

Civilization Versus the New Nihilists



by Victor Davis Hanson

Nihilism is the religion of the Left. Anarchy is now at the core of the new Democratic Party.

If the Left wished radically to alter the demography of the U.S., it could have expanded legal immigration through legislation or the courts.

Instead, it simply erased the border and dynamited federal immigration law.

By fiat, nihilists ended the wall, and stopped detaining and deporting illegal aliens altogether.

Or was it worse than that when candidate Joe Biden in September 2019 urged would-be illegal aliens to “surge” the border?

As a result, through laxity and entitlement incentives, eight-million illegal entrants have swarmed the southern border under the Biden administration.

They are swamping border towns, bankrupting big-city budgets, and infuriating even Democratic constituencies.

The same nihilism applies to crime.

In the old days liberals gave light sentences to criminals or reduced bail. But today leftist prosecutors do not even seek bail. They hardly prosecute theft or random assaults.

Criminals are arrested and released the same day. Is the nihilist plan to destroy the entire body of American jurisprudence, and to ensure "equity" in being victimized?

Is the woke idea that all Americans—inclusive of diverse Beverly Hills elites, Hollywood celebrities, or members of Congress alike—must share victim equity, and thus experience first-hand street robbery, car-jacking, smash-and-grab, and home invasion?

The United States can produce annually more natural gas and oil than any nation on earth. It once pioneered nuclear power. It has vast coal reserves and sophisticated hydroelectric plants.

The old idea was to use these unmatched resources to transition gradually to other cleaner fuels such as hydrogen, fusion power, solar, and wind. That way consumers would still enjoy affordable energy. And the United States could remain independent of coercion by the oil-producing Middle East.

But that was not the nihilist way.

Instead, the left deliberately cut back on pipelines, new energy leases, and fracking. It bragged of an upcoming ban on fossil fuels. In drought-stricken, energy-short California, the state is blowing up, not building new dams.

Is the nihilist agenda to punish with bankruptcy the energy-using middle class?

Is the hope that Americans will have to beg the Saudis, Iranians, Venezuelans, and Russians to pump more of the hated goo for our benefit so we would not have to dirty ourselves helping ourselves?

When Joe Biden entered office in January 2021 the U.S. was naturally rebounding from more than a year of Covid-enforced lockdowns.

Overtaxed supply chains were still fragile. Pent-up demand was soaring. Consumers were flush with government cash. Trillions of dollars had been printed and infused into the economy to ward off a feared recession.

All economists advised *not* to increase the deficit, spike further consumer demand, and expand entitlements.

Instead the Left did just the opposite.

Four-trillion dollars were printed and distributed. In no time, Americans, recovering from Covid, next experienced the worst, but entirely preventable, inflation in 40 years.

Three years later prices on staples remain 30-40 percent higher than when Biden took office. Mortgage rates tripled.

Abroad the nihilism is even more inexplicable and terrifying.

All nations suffer military setbacks. But none in memory have shamefully hightailed out of a theater as we did from Afghanistan.

Few countries could even imagine discarding billions of dollars of weapons and hardware into the hands of the terrorist Taliban, or abandoning a \$1 billion new embassy, and a huge, remodeled air base.

Why did the administration simply allow a huge Chinese spy balloon to float and photograph leisurely over the continental U.S.?

Naïve countries might endure two or three attacks on their overseas bases without serious retaliation. But how could the U.S. military permit 135 rocket barrages by Iranian-supplied terrorists on American soldiers without a major and sustained response?

Is the point to humiliate our own troops? To destroy what is left of U.S. deterrence?

Popular culture is especially captive to leftist nihilism.

It is not enough to object to a statue or artwork. Instead, without deliberation or public input, they must be defaced or destroyed, all the better stealthily and by night.

After the massacres of October 7—but well before Israel had even responded to the barbaric invasion—thousands of students swarmed their elite universities cheering on the violence.

And what so exhilarated them?

The nihilist, ghoulish beheading, torture, mutilation, mass rape, dismemberment, and necrophilia of unarmed, civilian Israeli elderly, women, children, and infants.

In sum, we are witnessing an epidemic of leftist nihilism similar to the 16th-century European mad wave of iconoclastic destruction of religious art.

Or is the better parallel the suicidal insanity that Mao Zedong unleashed during his cultural revolution of the 1960s?

The old politics of right versus left, and Republican opposed to Democrat have now given way to a new existential struggle: Americans must choose between civilization—or its destroyers.

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