



# Freedom to criticize president a tenet of American democracy

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“To announce that there must be no criticism of the president, or that we are to stand by the president, right or wrong, is not only unpatriotic and servile, but is morally treasonable to the American public,” Theodore Roosevelt wrote in an editorial published in 1918.

With the possible exception of Nixon, I can’t think of a time when this sentiment was more appropriate or relevant. When Americans place their trust and support in any president – to the point they are unwilling to voice any criticism of their leadership – dangerous and uncertain times lie ahead.

Over the years, I have supported members of both major parties for the highest office in the land. Some were elected; some were not. Regardless, I have always seen it as my civic responsibility to support the president when I agreed with him and to admonish the president when I disagreed with him.

What concerns me most about the current political landscape is the unwillingness of many who support the president to voice any disapproval of his actions, regardless of how bizarre, inexplicable or even patently anti-American those actions may be.

Look, it is entirely possible to be supportive of an individual while disagreeing with some of the policies and positions held by that individual. Nobody is perfect.

When anyone puts loyalty before critical thinking, or makes excuses for behavior that is clearly inconsistent with American ideals, then we are indeed treading on hazardous ground.

Again, it concerns me deeply when so many of the president’s most ardent supporters seem utterly incapable of expressing any criticism of anything he says or does.

What has always distinguished the United States from almost all other countries is our collective allegiance to an idea, not an individual or a political affiliation. When we lose that, we’ve lost everything.

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