

The Myriad Projections of the 2024 Campaign

By Victor Davis Hanson



Projectionism

Projection is a Freudian psychological term. It describes a particular defensive mechanism, when people, often unconsciously, attribute their own (usually undesirable) behaviors to others who do not have them.

These mental gymnastics are intended to alleviate one's own guilt or sense of inadequacy at the expense of another.

But in the political sphere, projection involves more overt dissimulation. It is increasingly common for leftist candidates or political parties to *falsely* accuse their opponents of the very destructive behaviors and unpopular agendas that they themselves embrace, but out of political necessity must deny.

Rather than an unconscious Freudian defense mechanism, political projection is usually a conscious strategy of hiding one's own negatives by fobbing them off on antagonists.

Projection often proves a quite successful ploy.

After all, the political projectionist knows best his own hazardous or off-putting conduct and policies. And so, he can most skillfully attribute just these liabilities to those who have had no experience with them.

Our Leftist Projectionists

The 2024 Harris-Walz campaign is turning out to be projectionist to the core. How?

First: Kamala Harris and her new running mate Governor Tim Walz have long advanced fringe leftist political agendas. (Her “everyone needs to be woke” and his claim that riots happen because society doesn’t prioritize “equity and inclusion.”)

They have been loud in their fringe cultural commentaries, which are not just unpopular but roundly rejected by the majority of the electorate. And they know that if they become open and honest about what they have done, they will likely be defeated.

Second: On a more personal level, both are attacking the behavior and conduct of their rivals as a way of deflecting attention from their own weaknesses on that score.

Thus, this kind of projection, about both policy and personal behavior, is more common on the left because its ideology is fundamentally far more distant from the views of most voters.

A few examples reveal that 2024 is turning out to be the most projectionist campaign in memory—and logically so, because the Democratic Harris-Walz ticket is unappealingly left-wing and thus vulnerable.

Harris is now barnstorming the country, repeating many times per day a teleprompted narrative that she sought to close the border and stop illegal immigration.

Donald Trump, she claims, did just the opposite, and is thus weak on the border. This idea of an open-borders Trump pitted

against a secure-borders Harris is a classic Big Lie—if not utterly unhinged and surreal.

As a senator in 2017-20, Harris repeatedly fought President Trump's secure border efforts.

Trump battled for a secure border against the likes of Harris (whose record was the most left-wing in the Senate), the administrative state, "anonymous" moles within his own administration, DNC-spawned lawsuits, and liberal justices.

All of them battled to keep the border open and the inflow of illegal aliens as large as possible—given that they felt subsidizing a huge illegal alien population would create loyal voters in the new era of poorly audited early and mail-in balloting.

Innate to the new hard-left Democratic party is a globalist ideology that regards borders as anachronisms. Thus, anyone should be allowed to travel and reside in any country he pleases, while deserving state support to accomplish such migrations.

Those agendas were why the entire leftist consortium tried to halt Trump's efforts to build a wall. They embraced catch-and-release and allowed illegal aliens to claim "refugee" status once inside the United States. They fought Trump tooth and nail when he tried to beef up ICE and other border security agencies.

Harris went to absurd lengths in her open-borders agenda. She bizarrely even blasted the public at Christmas time for daring to say "Merry Christmas" when, she alleged, young foreign nationals, here illegally, could not enjoy such holidays. When she called for reforming border security, she said of ICE—"And we need to probably think about starting from scratch."

Harris accused the border patrol falsely of whipping Haitian illegal aliens and compared them to the enforcers of slavery.

As a California attorney general Harris championed sanctuary cities and the state's neo-Confederate nullification of federal immigration laws.

She and Tim Walz both supported giving free health care to foreigners who arrived illegally in the United States. Harris claimed that illegal entry into the U.S. was not a criminal offense.

Most notoriously, Harris was part and parcel of the Biden-Harris-Alejandro Mayorkas administration that destroyed the border and allowed a record 10 million illegal aliens to enter the U.S. freely and without vetting.

So why is Harris projecting her own politics onto the border-hawk Trump, falsely claiming that he opposed bipartisan "comprehensive border reform"—a tired euphemism for the failed election-era gimmick of legitimizing the unimpeded entrance of millions more illegal aliens?

Because Harris knows that, of all the unpopular Biden-Harris initiatives, the wide-open border and accompanying unchecked influxes of unvetted illegal aliens have proved the most unpopular.

And Harris knows that she supported this nihilist policy and that she will again embrace it after the election in her remaining three months as vice president—and, if elected president, for another four years.

But for the next 80 days, Harris will lie, in utterly cynical fashion, that she is with the voters on enforced borders and regulated immigration and against Trump, the supposed open-border liberal. Note that Harris is still vice president and apparently remains "border czar" for the next five months. Thus, she could stop all illegal immigration right now. And, even if not elected president, she could ensure its end through November and until January 20, 2025.

In the personal domain, Tim Walz, and his supporters are now alleging that his opponent J. D. Vance is not a true veteran of the Iraq War, because he was mostly assigned to a non-combat unit.

Walz and company are projecting in this absurd fashion because Walz himself has lied that he served in a combat zone and implied he was deployed to either Iraq or Afghanistan or both when he in fact left the National Guard before it was deployed to a combat theater. On yet another occasion, he claimed to have carried weapons "in war" when he had never been in combat theater his entire life. He also falsely claimed to have retired as a Command Sergeant Major, when he instead demonstrably held a lower rank.

As a way of hiding these untruths, Walz projects lies onto Vance.

But anyone knows who has been to Iraq during the war, and especially during the surge—whether as a journalist embedded with ground troops or on an official military-arranged helicopter and plane visits to outlying American bases and troop installations—Iraq was a combat zone *everywhere*.

There were no traditional fronts and no safe areas. Troops got killed inside the supposedly safe "green zone." They were shot and killed or blown up in Humvees while traveling on allegedly secure roads and in purportedly secure bases. Journalists and bureaucrats alike were killed by IEDs, barrages, and sniper fire—anywhere and everywhere.

Vance was in such a 24/7 combat environment when he was deployed to Iraq. Classic projection is clear when the soldier who avoided combat deployments projects his guilt, embarrassment, or fear of criticism onto an antagonist who chose the very opposite conduct and behavior.

In the year of the projectionist, watch how Harris—who obsessively avoids any live, impromptu, or ex tempore talk or

interview—blasts Trump—who cannot restrain himself from talking publicly to anyone—for supposedly seeking to escape debating her.

Watch how she rails against voter IDs with accusations that her opponents want to warp balloting—while she has encouraged massive, unaudited mail-in voting and third-party vote harvesting, along with 10 million new potential illegal voters conveniently entering the U.S.

Watch how Harris blasts “radical Republicans,” as she intends (together with a Democratic congress) to pack the court, go after the filibuster, and admit new states to get on the cheap four left-wing senators.

Watch Harris scream that the near-unprecedented Biden-Harris inflation—which saw staples including food, power, gas, rent, cars, and insurance soar by 20-30 percent during her tenure—was supposedly caused by ex-president Trump, who left office three years ago with a 1.2 percent inflation rate.

Watch the projectionist Walz claim that Vance, the author of *Hillbilly Elegy* who grew up in an impoverished Appalachia, is actually an elite because he went to law school at Yale, while Walz was a rural Nebraska boy who stayed rural in outlook.

In fact, Vance is the first poor white boy presidential or vice presidential candidate since Bill Clinton (who also went to Yale Law School) ran in 1992. Meanwhile, Walz once scoffed not to take the overwhelmingly conservative map of Minnesota too seriously since there were only “rocks and cows” out there.

Watch Walz scream about “weird” Republicans—as he let Minneapolis burn for days in the awful summer of 2020 before calling in the National Guard, as his wife opened their official residence’s windows to get an authentic whiff of the revolutionary arson, and as his daughter tweeted out

assurances to rioters not to worry about being arrested or stopped by the National Guard given her inside knowledge, they would not be sent in.

Watch Biden claim that Trump will attack democracy if he loses. This comes from a president who has unleashed lawfare against his opponent, who was removed from his own reelection candidacy by a backroom cabal, and whose mental disabilities have been hidden from the public by the same dark forces who recently forced him out—but only when his polls dived, and he threatened other Democratic candidates. Note Harris is the first modern presidential candidate who has never won a single delegate in a single primary but was anointed by a fiat of unnamed donors and politicians.

The first cousin of projection is the more familiar vice of hypocrisy, marginally preferable to projection in that here the other side is at least doing what they're accused of.

Harris's hypocrisy is stunning and shameless. For example, she has blasted Trump's demand for voter IDs as racist and voter suppression. Yet Harris demands the very same sort of photo IDs from all who would attend her rallies.

Her logic, apparently, is that verifying the citizenship of voters is not as important as proving you have obtained a ticket to her rally and are not unlawfully seeking to enter her own event. Her message to the public is that the security of American balloting is hardly as important as the security of her own rallies.

The second cousin of projection is simple lying about one's real intentions, virtually inevitable for the side with the less popular ideology.

Once elected, Vice President Harris felt she could safely push unpopular restrictions on pipelines, existing oil and gas fields, and new federal energy leasing to please her leftist circle and in pursuit of her 'green new deal' agendas. Now

facing a presidential election, and the need for cheaper gasoline and fracking jobs in swing states, she is pro-fracking and drilling for oil and gas.

As president, she would inevitably revert to her consistent earlier advocacies. And they range from federal gun confiscation and nullifying (“snatching”) private enterprise patents to controlling not only food prices but also wages that she deems not meeting her standards of “gender equity”.

At long last, can't we take away the projection, the hypocrisy, and the concealment of one's real positions, not to mention all the past collusion, disinformation, and lawfare, and just let the people decide whether they really want to return to the leftist vision of America as fundamentally flawed, inherently racist, and in desperate need of corrective illiberalism?

Can't the left be honest that it wants massive government redistributive action in health, education, and welfare, fueled by enormous government spending increases, more taxes, and more administrative-state overseers?

And can't the left be honest to Americans about their globalist view that America is only exceptional to the degree that any country believes it is exceptional—but demonstrably not exceptional enough to warrant secure borders, a free market economy, legal-only immigration, a strong deterrent military, and a content-of-our-character-not-color-of-our-skin approach to race?

Or to put it another way, if you don't want what the people want, you have to project.

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