

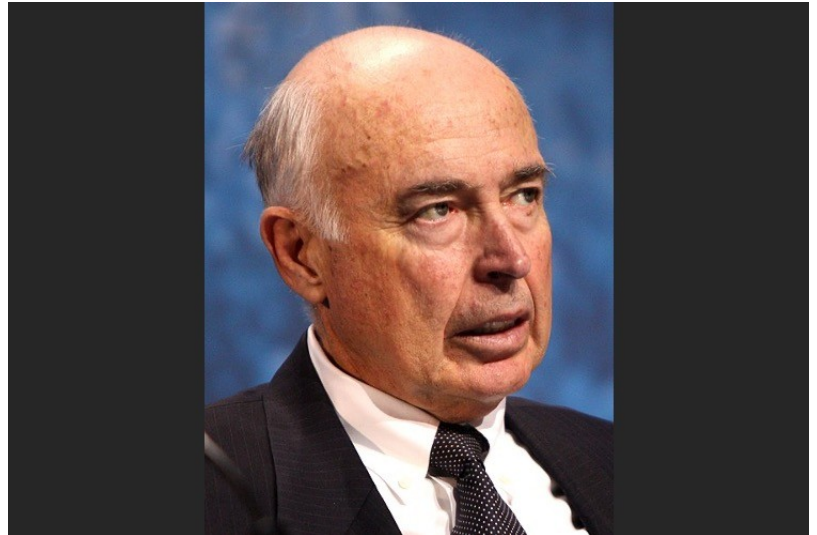


# Angelo Codevilla, Conservative Intellectual Giant, Dead at 78

Angelo Codevilla, a towering conservative intellect, [died on Monday](#) in a car accident at age 78.

Charles Bowyer, writing in the *Christian Post*, called Codevilla “one of our country’s greatest public intellectuals.” Ryan Williams, president of the Claremont Institute, where Codevilla spent his last years reflecting on and writing about America’s intellectual and cultural decline, called him “a scholar, a veteran, a patriot [and] a gentleman.”

Michael Walsh of the *Epoch Times* called Codevilla “one of the sharpest and shrewdest observers of the contemporary political scene.”



Gage Skidmore/Wikimedia Commons  
Angelo Codevilla

A gifted writer, Codevilla, in his book *The Ruling Class: How They Corrupted America and What We Can Do About It*, called out the Deep State long before the term became popular. More surprising, he all but predicted the rise of Donald Trump, a populist who reflected the growing unrest of Codevilla’s “country class” whom the “ruling class” rejoiced in belittling and coercing.

The “ruling class,” now seen by vast numbers of America’s citizens as corrupt usurpers of political power, have been educated at the country’s most prestigious universities and consequently are convinced of their own superiority over the rest of us. They maintains that they knows what is best for us and use governmental power to control every facet of American life.

In 2010 Codevilla wrote his essay *The Ruling Class* for *American Spectator*, where it was picked up and read on the air by the late Rush Limbaugh. It was later published in book form and remains available at Amazon. As Matthew Schmitz noted in his memorial to Codevilla, he “observed that Americans could no longer maintain the pretense of being equal citizens. There were now ... two classes: rulers and ruled.”

Codevilla wrote from his personal experience. He served as staff to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, worked for the CIA, and helped conceive the technology that became the Strategic Defense Initiative, or SDI. He served as a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

He was invited to join the Deep State and turned down the invitation. In a remarkable interview published by the liberal Jewish magazine *Tablet*, Codevilla, a conservative Roman Catholic, sparred with David Samuels, a liberal Jew. In Samuel’s article, *The Codevilla Tapes*, Samuels proudly announced that he considered himself part of the intellectual elite and asked Codevilla to respond.

Wrote Samuels in his introduction to the interview:

Angelo Codevilla ... is one of the few American political philosophers who combines a deep sense of the Western moral and philosophical traditions with a hard-nosed sense of how the American political system actually works.



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on September 23, 2021

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I thought it would be fair-minded to give Codevilla a hearing, despite the fact that he identifies as a conservative Catholic rather than [myself who is] a liberal Northeastern Jew.

Remarkably, Codevilla agreed to be interviewed, and even invited Samuels to his home and vineyard in Northern California for an evening of discussion and breakfast the morning after.

Here are selected parts from that interview, which reflect Codevilla's astonishing intellect along with his courage to take on his Deep State opponent with kindness and generosity:

**David Samuels:** In 2010, you wrote an article, which then became a book, in which you predicted the rise of someone like Donald Trump as well as the political chaos and stripping away of institutional authority that we've lived through since. Did you think your prediction would come true so quickly?

**Angelo Codevilla:** I didn't predict anything. I described a situation which had already come into existence. Namely, that the United States has developed a ruling class that sees itself as distinct from the raw masses of the rest of America. That the distinction that they saw, and which had come to exist, between these classes, comprised tastes and habits as well as ideas. Above all, that it had to do with the relative attachment, or lack thereof, of each of these classes to government.

**Samuels:** One of the things that struck me about your original piece was your portrait of the American elite as a single class that seamlessly spans both the Democratic and Republican parties.

**Codevilla:** Of course, yes. Not in exactly the same way, though; what I said was that the Democrats were the senior partners in the ruling class. The Republicans are the junior partners.

The reason being that the American ruling class was built by or under the Democratic Party. First, under Woodrow Wilson and then later under Franklin Roosevelt. It was a ruling class that prized above all its intellectual superiority over the ruled. And that saw itself as the natural carriers of scientific knowledge, as the class that was naturally best able to run society and was therefore entitled to run society.

The Republican members of the ruling class aspire to that sort of intellectual status or reputation. And they have shared a taste of this ruling class. But they are not part of the same party, and as such, are constantly trying to get closer to the senior partners. As the junior members of the ruling class, they are not nearly as tied to government as the Democrats are. And therefore, their elite prerogatives are not safe.

Not surprisingly, such a towering intellect didn't go unnoticed by the Deep State, which tried to coopt Codevilla:

**Codevilla:** When I started working for the Senate, some folks at the [CIA] figured out that I wasn't a run-of-the-mill staffer. So I was visited by one of the old boys who took me up to the director's office — the director wasn't there at the time. He took me up via the director's elevator, he had a key. And showed me all around and was very, very clubby with me. Then they took me to his house, which is overlooking the Potomac, with these large wolfhounds



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sitting about. And essentially, he said the equivalent of “all this could be yours.”

**Samuels:** My son, if you play the game.

**Codevilla:** If you play the game. I said to myself, “HmMMM, what did the Lord say to all this?”

But it really is a matter of who has dinner with whom. I have worked in Washington long enough to know that people would sell their souls for invitations to be at certain tables. To be allowed to speak with this person or that. In the end, it’s all social.

And how do you become social? You express the same thoughts, you have the same tastes. You vacation in the same places. You love the same loves, you hate the same hates....

The primary element is, as we Christians were taught, pride. That is the sin of sins.

There is nothing that moves human beings quite so much as the desire to be on top of other human beings.

Codevilla, obviously, turned down the invitation, reflecting not only the man’s faith, but his courage to stay true to his faith.

He will be missed.



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