

Biden Has Sunk the 'Progressive' Option



by Conrad Black

The Biden administration is turning into the funeral pyre of the American left. Historians of the future will deduce who was responsible for converting the Biden–Sanders unity program, designed as the most socialistic that could be sold to the voters, into an outright, far left, suicide note for the Democratic Party as it had been known since the days of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The kamikaze candidacy of George McGovern in 1972, although President Richard Nixon had almost entirely withdrawn from Vietnam, demanded peace terms that, as the New York Times stated, were harsher for America than what the North Vietnamese government was seeking. That was an aberrant moment: The candidate returned to inconsequential obscurity, as Nixon was reelected by what still stands as the greatest plurality in American history despite a doubling in the size of the electorate—18 million votes, carrying 49 states.

Apart from that mad excursion, the Democrats have held to the old Roosevelt coalition of the working class, the working press, the African-Americans, Latin Americans, and any other voters identified with ethnic minorities, the academics including the teachers, and a healthy chunk of the middle class.

After only 14 months, the Biden administration has insulted almost all of the core elements of its support and discredited all of its principal "progressive" policies.

Citizenship is held to be unnecessary to vote; mere physical presence in the country will suffice and immigration has been reduced to the tawdry flood across the southern border, more resembling the barbarians pouring across the frontiers of the Roman Empire in the fifth century A.D. than any considered and sincere determination to come to America to adapt and espouse the American ethos. The fatuous ideal of open borders and refuge and haven for anyone in the world seeking to enter it for whatever motives, appalls the country. It's personified in the nodding head of Homeland Security Sec. Alejandro Mayorkas as he declares "The border is closed" while on the other side of the split television screen, unrestrained masses of unauthorized foreigners flood into the country with no recognition that they're crossing a national border.

The administration has waffled badly on the whole issue of race relations, has effectively promoted critical race theory in the education system, the armed forces, and among civilian employees of the federal government, and has shown a grossly undeserved respect for the theories that have been floating around the Democratic intellectual entourage that proclaim that the United States was initially a slaveholding enterprise that has not begun to compensate African-Americans for what President Abraham Lincoln called "the bondman's 250 years of unrequited toil," followed by a century of segregation and 50 uneven years of the Great Society. Biden's negligent tolerance of racial extremism is tarnishing and weakening the powerful

consensus for enabling African-Americans to achieve a position of equality in American society that has been faithfully followed by both parties for nearly 60 years.

There's probably a consensus for more professional rules and training for police, but there was never the slightest support for the disparagement and intimidation and shrinkage of police forces that occurred in most large Democratic governed cities in the last two years. The Democrats are finally coming to regret blaming the 2020 summer of "peaceful protests" (in which more than 50 people were killed and \$2 billion of property damage inflicted) on racist police. The whole party was cowed by Black Lives Matter, which was threatening to "burn down America" if it didn't receive everything that it sought. Black Lives Matter has since been substantially exposed as an alleged tax scam, but the Democrats have done almost nothing to distance themselves from these harum-scarum radical and charlatan movements that have alienated the great majority of Americans.

Most Americans were tired of unending war in the Middle East, particularly when the principal effect of the 2003 Gulf War was to raise Iran's influence in Iraq. But the catastrophic departure from Afghanistan, in which thousands of Americans were left behind along with billions of dollars worth of sophisticated military equipment, and tens of thousands of completely unevaluated Afghans who had had no connection with the United States were admitted to the United States, has justly shaken faith in the military and splintered any foreign policy consensus.

For the first time since the battle of Kasserine Pass in 1943, America's allies are seriously questioning the efficacy of the U.S. armed forces. It's now clear that despite the colossal funds allocated to rebuild American defense by the Trump administration, the senior military staff have failed to provide adequate protection for the Nimitz class aircraft carriers that are the principal means of projecting American

power in the world, and have completely failed to grasp the significance of hypersonic weapons.

The further the United States gets from a successful war in its past, the more absurdly decorated and bemedaled its senior officers become. The chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, Gen. Mark Milley, sports more ribbons than the combination, at the heights of their careers, of Generals Washington, Grant, Sherman, Lee, Pershing, Marshall, MacArthur, and Eisenhower. Faith in every branch and activity of government has largely evaporated, for good cause.

The initial Biden reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine was very ambiguous, as if there were any relativism possible where one sovereign state is simply invaded and its civil population is smashed up from the air and by artillery. Again Milley so grossly misjudged the correlation of forces that he predicted the Ukrainian capital of Kiev would fall to the Russians within three days, and the daring act of solidarity offered by Biden in the early days was a guaranteed safe headlong flight of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his family out of Ukraine.

The United States had been instrumental in training and supplying the Ukrainians, and the joint chiefs should have known how dangerous and motivated their armed forces could be. The administration seems painfully committed to trying to assure Ukrainian survival while avoiding Russian defeat: a cowardly policy of appeasement while Ukrainians die at the hands of unprovoked invaders. And while the Pentagon spokesman John Kirby contradicts the Secretary of State, saying that furnishing Ukraine with 13-year-old warplanes would be “escalatory,” the president has sought to distract the nation with a lot of unutterable nonsense about transsexualism.

This presidency has failed so badly and so quickly that it has made the Democratic Party synonymous with bad policies. The demented extravagance of Build Back Better—like the attempted

coup d'état of the electoral changes that would have eliminated any process of verification and turned elections into 30-day harvested ballot-stuffing contests, and a packed, overtly political Supreme Court—could not even be brought to a successful vote.

Everything the administration could do to discredit the “progressive” agenda, from ambivalence about the naked aggression against Ukraine, to maintaining defenseless 5-year-old children in masks, to skyrocketing inflation and urban crime, it has done. Biden has sunk the “progressive” option. And for that, and probably only that, the country will be grateful to him.

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