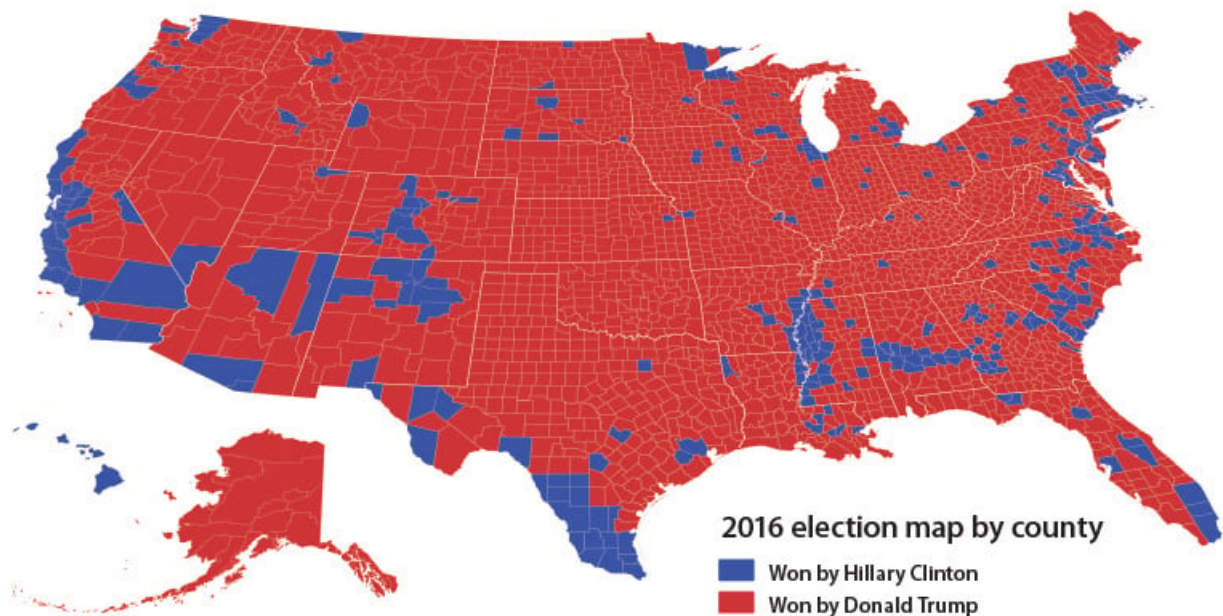


The Anti-Democratic Democratic Left



by Victor Davis Hanson

Joe Biden has claimed that his opponents are assaulting democracy on the basis of the January 6, 2021, buffoonish riot.

Aside from the fact that storming the Capitol Rotunda sometimes is apparently deemed permissible—as in the recent pro-Hamas takeover of it—or aside from the fact that disrupting a federal government proceeding is deemed exempt—as in the recent pro-Hamas throng that blocked the route of the presidential motorcade and thus delayed the State of the Union address to the nation by 26 minutes—who really is attacking democracy?

Take the Supreme Court. After the Court went to a 6-3 conservative majority, liberal law professors, progressive activist groups, and many ends-justify-the-means Democrats in

Congress began advocating “packing the court” to gain additional new billets for left-wing judges.

In other words, the left had little confidence that it would hold the White House and the Senate when a judicial opening came up, so it sought to force the issue while it had the power in both.

Formerly, any such notion would have been written off as lunatic and dangerous, given that the nine-justice Supreme Court has been canonized for 155 years since 1869. Second, during the last time Democrats attacked the nine-justice Supreme Court over its supposedly too conservative rulings—Franklin Roosevelt’s 1937 notorious court-packing scheme—even fellow liberals opposed the toxic gambit. They knew that it would only lead to a tit-for-tat fluid court every time a new administration took power.

Then there was the public demonization of the court, which saw efforts to scare it into “correct” rulings. The effort was multifaceted.

Sometimes the left-wing method was direct intimidation. So in 2020, then Senate Minority Leader Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY) led a throng of pro-abortion protestors to the court’s very doors, threatening Justices Gorsuch and Kavanaugh by name. He was not subtle in his warnings: “I want to tell you, Gorsuch. I want to tell you, Kavanaugh. You have released the whirlwind, and you will pay the price. You won’t know what hit you.”

Hit you? Pay the price?

Later, when left-wing mobs thronged at the private homes of some conservative judges with the intention of intimidating them and leveraging their decisions—in violation of a 1950 federal law—the Biden administration did nothing. No wonder a potential assassin soon showed up near the home of Justice Kavanaugh, and, fortunately, did not go through with his

planned attack.

Nor was the 2022 leaker ever found who illegally disclosed confidential memos on the court's future rulings on abortion. In the recent State of the Union address, Joe Biden spoke directly to the seated justices and seemed to level yet another threat: "With all due respect, justices, women are not without electoral or political power...You're about to realize just how much." In some sense, Biden was following the precedent of Barack Obama, who in his 2010 State of the Union address made a direct attack on the justices of the Supreme Court, many of whom were in attendance.

In sum, during the years of liberal majorities, the left once defended the sacrosanct nature of the third branch of government. Now, when rulings do not always go their way, they seek to discredit and impugn it. And they employ direct intimidation, willful blindness to threats to the justices' private homes, and plans to alter the makeup of the court to fit their ideological agendas.

Democracy is also endangered by radical efforts to alter decades of voting protocols to achieve short-term political advantage. Never has a political party organized its state attorney generals and kindred courts to ban their likely opposing presidential candidate from state ballots.

Yet Colorado, Illinois, and Maine did just that in an effort to erase Trump's name from their state ballots, on grounds that he was an "insurrectionist," despite never being charged with, much less convicted, of "insurrection." The anti-democratic effort was designed to deprive millions of voters of their right to vote for the candidate of their choice and to diminish the chances of down-ballot state and local Republican candidates.

In 2020, under the guise of the COVID lockdowns, anti-democratic liberal activists sued or sought out sympathetic

bureaucrats in numerous states to overturn state voting laws, a right traditionally given to the state legislatures by the Constitution. They proved so successful that, in a historical first, 68% of Americans in 2020 did not vote on Election Day. By design, the vast majority of them were Biden voters—even as the rejection rate of less verifiable mail-in and early voting ballots radically declined.

At various times since the 2017 Trump inauguration, Democratic activists have sought to neuter the 235-year-old Electoral College by circumventing it through the so-called “*National Popular Vote Interstate Compact*.” The effort would force electors to reflect the national rather than their own states’ votes. Earlier, following the 2016 election, the Left organized a concentrated effort—saturating the media with ads featuring Hollywood celebrities— to convince electors to reject the popular vote counts in their states that Trump had won, and instead to become “faithless electors” and swing the election to Hillary Clinton.

The anti-democratic left has railed about ending the 187-year-old filibuster—but only when Democrats are a minority in the Senate. And many in the Democratic Congress have lobbied to admit Puerto Rico and Washington, DC, as states in order to gain four new left-wing senators, thus ending the 65-year-old 50-state union.

Never before had impeachment been envisioned as a normal political ploy to weaken a first-term president once he lost his House majority. Yet the Democratic House majority, for the first time in history, impeached a first-term president twice. And also, for the first time, Democrats tried him as a private citizen in the Senate and rushed to judgment without a special counsel investigation or report.

There are two themes in the left-wing assault on American democracy’s rules, protocols, and long-held traditions. One, the left advocates changing or ending an institution only when

it has lost control of it. And two, it would charge as “insurrectionary” any similar Republican effort to do the same.

The January 6, 2021, riot was a stupid and dangerous gambit. But the buffoonish act was certainly not an “insurrection” that justified militarizing the capital for weeks, stocking a congressional investigating committee with partisans, or using the day to permanently delegitimize the Trump candidacy.

No one arrested was armed. Many of the rioters were let into the Capitol by law enforcement. And we now know that Trump actually did request 10,000 guardsmen to keep the peace, a fact covered up by the January 6 committee.

Insurrectionists do not advise their partisans to march “peacefully and patriotically” to the Capitol. Of the five who died on January 6, four likely died from natural causes. The left spread a gargantuan lie that Capitol Officer Sicknick was killed by “insurrectionists.” But in fact, he died the following day from natural causes.

The left also suppressed news of the circumstances surrounding the one violent death of Trump protestor Ashli Babbitt—the unarmed military veteran who was lethally shot while entering a broken window. The name of the shooter, an officer of the Capitol police, in a first, was deliberately suppressed by the media for months.

A prize-winning *New York Times* reporter claimed that the FBI informants were numerous among the crowd. The number, nature, and purpose of such informants were never disclosed by the FBI.

Of course, not all riots that threaten federal property and functions are deemed the same. In summer 2020, Antifa and BLM fueled 120 days of street violence. The result was \$2 billion in property damage, 35 deaths, 1,500 officers injured, and 14,000 arrests.

The violent looters, arsonists, and demonstrators likewise focused on government facilities. But rather than swarming the Capitol, they torched a federal courthouse, a police precinct, and a historic Washington, DC, church. They tried to swarm the very White House grounds and harm the president, who was whisked by the Secret Service to a secure bunker—a fact mocked by the *New York Times*.

There are two other symptoms of the Democratic assault on democracy. One is the use of the courts to nullify the candidacy of the left's presidential opponent in the 2024 election. Many things can be said of the lawfare waged against Donald Trump, but two themes are uncontested: one, if he had not run for reelection in 2024, he would not have been targeted; and two, were he a man of the left, he now would have no legal worries. Trump's fate, by design, will be in the hands of big blue-city, left-wing prosecutors, judges, and jury pools.

There are commonalities in such lawfare: Laws are being used in novel fashion solely to "get Trump." Statutes of limitation are suddenly waived to go after Trump. Federal laws are being bootstrapped by state prosecutors. Some of the prosecutors are themselves compromised and have likely either violated judicial canons or may be subject to prosecution.

Judges are not shy about expressing their dislike for Trump from the bench. Some prosecutors have coordinated with the White House. And the application of justice is blatantly asymmetrical, given that Trump is being tried for some crimes that Biden himself has committed but has been exempted from.

So our institutions have been corrupted in an anti-democratic and purely partisan fashion. The FBI, along with the Clinton campaign and its paywalls, hired a foreign national, Christopher Steele, to smear a presidential candidate in conjunction with the 2016 campaign. The agency also contracted social media censors to suppress news deemed unhelpful to the

2020 Biden campaign.

FBI directors have lied under oath or pled amnesia before Congress when questioned about the agency's efforts to interfere in the election process. The Department of Justice has also been weaponized. It has sought to exempt the Biden family, violent pro-abortion protestors, and various radical groups from prosecution, even as it goes after pro-life activists and parents at school board meetings. It has segregated January 6 protestors in solitary confinement without charges being filed for months.

On campuses, it is the anti-democratic left, not the right, that has de facto suspended the First Amendment and denied free speech and expression. The left has repeatedly violated both the spirit of the Civil Rights Act and the letter of the law in its use of racial discrimination (the "good" "anti-racism") to hire, promote, and admit on the basis of race and gender.

It has neutered the right to due process in its frequent kangaroo courts as it tries students for anti-woke thought crimes. And universities have violated freely and brazenly various civil rights statutes that prohibit racial segregation in housing and public spaces, as they institutionalized racially separate graduations, safe spaces, and dorms.

Most disturbing has been the weaponization of the U.S. military. It was on record, in promising to scour the ranks for so-called white supremacists. Yet by December 2023, the Pentagon admitted it discovered no such cabals. But it did drum out some 8,400 veteran soldiers for not being vaccinated, despite most having developed natural immunity from prior infections.

It instituted race- and gender-based protocols for recruitment and promotion and inaugurated an entire woke DEI apparatus. Yet now it faces a shortfall of some 40,000 recruits. Mostly the

dearth of manpower is due to the fiasco in Afghanistan, coupled with the loud accusations from the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs on down that whites as a collective are somehow under automatic suspicion—supposedly dangerously embittered by the new Diversity/Equity/Inclusion woke Pentagon protocols.

The country has become wary of its own officers. During 2020, retired generals and admirals brazenly violated the uniform code of military justice by openly and publicly smearing and slandering their own Commander in Chief.

Some, along with a former Pentagon lawyer, called for a military intervention, a veritable coup, to remove the president, well apart from scheduled elections. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs freelanced by contacting his communist Chinese counterpart to apprise him that should his own president call a state of emergency possibly involving nuclear weapons, Gen. Mark Milley would first forewarn the Chinese about the actual nature of the threat and intent of the American president.

The Left talks grandly of “democracy dies in darkness” as Joe Biden beats the dead horse of January 6 to warn that democracy is in its greatest peril. But all such rhetoric is projection. The verbiage masks the most comprehensive effort in modern American history to radically change, destroy, or warp American laws, customs, and traditions for the short-term aim of gaining and retaining political power.

The rationale is that the left is of such superior morality and wisdom that it has the right to violate the Constitution or the hallowed traditions of the country to achieve the higher end of ensuring a progressive agenda.

In sum, the defense of those destroying democracy is that they are doing it to prevent others from doing what they would do, should they have been on the receiving end of exactly what

they are now doing.

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