



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on September 26, 2023

## CNN Chyron: “Outdated Constitution Has Put Democracy at Risk”

CNN may never be able to top its now infamous 2020 chyron, “Fiery But Mostly Peaceful Protests...” — but that doesn’t mean the network isn’t still trying. It’s latest effort is an eyebrows-and-ire-raising attack on America’s foundation reading, “SCHOLARS WARN OUTDATED CONSTITUTION HAS PUT DEMOCRACY AT RISK.”

Of course, perspective is needed. If the “scholars” — Harvard government professors Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt — mean “democracy” as in the people or our congressmen get whatever they want at the moment based on majority vote no matter how rash, they have a point. The Constitution certainly is an impediment to glorified mob rule. This is for a good reason, too, one that happens to be the precise reason cultural revolutionaries hate the document:

It is conservative by its very nature.

(This doesn’t mean what you may think, but more on that later.)

Perhaps not that many people saw CNN’s anti-American chyron (image below), given that the network just experienced its [worst ratings in history](#) with the vital 25 to 54 demographic (CNN’s most recent weekend shows attracted *just 55,000 viewers from that group*).

But enough saw the chyron so that the network got dragged mercilessly on social media. Examples:

Not surprisingly, the CNN segment also had its fans. “One of the most important interviews on any American news channel and very few will ever see or hear about this,” wrote “rabukan 58” under the YouTube video (below) of the Levitsky-Ziblatt appearance. “This is truly the best 9:37 minutes that I’ve spent listening to an interview. I wanted more,” said an equally impressed “Morgan Belinsky.”

You can have more, too (no running please!), as Levitsky and Ziblatt are hawking a book, *Tyranny of the Minority*. Its thesis seems like bold projection, with *The Harvard Gazette* [writing](#) earlier this month that the work “makes the case that large segments of the Republican Party leadership have lost commitment to democratic rules of the game.” (Yes, well, a major party certainly does have that problem.) And what



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is the profs' issue with the Constitution?

“We have a very, very old constitution; in fact, the oldest written constitution in the world,” notes Ziblatt, the Eaton Professor of the Science of Government,” relates the *Gazette*. “It was written in a pre-democratic era. It hasn’t been amended much compared to other democracies. As a result, we have these institutions in place that most other democracies got rid of over the course of the 20th century.”

While by “pre-democratic era” the professors no doubt mean a time when representative government wasn’t the norm, democracy had existed, of course, prior to our nation’s birth. Thus could our Founders make observations such as, “Democracies ... have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths” (James Madison, *The Federalist*, No. 10).

Most interesting, though, is the academic’s effort to discredit the Constitution by calling it “very, very old” (should it be euthanized?). Do note that the professors beloved “democracy” is far older still, not 200-plus years but *2000-plus*, dating back to ancient Athens. The world’s most popular sport, soccer, [dates back](#) to 206 B.C. Pizza, perhaps America’s favorite food, [dates back](#) nominally to 997 A.D., with even the modern version being born in the 18th century. The flush toilet, which none of us can do without, was invented in 1596. The point?

Most things we really need or love are “very, very old.” In fact, being old means they were valuable enough to stand the test of time.

Levitsky and Ziblatt also frown on the Electoral College, which they blame for facilitating GOP “extremism.” Moreover, in their book they “survey governments worldwide for examples of democratizing reforms,” the *Gazette* further relates. “And they draw from history in underscoring the dangers of our constitutional stasis.”

Ah, “stasis.” This is [defined](#) as “a state of static balance” or “stagnation.” But, then again, it’s also [defined](#) as a “stable state.” And maybe, just perhaps, this is why when we adhered to our stasis-breeding Constitution, we had a stable state.

This brings us to the Constitution’s inherently “conservative” nature: The quoted term’s only consistent definition is “having the effect of maintaining the status quo” — and a status quo is precisely what the Constitution prescribes. It limits government, providing boundaries beyond which leaders may not lawfully go (e.g., “Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech”). In fact, the Constitution is replete with “shall nots.”

Of course, we can alter the Constitution if new national challenges present themselves, but it prescribes a status quo for this as well: the amendment processes (there are *two*). In other words, politicians and judges may not, *lawfully*, dictate policies contrary to the Constitution’s status quo using a “living document” rationalization.

So it’s no surprise that revolutionaries would despise the Constitution: Revolutions are all about overthrowing the status quo.

But ensuring stasis (and avoiding statism), in certain departments, is wise. “Look before you leap,” “A fool rushes in where angels fear to tread,” “Act in haste, repent at leisure,” and other *very, very old* sayings all warn of the perils of rash action, which the glorified mob rule known as democracy facilitates. Why, we saw this already in democracy’s birthplace: The ancient Athenians voted to execute philosopher Socrates, having wrongly blamed him for their empire’s loss. They then regretted it soon afterwards and erected a statue in his honor.



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As for CNN, since it was launched in 1979, a question suggests itself: When will the network be too old to be listened to?



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