win I can find. The fascist Lapua Movement tried an armed coup before they'd secured government power. The military stayed loyal to democracy, crushed the rebellion, and banned the movement. That's it. That's the success story. One time out of roughly fifty attempts, fascists were stopped because they were stupid enough to try violence before winning elections.

France in 1934 looked like a victory for about five minutes. Fascist leagues tried to storm parliament on February 6th. Six days later, twelve million workers went on general strike. Twelve million. The entire country stopped. No trains, no factories, no shops, nothing. The fascists backed down. Great victory, right? Except those exact same fascists enthusiastically collaborated when the Nazis invaded six years later. They just waited.

Portugal's fascist regime finally fell in 1974. After 48 years. How? Military officers launched a coup. Democratic resistance had been crushed for five decades. International pressure meant nothing. The dictator Salazar died in 1970 and his successor just kept going until the military said enough. That's your success story: wait half a century and hope the military gets tired.

The pattern is so consistent it's almost funny if it weren't so terrifying. Every single time it goes like this: Conservatives panic about socialism or progressives or whatever. They ally with fascists as the "lesser evil." Fascists take power. Fascists immediately purge the conservatives who helped them. Then it's 30-50 years of dictatorship. This happened in Germany, Italy, Spain, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Greece, Portugal, Croatia, Romania, and Hungary.

Want to know how many times conservatives successfully "controlled" the fascists they allied with? Zero. Want to know how many times fascists purged the conservatives after taking power? All of them. Every single time.

And here's the part that breaks your heart. Violence works. For them.

Fascists use violence while claiming to be victims. They create chaos that "requires" their authoritarian solution. Then they purge anyone who opposes them. Meanwhile, democrats keep insisting on following rules that fascists completely ignore. They file lawsuits. They write editorials. They vote on resolutions. And fascists just laugh and keep consolidating power.

The statistics are brutal. Fascist takeovers prevented after winning power democratically: zero. Average length of fascist rule once established: 31 years. Fascist regimes removed by voting: zero. Fascist regimes removed by asking nicely: zero. Most were removed by war or military coups, and tens of millions died in the process.

I'm not allowed to make the obvious contemporary comparisons, but you're already making them in your head. "We can control him" is being said right now, in 2025, by people who apparently never cracked a history book.

Based on the historical record, there are exactly three ways this goes. Option one: Stop them before they take power. Option two: War. Option three: Wait for them to die of old age.

They tried anyway.

But here's the thing: we already missed our chance. The window isn't closing; it's closed.

The Supreme Court declared Trump above the law. He's threatening to arrest political opponents. He's already sent the FBI after elected officials when they haven't committed crimes. Congress is his. Most state governments are his. Billionaire oligarchs openly coordinate with him. The window slammed shut.

So let's stop pretending we're in the "prevention" phase and start talking about what you do when fascists already control the institutions but haven't fully consolidated power yet. Because historically, nobody's been here before, not like this.

No wealthy democracy with nuclear weapons has ever fallen to fascism. The 1930s examples everyone cites were broken countries. Weimar Germany was weakened by World War I and hyperinflation. Italy was barely industrialized. Spain was largely agrarian. They didn't have the world's reserve currency. They didn't have thousands of nukes. They didn't have surveillance technology that would make the Stasi weep with envy.

America has all of that. Plus geographic isolation that makes external intervention impossible. Plus a population where 30-40% genuinely wants authoritarian rule as long as it hurts the "right people." The historical play-

book is useless here. We're in unprecedented territory.

But that also means the old rules about what's possible might not apply.

Option 1: The Blue State Coalition or Soft Secession California's economy is bigger than the UK's. New York controls global finance. The blue states collectively represent over 60% of America's GDP. They could, theoretically, make the federal government irrelevant.

Imagine if California, Oregon, Washington, New York, Massachusetts, and others started coordinating directly. Ignoring federal mandates. Creating their own interstate compacts for everything from climate policy to civil rights. They already started this with climate agreements when Trump pulled out of Paris. But I'm talking about going much further.

State-level cryptocurrency to avoid federal monetary control. State-funded healthcare systems that ignore federal restrictions. State-level immigration policies that simply refuse to cooperate with ICE. Make the federal government have to physically enforce every single policy, stretching their resources to breaking.

The precedent? The way Northern states nullified fugitive slave laws in the 1850s. The way states are currently ignoring federal marijuana prohibition. But coordinated and comprehensive.

Option 2: Selective Compliance and Irish Democracy The Irish called it "Irish Democracy" when they were under British rule, the silent, dogged resistance of millions who simply ignored laws they found illegitimate. Don't protest. Don't riot. Just don't comply.

Red states need blue state money. Blue state taxes fund red state governments. What if millions of people in blue states simultaneously decided to claim exempt on their W-4s and simply... stopped paying federal taxes? Not as protest but as a coordinated "forgetting." Overwhelm the IRS. Make enforcement impossible.

Doctors in blue states could ignore abortion restrictions. Teachers could ignore curriculum mandates. State police could refuse to enforce federal laws. Not dramatically, just... incompetently. "Sorry, we couldn't find them." "The paperwork got lost." "Our systems are down."

Make every single act of authoritarian control require physical enforcement, then make that enforcement impossibly expensive and difficult.

Option 3: Secession We already have two incompatible visions of what America should be. One side wants a multi-ethnic democracy with a social safety net. The other wants a white Christian ethnostate with unlimited corporate power. These cannot coexist indefinitely.

What if blue states started seriously discussing secession? Not threatened as political theater but actually planned. Constitutional conventions. Referendums. Negotiations for national debt division. Military base transfers. Currency agreements.

Yes, the last time states tried to leave it caused a civil war. But that was over slavery, with clearly defined geographic boundaries and two relatively equal economic systems. This would be the economic powerhouses leaving the welfare states. What would the red states do, invade California? With what money?

The mere serious threat might be enough to force structural changes. Quebec nearly left Canada twice and got massive concessions both times just from credible threats.

Option 4: International Intervention This has never happened to a nuclear power, but there's a first time for everything. Blue states could request UN election monitoring. They could sign their own climate agreements with the EU. They could create alternate diplomatic channels.

California could request Canadian peacekeepers for "election security." New York could invite European observers for "financial transparency." Make it embarrassing. Make America's collapse visible to the world. Force the international community to pick sides.

No, the UN can't invade America. But they can isolate it. Sanctions work. Ask Russia. International humiliation works. Ask South Africa under apartheid.

Look, we're past normal. The fascists already won round one. They control the institutions. They have their judges. They have their media ecosystem. They have their army of true believers who will excuse anything.

But they don't have the money. They don't have the cities. They don't have the educated workforce. They don't have the young. And most importantly, they don't have legitimacy in the eyes of the majority.

The historical record says once fascists gain power, they stay for 30-50 years. But the historical record doesn't have examples of fascists taking over a country where their opposition controls most of the economy, technology, and cultural production. We're in uncharted territory, which means we need unprecedented responses.

The question isn't whether these options are extreme. They are. The question is whether we're ready to admit that normal is already gone. The window to prevent fascism closed. But the opportunity for something else, something unprecedented, might just be opening.

The German conservatives who said "we can control him" were all dead or fled within two years. We're just months into our version of this story. The question is: are we going to be the first generation that finds a new way out, or are we going to be another cautionary tale future historians write about?

At least we're finally asking the right questions.