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Notes from editor (not for publication):

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

Can we say our Democratic experiment has succeeded?

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

Amid the celebrations and fireworks of the U.S.

Semiquincentennial, think about this: checks and balances have
disappeared, and tyranny is alive and well

####END SUBHED####

TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

THIS JULY 4 WAS supposed to be a celebration that
America's experiment with popular rule has lasted a quarter
millennium. I'm just not sure it has.

When you consider what was unique about the republic
established by our founding fathers in the late 1700s, its chief
attributes were government of the people, by the people, and for

12 the people; rule of law rather than of men (persons); and
13 separation of powers to prevent tyranny.

14 For these advantages, the 13 original states put aside
15 their differences of size, wealth, and economic structure — and,
16 of course, their opinions about slavery. These principles were the
17 reason to separate from England and to unite as a new country.

18 Now look at what's happened, starting with the rule of
19 law: In America, that starts with the Constitution. It may not be
20 perfect, but everyone agreed that it was the law of the land, as
21 clarified by the Supreme Court.

22 But we have a president who thinks he can use executive
23 orders to overrule parts of the Constitution he doesn't like. The
24 intended safeguard, the Supreme Court, is failing in its purpose
25 by enabling so many of these violations. Effectively, the
26 Constitution is being nullified.

27 How about the separation of powers to prevent tyranny?
28 The judicial branch of government, namely the Supreme Court,
29 has become a rubber stamp for some clearly unconstitutional
30 policies, even coming perilously close to overturning birthright
31 citizenship as granted in the 14th Amendment. The Republican-
32 led Congress as well, ruled by a party under the heavy personal
33 influence of the president, just rubber-stamps whatever he says.

34 So neither the judicial nor the legislative branches of
35 government serves as checks and balances on the executive. And
36 the executive branch is headed by a person who expects every
37 decision of his to be enacted without opposition — the very
38 definition of a tyrant.

39 In fact, this tyrant threatens opponents with specious
40 investigations, costly lawsuits, termination from positions of high
41 responsibility, and thug-like verbal abuse. He aims to make
42 opposition harder and harder.

43 * * *

44 WHAT MIGHT SAVE the country is government of the
45 people, by the people, and for the people, which means elections

46 — changing our leaders when we don't like them. That, too, is
47 under threat — or, we should say, increased threat.

48 For decades now, the Republican party in states like
49 Texas and Louisiana has been suppressing the vote by purging
50 voter rolls, providing inadequate polling stations in certain areas,
51 gerrymandering districts, and eliminating voting methods used
52 heavily by its opponents such as mail-in ballots. Jailing Black
53 men in large numbers and never letting them vote thereafter is
54 part of that suppression strategy.

55 Now Trump threatens to upend elections completely by
56 demanding passports or birth certificates on voting day —
57 documents that many Americans can't easily get, especially those
58 in lower economic brackets. You can just imagine administrators
59 in red states dragging their feet or imposing high fees when
60 providing these documents.

61 It is a blatant attempt to steal the 2026 midterm
62 elections, which popular sentiment indicates that Republicans are
63 likely to lose. This is made possible in part by a large plurality of
64 Americans who no longer believe in elections unless their party
65 wins, thus rendering democracy impossible. That's the effect of
66 years of fake news, showing why fake news is incompatible with
67 democracy. (Fake news has told them we never had a
68 democracy.)

69 * * *

70 SO IF WE ARE NOW without the rule of law, separation of
71 powers, and government of the people, by the people, and for the
72 people, what reasons remain for the United States to continue as
73 a country?

74 Trump has won two out of the last three presidential
75 elections. Anyone who thought Obama's election marked an end
76 to white nationalism, xenophobia, and political hate was wrong.
77 The people we have over the years called Confederates,
78 segregationists, Tea Party, or MAGA are still with us, and likely
79 always will be in the United States of America. And they don't
80 want to share power — they want it all.

81 We celebrated the patriotic victory in the Civil War that
82 held the country together, including the vanquished
83 Confederates. Ah, but the Confederates weren't really defeated;
84 they and their heirs lived to perpetrate Jim Crow laws,
85 segregation, discrimination, and eventually Trump.

86 It is tempting to imagine the country split geographically
87 into the majority MAGA/former Confederate belt and the
88 progressive coasts and North. Without this region, the rest of us
89 could have nice things like universal health care, rational gun
90 laws, and limits on the power of billionaires. We may never have
91 those things as the 50 states, but we might as the 20 or 30 states.

92 So now that the fireworks for America's 250th are over, it
93 might be worth reflecting on what exactly has survived of our
94 democracy — and what perhaps hasn't — as well as what we
95 might want for ourselves and our descendants.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

96 **STEEV LYNN** is an international development
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98 Dummerston, having worked for years in Africa and Asia on
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####END BIO/COATTAIL####

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