

# What Is Going on in America

By Bruce Gilley

We started to hear the phrase in the Summer, but it really attained frequent flier status in the Fall. "What is going on in this country." There was the rage-hoarse anti-ICE protestor in Minneapolis, a white woman of a certain age in a pert topcoat with matching tasseled snow boots, who screeched at the Youtuber: "Look me in the eye and tell me you are OK with what is going on in this country!" There was Gavin Newsom, posting his interview from a *New York Times* event, telling the unwoke to "Wake up to what is going on in this country." Closer to home, there is my own political science department (yes, not the gender and ethnic studies department) hastily standing up a winter seminar with the phrase turned into a startled and alarmed question: "What the Fuck is Going on?"

Let me offer a simple response: Nothing is going on in the United States, by which of course I mean that life carries on as usual, the economy is humming, and politics is its usual admixture of virtue and treachery, all being kept within bounds by our English constitutional tradition and our European cultural norms.

More specifically, to address the issues that seem to continually elicit this question/statement: after eight years of trying to commit regicide against President Trump, as they did successfully with President Nixon, the cat-of-nine-lives returned to office in 2024 with a decisive victory over perhaps the weakest and stupidest major party presidential nominee since Alf Landon. Campaigning to advance American security and economic interests in a hostile world and to restore the rule of law, capitalism, and democratic freedoms at home, the Trump administration proceeded to do exactly that. ICE and the National Guard enforced laws passed by Congress, just as National Guard and Army troops did in Little

Rock in 1957. Senseless regulations and taxes were rolled back. Europe was put on notice that it was a collapsing civilization that could no longer claim equality in an alliance with the United States. And the conspirators of the attempted regicide were pursued with vigor lest it happen again to the leader of any political party.

This was all “nothing” in the sense of “nothing out of the ordinary”, which is the usual referent of the phrase, hence its earlier iteration in Trump I as “Not Normal.”



The Trump administration has struggled mightily to deport as many people as the Biden and Obama administrations did. It has been checked by courts and obeyed their rulings. It has predictably said nothing about the entitlement programs bankrupting the treasury – the most appallingly normal aspect of his presidency. We could continue to peel off all the normalcies of this administration.

To respond to the question in this way is to volley back into the other court and ask the question: What is going on with

the American Left? Why, to elaborate, is virtually the entire cohort of left and far left voters in the United States, with the apparent sole exception of Rahm Emanuel, acting and speaking as if there is a power outage, or as if they can't find their car in front of Target?

I don't have an easy answer to this question, only a historical parallel from Germany – not Weimar Germany which the hysterics repeatedly cite but Cold War Germany.

During the presidency of Ronald Reagan, the American left was in similar hysteria. Long before there was TDS there was RDS. And the Reagan iteration of “Not Normal” was more proximate to the germinal moment of this shift in the American Left, namely the belief that having brought down Nixon, the American media/deep state collective would no longer have to suffer a two-party system in the United States. The idea was that Democrats alone now represented justice, truth, virtue, peace and all the rest, latterly addended with sustainability and anti-racism. Jimmy Carter, the John the Baptist figure for the Coming of the Obama, was supposed to have ushered in this new millennium. Then came Ronnie and the Left was astonished: What Is Going On?

The “Not Normal” reaction to Reagan came of the shock of being reminded that America was still a two-party country with two different visions of the republic. It reached a pinnacle, in my mind, after Reagan's justifiably famous speech at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin in 1987 demanding a removal of the Berlin Wall. The Left predictably accused him of war-mongering, but lo and behold the wall came down and millions were freed. After Reagan's death in 2004, his foundation began lobbying the city of Berlin to erect a statue in his honor, which was shot down like an East Berliner fleeing communism. Finally, the U.S. embassy erected a statue on its terrace in 2019. The global Left, like its American branch in the Democratic Party, was simply unwilling to accept that they were not entitled to rule forever.



Which explains what is going on today in America. If Reagan was a shock, and George W. Bush a fluke sustained for a second term by war, then the election of Obama, coupled with the continued and soul-stirring “browning” of America, was supposed to signify a permanent return to normalcy. Soaring rhetoric about “our better nature” along with profuse apologies for the American past to all and sundry would henceforth define the Great Consensus.

When Trump I occurred, the Women’s March was formed as the first shock force to deny reality. Then came BLM, Anti-fa, and now anti-ICE. The background of course was a broader cavalcade of causes which were all supposed to be “normal”: Free Palestine, Climate Action Now, End Whiteness, Medicare for All, Tax the Rich, Stolen Land, and, notoriously, You Should Come.

What is going on then? Nothing at all really, except the fact that the United States remains vigorously contested as an ideal, which explains its vitality while Europe and Canada slip in irrelevance as feminized, censorious, and woke welfare states. Much *is* going on, on the other hand, if we recognize

the neuralgic reaction to nothing by the Left. Then again, if I am correct in explaining this reaction, then this too is nothing new, at least since Nixon. An acceptance of the pluralism of the American body politic by the American Left, and a recognition by them that we are all *not* trying to get to Denmark (only to Greenland)? Now that *would* be Not Normal. But that's not happening.

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