

The Logic in All the Madness

By Victor Davis Hanson

Most Americans believe it is unhinged to deliberately destroy the border and allow 10 million illegal aliens to enter the country without background audits, means of support, any claims to legal residency, and definable skills. And worse still, why would federal authorities be ordered to release repeat violent felons who have gone on to commit horrendous crimes against American citizens?

Equally perplexing to most Americans is borrowing \$1 trillion every 90 days and paying 5-5.5% interest on the near \$36 trillion in ballooning national debt. Serving that debt at current interest exceeds the size of the annual defense budget and may soon top \$1 trillion in interest costs, or more than 13% of the budget.

Why would the United States suspend military aid to Israel as it tries to destroy the Hamas architects of the October 7 massacres? Why would it lift sanctions on a terrorist Iran? Why would it suppress Israel's response to Iran's missile attack on the Jewish homeland? Why would it prevent Israel from stockpiling key munitions as it prepares to deal with the existential threats posed by Hezbollah?



Why would the Biden administration cancel key pipeline projects and put vast swaths of federal lands rich in oil and gas off limits to production, even as it further drains the strategic petroleum reserve? Why not pump rather than drain our own oil from strategic stockpiles?

Why would the Biden White House's counsel's office meet with Nathan Wade, the former paramour chief prosecutor in the Fani Willis Fulton County prosecution of Donald Trump? Why would the third-ranking prosecutor in the Biden Justice Department step down to lead Alvin Bragg's Manhattan prosecution of Donald Trump? Why would the Biden Justice Department under Attorney General Merrick Garland select Jack Smith as a special prosecutor of Donald Trump—given his past failures as a special counsel and known political biases?

Nihilism only explains so much. A better explanation is that the Biden administration and its handlers knew that there was a good chance that most of their policies would prove unpopular and might even jeopardize Biden's reelection.

But they also were confident the changes were of such magnitude that the United States would either become—in the infamous phrase of Barack Obama—"fundamentally transformed" or force the next Republican administration to adopt such tough medicine that it would prove untenable politically and the malady would still prove mostly impossible to undo.

After all, how would a Trump administration deal with 10 million illegal aliens who entered the US without audit or legality? Where are they? How would they be found and deported? How many court suits in blue-jurisdictions before blue judges would have to be overcome?

The country has become acculturated to a nonexistent border. And so, the left assumes, it would be expensive and difficult to finish the wall, to stop catch and release, to insist refugee status must be obtained before entry, and to deport what is

likely now 20-30 million illegal aliens in toto. In other words, the Biden administration may sigh, "Our work is done. Whatever you think about our illegal methods, we forever changed the idea of immigration and the demographics of the country."

All presidents—Bush, Obama, Trump, and Biden—have run deficits and vastly increased the debt since the Bill Clinton-Newt Gingrich compromises that resulted in a temporary period of balanced budgets. But in the case of Biden, there was no need to keep up the multitrillion-dollar deficits, especially as interest rates on the national debt tripled and the service costs now approach \$1 trillion per year.

Biden, after all, inherited a recovering economy, flush with post-COVID-19 lockdown stimulatory dollars, pent-up consumer demand, and ossified supply chains. And then he stupidly poured gasoline on the explosive mix by dousing the country with even more federal spending. Now we have the worst of both worlds: high interest rates and nearly \$36 trillion to service.

But in the leftist mind, it was worth it, given that left-wing constituencies received vast expansions of entitlements that will be hard to prune back. And unprecedentedly vast debt at levels like our current burden of 123% of annual GDP prove unsustainable. And the historic correctives are brutal: 1) major cuts in entitlements and redistributive spending programs; 2) tax hikes at a time when state, local, federal, and gas, sales, and property taxes—and other "fees"—already take over half the income of most middle-class Americans; 3) hyper-inflation to pay back what is owed with cheap funny money, with the added leftist fillip that those who have dollars lose wealth and those who don't gain greater access to them; 4) renunciation of debt. We already saw in the Obama era that liberal bureaucrats and courts often reversed the orders of creditors in bankruptcy hearings. When debt becomes unsustainable, historically arise cries of "Why should the

poor suffer more when the rich already have enough money and don't really need to be paid back?"; and 5) efforts to "confiscate" private wealth by giving, in exchange, government "credits." For example, there have already been floated ideas that 401Ks could be absorbed into the insolvent Social Security system for credit in government benefits.

Most Americans poll strong support for Israel. They oppose the Biden effort to triangulate by revisiting the old Obama nihilist agendas of emboldening the Iranian/Hezbollah/Hamas/Houthis axis to play off against our traditional allies of Israel and the more moderate Arab regimes.

By failing to prosecute nine months of domestic violence committed by pro-Hamas lawbreakers, by allowing leftist campuses to normalize anti-Semitism and pro-terrorist advocacy, and by destroying the once close alliance of Israel and the United States, the left feels it will be almost impossible to go back to the pre-Obama/Biden years. Their legacy, they hope, is a mendicant Israel utterly dependent on U.S. largess—a condition itself predicated on essentially destroying the idea of a secure Jewish state within its present borders.

The Biden administration sought to curb oil and gas production—save for brief periods before the midterm and reelection campaigns, when it drained the strategic petroleum reserve. The point was to acculturate the public to high gasoline prices, to make inefficient solar/wind/EVs projects competitive against artificially costly fossil fuels, and to institutionalize policies that will make it difficult to reopen closed fields, to reboot federal oilfield leasing, and to dismantle costly subsidies for inefficient green fuels.

That Americans paid hundreds of billions of dollars more for their fuels under Biden, that the auto industry is stuck with vast inventories of money-losing electric vehicles that the

public does not want, and that the entire economy has been shackled by counterproductive green mandates were considered worth the cost of alienating the public.

The left knows that neither Alvin Bragg, E. Jean Carroll, Letitia James, Jack Smith, nor Fani Willis would have gone to court against Donald Trump if he was either a leftist or had bowed out of the 2024 presidential race. They know no one has been tried on such pseudo-charges, and no one will again be so charged after Trump. And they accept that no republic can long survive if the opposition party seeks to remove the names of its political opponents from the ballot.

But they also know that the left has now established a valuable precedent: oppose woke progressivism, and one will either become bankrupted by indictments or land before a blue-city jury eager to nullify evidence to ensure the accused is jailed and broke.

So the left believes that its new lawfare was well worth the destruction of the entire tradition of equality under the law: 1) Donald Trump has lost a half-billion dollars in fines and legal fees; 2) a court-bound Donald Trump was robbed of weeks of valuable campaign time; 3) Donald Trump can be forever now libeled as a “convicted felon”; and 4) the left has played chicken with the American Constitution and believes it has won, given conservatives would never enter into a destructive cycle of tit-for-tat.

The Biden years did the country great damage and rendered Biden himself one of the most unpopular incumbent presidents in American history. But his agendas may have fundamentally changed the country for decades, if not longer—and will require tough remedies that may be almost as unpopular as the wreckage they wrought.

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