

August 19, 2015

The "fake peace" of the Dems gets the Kevin Williamson treatment.

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Democratic presidents have more enthusiastically embraced the role of "peacemaker," and by "role" I mean just that: Democratic peacemaking has amounted to very little more than political theater. From Carter to Clinton to Obama, the Democrats have not been peace-makers but peace-fakers. ...

... American leadership is necessary in this world. As Carly Fiorina and others have persuasively argued, an America-sized vacuum in world affairs draws out monsters. That leadership need not always be rifles-first, nor is it, as the reasonable efficacy of the Iranian sanctions shows. What invites disaster — and the disaster of war — is wishful thinking, including the wishful thinking that the terrorist regimes in Havana and Tehran can be reformed by gentle talk and good wishes. And those of us who put peace high on our agendas must begin with a frank acknowledgment that whatever it is that Iran and Cuba are engaged in, it isn't "waging peace."

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Victor Davis Hanson thinks this administration's failures come from a defective understanding of human nature.

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Read Gerhard Weinberg's A World at Arms or Richard Overly's 1939, for an account of the negotiations preceding World War II, and you will find that an underappreciated theme emerges: the autocratic accentuation of the human tendency to interpret concession and empathy not as magnanimity to be reciprocated, but rather as weakness to be exploited or as a confession of culpability worthy of contempt.

The more Britain's Chamberlain and France's Daladier in 1938 genuinely sought to reassure Hitler of their benign intentions, the more the Nazi hierarchy saw them as little more than "worms" — squirming to appease the stronger spirit. Both were seen as unsure of who they were and what they stood for, ready to forfeit the memory of the sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of their own on the false altar of a supposedly mean and unfair Versailles Treaty.

Hitler perversely admired Stalin after the latter liquidated a million German prisoners, and hated FDR, whose armies treated German POWs with relative humanity. In matters big and small, from Sophocles' Antigone to Shakespeare's King Lear, we see the noble and dutiful treated worse by their beneficiaries than the duplicitous and traitorous. Awareness of this pernicious trait is not cynical encouragement to adopt such pathologies and accept our dog-eat-dog world. Rather, in the postmodern, high-tech 21st century, we sometimes fool ourselves into thinking we have evolved to a higher level than what Thucydides saw at Melos or Corcyra — a conceit that is dangerous for the powerful and often fatal for the weaker. ...

Craig Pirrong posts on Hillary's latest excuses.

... Hillary was Secretary of State, the officer of the government responsible for the "foreign relations of the United States," and who dealt with national defense issues as part of that job. So, if Hillary wrote anything in an email pertaining to her job that would have damaged the United States had it been disclosed, or received any email pertaining to her job that would have damaged the United States had it been disclosed, she violated the law.

So Hillary's defense would have to be: "All I did as Secretary of State—or at least, all I did via email—was discuss frivolous matters that would not have mattered in the least had they been disclosed." In other words, she was a total cipher as SoS whose electronic correspondence (sent and received) was utterly trivial and required no protection against unauthorized disclosure. Not some of it. All of it.

Well Okay then! Who am I to disagree that Hillary was a cipher?

But if that's her defense, why the extreme measures to prevent disclosure of this information? Why protect the banal and irrelevant? Why have a private server in the first place? Why fight tooth and nail to delay and impede turning over even paper copies of the allegedly trivial email? And most tellingly: why wipe the server clean? The latter act particularly suggests guilt. ...

Joel Kotkin with a couple of thought provoking essays; the first is on how the left is "**downsizing the American dream.**"

Barack Obama has always wanted to be a transformational president, and in this, at least, he has been true to his word. The question is what kind of America is being created, and what future does it offer the next generation.

President Obama's great accomplishment, arguably, has been to spur the evolution of a society that formerly rested on individual and familial aspiration, and turn it into a more regulated and centralized regime focused on broader social and environmental concerns. This tendency has been made much stronger as the number of Americans, according to Gallup, who feel there is "plenty of opportunity ahead" has dropped precipitously – from 80 percent in 1997 to barely 52 percent today.

The shift away from the entrepreneurial model can also be seen in the constriction of loans to the small-business sector. Rates of business start-ups have fallen well below historical levels, and, for young people in particular, have hit the lowest levels in a quarter century. At the same

time, the welfare state has expanded dramatically, to the point that nearly half of all Americans now get payments from the federal government.

In sharp contrast to the Bill Clinton White House, which accepted limits on government largesse, the newly emboldened progressives, citing inequality, are calling for more wealth transfers to the poorer parts of society, often eschewing the notion that the recipients work to actually improve their lives. The ever-expanding regulatory state has powerful backing in the media, on campuses and among some corporations. There is even a role model: to become like Europe. As the New York Times' Roger Cohen suggests, we reject our traditional individualist "excess" and embrace, instead, Continental levels of material modesty, social control and, of course, ever-higher taxes. ...

The second by Kotkin is how progressive policies drive more into poverty.

Across the nation, progressives increasingly look at California as a model state. This tendency has increased as climate change has emerged as the Democratic Party's driving issue. To them, California's recovery from a very tough recession is proof positive that you can impose ever greater regulation on everything from housing to electricity and still have a thriving economy.

And to be sure, the state has finally recovered the jobs lost in the 2007-09 recession, largely a result of a boom in values of stocks and high- end real estate. Things, however, have not been so rosy in key blue-collar fields, such as construction, which is still more than 200,000 jobs below prerecession levels, or manufacturing, where the state has lost over one-third of its employment since 2000. Homelessness, which one would think should be in decline during a strong economy, is on the rise in Orange County and even more so in Los Angeles.

The dirty secret here is that a large proportion of Californians, roughly one-third, or some 3.2 million households, as found by a recent United Way study, find it increasingly difficult to keep their heads above water. The United Way study, surprisingly, has drawn relatively little interest from a media that usually enjoys highlighting disparities, particularly racial gaps. Perhaps this reflects a need to maintain an illusion of blue state success. If Republican Pete Wilson were still governor, I suspect we might have heard much more about this study. ...

*... Anyone who criticizes the current policy drift, no matter how social democratic their perspective, will likely be written off as a "denier" or right-wing, or simply ignored by the mainstream media. In contrast to the people-centered progressivism of a Gov. Pat Brown or President Harry Truman, today's Left increasingly seems unconcerned about their policies' true impact on the poor and struggling middle class. **Call it progressive heart failure.***

National Review

The Blessed Peace-Fakers

What Obama is pursuing in Iran and Cuba isn't peace.

by Kevin D. Williamson

Republicans don't talk about peace as much as they used to, or as much as they should. President Dwight Eisenhower, whose unflashy élan masked the difficulty and danger of the serial crises he managed, put "waging peace" at the center of his agenda, even as circumstances obliged him to wage war. President Reagan famously described his agenda as "peace through strength," a formulation that goes back at least as far as Hadrian. Since then, Republicans have been relatively good on the "strength" part — they have rarely encountered a line item on the military budget that did not enrapture them — but, with the notable exception of Senator Rand Paul, the "peace" side of the equation is something of a stepchild for the Right.

Democratic presidents have more enthusiastically embraced the role of "peacemaker," and by "role" I mean just that: Democratic peacemaking has amounted to very little more than political theater. From Carter to Clinton to Obama, the Democrats have not been peace-makers but peace-fakers.

The list of countries designated by the United States as state sponsors of terrorism is a pretty exclusive club, a veritable Legion of Doom populated by the likes of North Korea and Syria. The Obama administration has, for reasons that seem to be mainly political, shown extraordinary solicitude toward two countries that were on the State Department's list when he became president: Cuba and Iran. Cuba has been removed from the list — "Cuba meets the statutory criteria for rescission" was the State Department's bloodless explanation — and John Kerry has been dispatched to Havana to raise the flag over a reopened U.S. embassy there. Cuba hasn't lost its taste for terrorism — the Castro regime maintains ties with FARC terrorists in Colombia and ETA terrorists in Spain, among others — but its enthusiasm for such patronage has outlived most of its clients.

The same cannot be said of the much more consequential case of Iran, the rulers of which have had their long fingers in practically every terrorist pie from Iraq to Syria to Yemen, and quite likely Georgia, Thailand, and India as well. Iran's rulers have reaffirmed their commitment to financing and assisting jihadist violence around the world. In the face of that, the Obama administration negotiated a deal with Tehran that will 1.) almost certainly permit the Iranian regime to build a nuclear weapon and 2) release impounded Iranian funds that all knowledgeable parties, including those who support the deal, concede will be used in some part to finance additional terrorist adventuring wherever the investment seems worth it to the ayatollahs. Iran's "state sponsorship of terrorism worldwide remains undiminished," the State Department reports.

Because Barack Obama is the prince of false choices, his enablers insist that the choice is between this deal — not any deal, but this deal — and war. That is bunkum, as even the Obama administration admitted the day before yesterday when it insisted that it would walk away from negotiations unless it could get a good deal. This accord isn't a good one, for reasons that the editors of National Review have enumerated. Senator Charles Schumer, not normally a man to be persuaded by arguments advanced in these pages, has reached roughly the same conclusion.

If the alternative really were war, then the president would have a point. But the alternative isn't war at all: It is, rather, continuing to let the crippling sanctions imposed by the United States on

Iran continue doing what it is they were designed to do. Sometimes sanctions work, and sometimes they do not. The sanctions did not topple the Iranian regime, nor were they intended to; rather, they restricted its sphere of financial operations, and thus its ability to support terrorism around the world. The effectiveness of those sanctions has been attested to by, among others, Barack Obama himself. But the sanctions are unpopular among the Europeans, who wish to do business with Iran and whose good graces President Obama values more highly than he should. Add to that the depth of the president's desire to one-up Bill Clinton's Thursday afternoon of faux statesmanship with Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin, and a grand accord was all but certain. The sanctions stand in the way of Obama's ambition to be a global figure rather than a merely American one, and so they must go, unless Congress puts its foot down.

If anything, the United States should be exploring ways in which to more ruthlessly weaponize its economic standing in the world. The United States produces 22 percent of the human race's economic output; as Senator Marco Rubio has emphasized in his defense of the Iran sanctions, more than half of international capital flows move through the American financial system. Sanctions are no substitute for an army and a navy, but when a country enjoys a strategic advantage comparable to the American economic edge, it owes it to itself to fight first from the high ground.

American leadership is necessary in this world. As Carly Fiorina and others have persuasively argued, an America-sized vacuum in world affairs draws out monsters. That leadership need not always be rifles-first, nor is it, as the reasonable efficacy of the Iranian sanctions shows. What invites disaster — and the disaster of war — is wishful thinking, including the wishful thinking that the terrorist regimes in Havana and Tehran can be reformed by gentle talk and good wishes. And those of us who put peace high on our agendas must begin with a frank acknowledgment that whatever it is that Iran and Cuba are engaged in, it isn't "waging peace."

The Obama administration is opening the door to a nuclear conflict in the Middle East, and perhaps beyond. The Iran deal is not a prelude to peace, but a prelude to war. To imagine that Tehran's posture toward its neighbors and the world constitutes peace or that it is oriented toward peace is an error that we cannot afford to make.

National Review

Obama: Earning Contempt, at Home and Abroad

From Thucydides's Athens to 21st-century America, appeasement is not a winner.

by Victor Davis Hanson

The common bond among the various elements of the failed Obama foreign policy — from reset with Putin to concessions to the Iranians — is a misreading of human nature. The so-called Enlightened mind claims that the more rationally and deferentially one treats someone pathological, the more likely it is that he will respond and reform — or at least behave. The medieval mind, within us all, claims the opposite is more likely to be true.

Read Gerhard Weinberg's *A World at Arms* or Richard Overly's *1939*, for an account of the negotiations preceding World War II, and you will find that an underappreciated theme emerges: the autocratic accentuation of the human tendency to interpret concession and empathy *not* as magnanimity to be reciprocated, but rather as weakness to be exploited or as a confession of culpability worthy of contempt.

The more Britain's Chamberlain and France's Daladier in 1938 genuinely sought to reassure Hitler of their benign intentions, the more the Nazi hierarchy saw them as little more than "worms" — squirming to appease the stronger spirit. Both were seen as unsure of who they were and what they stood for, ready to forfeit the memory of the sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of their own on the false altar of a supposedly mean and unfair Versailles Treaty.

Hitler perversely admired Stalin after the latter liquidated a million German prisoners, and hated FDR, whose armies treated German POWs with relative humanity. In matters big and small, from Sophocles' *Antigone* to Shakespeare's *King Lear*, we see the noble and dutiful treated worse by their beneficiaries than the duplicitous and traitorous. Awareness of this pernicious trait is not cynical encouragement to adopt such pathologies and accept our dog-eat-dog world. Rather, in the postmodern, high-tech 21st century, we sometimes fool ourselves into thinking we have evolved to a higher level than what Thucydides saw at Melos or Corcyra — a conceit that is dangerous for the powerful and often fatal for the weaker.

One thing Donald Trump got right was the pathetic spectacle of socialist Bernie Sanders being mystified about why Black Lives Matter activists would pick on *him* of all people. Why would they not first hijack a speech by Trump or Walker to shout down the conservative audience? If two white pro-life evangelicals had grabbed Sanders's microphone, would he have so obsequiously ceded it? Would the activists have been more respectful of the microphone of the officious Sanders or the imperious Trump?

The most important characteristic of a sound diplomat and negotiator is the acknowledgment of this sad human characteristic, which to some degree is innate in us all. It was often said during the Cold War that the Soviet hegemonists would rather negotiate with right-wingers than liberals, apparently on the premise that those they could not bully they respected, and those they could bully they felt only contempt for. It reminds me of a minor Chinese official who once told me that she thought Obama must be a master of intrigue; otherwise, she could not believe a leader would so frequently neglect his own country's strategic interests.

Consider immigration. After we had allowed well over 12 million illegal aliens into the country, permitted hundreds of sanctuary cities to be established, and de facto suspended federal immigration laws and stopped deportations, did either the Mexican government or the illegal aliens and their La Raza supporters interpret this as magnanimity to be reciprocated? Did we hear paeans to American willingness to take in 10 percent of the Mexican population and show it more deference and respect than did its mother country? Is that the message on Univision, in Chicano Studies departments, and at immigration rallies — the singular kindness of the United States in absorbing a tenth of the population of its neighbor by waiving all considerations of legality?

Or did the shrill complaints of racism, nativism, and xenophobia only accelerate as more impoverished refugees made their way into postmodern California and found themselves exempt from enforcement of the laws — and, by extension, without much respect for a country that itself had no respect for its own legal system? If there were a walled border, an E-Verify system, expeditious deportation for those who had either committed crimes or quickly enrolled in government entitlement programs, would Mexico's rulers think worse or perhaps more highly of us, in the manner in which they assume that Central Americans respect Mexico for the confidence with which it patrols its southern border? Would illegal aliens here be more or less careful to follow the law, if a serious misdemeanor or a felony would result in instant — and permanent — deportation? Would there be more or fewer Mexican flags at immigration rallies, and would soccer fans be more or less likely to boo the American team and cheer the Mexican team, if the border were closed and those who broke the laws of the host country were sent

home? In a system of closed borders, immediate and permanent deportation for criminal activity, and no sanctuary cities, would the illegal immigrant have more or less respect for his hosts?

Then we come to Iran. Does Supreme Leader Khamenei tone down his anti-American rhetoric — unwise though such rhetoric may seem in the midst of heated debates over the wisdom of President Obama's negotiations — when the United States offers concessions on continued enrichment and centrifuges, or backs off from snap-back sanctions and anywhere/anytime inspections? If the U.S. Congress should defeat the treaty, reinstate even tougher sanctions, organize another global boycott, and warn the Iranians that they will be held accountable for their terrorist operatives, would Iranian theocrats keep chanting "Death to America" in their legislative chambers and press ahead with enrichment as they wink and nod to their allies about nuclear proliferation?

The trait is not quite ingratitude so much as it is gratuitous derision. It all reminds me of 1980, when the ingratiating Jimmy Carter (remember the aborted appeasement mission of Ramsey Clark, and Andy Young's blessing of Khomeini as a probable "saint"?) was slandered as satanic by the Iranian hostage-takers, while President-elect Ronald Reagan was met with silence and released hostages.

The Castro brothers just upped their rhetoric, as Fidel demanded millions of dollars in embargo reparations as part of President Obama's "normalization" of relations with Cuba — apparently to remind the world that the Cubans have no intention of paying back the billions of dollars they confiscated 55 years ago in American capital and property, much less of easing up on human-rights activists. Why would the Castros do that at this point, when no American president in a half-century has been more deferential to their Stalinist government? Is their defiance cheap public grandstanding for the benefit of Cuban hardliners, or a more natural reaction known to benefactors and beneficiaries alike as something like the following: "If he gave a wretch like me something for nothing, then he either did not deserve what he had or he should have given me even more"? Do spoiled teenagers become parsimonious when they see their hard-working parents scrimping and saving to pay off their maxed-out credit cards — or do they become even more irresponsible, thinking that their parents were rich, after all, or perhaps could not be real parents for covering the splurges of someone as reckless as themselves?

If a President Rubio announced a ratcheting up of sanctions, a public campaign on behalf of democratic dissidents in Cuban jails, and increased radio and television broadcasts to the enslaved island, would Castro think any less of him than he does of President Obama? Would he now be demanding of Rubio millions in reparations?

Why did Putin react to Obama's and Hillary Clinton's obsequious reset with invasions of his smaller neighbors? Is the U.S. popular in Libya for removing the hated Qaddafi? Do the Palestinians appreciate stepped-up foreign aid to them and American pressure on Israel? Why did ISIS swallow Iraq immediately following our departure, when we had been told ad nauseam in the 2008 campaign that our foreign presence there was an irritant and a radicalizing force among the peoples of the Middle East?

The answer is something more than just the obvious: that naïve appeasement is more dangerous than wise deterrence, or that the sober advice to keep quiet and carry a large stick trumps sounding off while wielding a toothpick.

Certainly, there are downsides to braggadocio and the sloppy use of force. Rudeness and gratuitous putdowns are counterproductive. Still, certain sorts of outreach, especially those that

appear to be pandering, incite revulsion. We see the phenomenon anywhere that human nature plays out in our collective arenas. If the police de facto confess culpability and pull out of the inner city of Baltimore in the wake of rioting, why wouldn't the murder rate accelerate and hatred of the police — initially for their proactive strategy and later for their retrenchment — intensify? Would you expect criminals to think: "Since the police are now giving us some latitude, and since we are now free from intrusive proactive broken-windows policing, at last we have peace and mutual respect and thus, with the community in our own hands, less desire to commit crimes"?

Repeatedly the Obama administration has been shocked to see that the recipients of its consideration, from Putin to Khamenei, interpret such deference as weakness or maybe even smug arrogance. At times I think Vladimir Putin would prefer to be checked by NATO in Ukraine than psychoanalyzed by an appeasing Obama as an adolescent class cut-up engaged in "macho schtick."

The current attraction of Trump is not his consistent and detailed agenda (he has no such thing), much less his conservative pedigree and mannered repartee. It instead may well be his brash assertions that what he believes in he is unapologetic about. Trump assumes that life is a *bellum omnium contra omnes*, in which protecting one's own and preferring one's own interests to someone else's not only is natural but earns respect rather than contempt from rivals. That is not a credo to base a campaign on, but in these dark days, many for a time apparently see it as a brief return to normalcy.

Obama's misreading of human nature has proverbially sown the wind, and the whirlwind is upon us.

Streetwise Professor

The Chronicles of Hillary, Book the Third: Felon or Cipher?

by Craig Pirrong

The Hillary email travesty becomes more of a travesty by the day.

Hillary keeps repeating her mantra: none of the email was marked as classified when she received or sent it.

Yes, she thinks you are that stupid. Or maybe she is that stupid, and doesn't recognize the difference between a sufficient condition and a necessary one. Keeping information marked as classified on her private server would be sufficient to violate the law. But it's not necessary. The relevant statute defines classified information of the United States as:

information originated, owned, or possessed by the United States Government concerning the national defense or *foreign relations* of the United States that has been determined pursuant to law or Executive order to require protection against unauthorized disclosure in the interests of national security [emphasis added].

Hillary was Secretary of State, the officer of the government responsible for the "foreign relations of the United States," and who dealt with national defense issues as part of that job. So, if Hillary wrote anything in an email *pertaining to her job* that would have damaged the

United States had it been disclosed, or received any email *pertaining to her job* that would have damaged the United States had it been disclosed, she violated the law.

So Hillary's defense would have to be: "All I did as Secretary of State—or at least, all I did via email—was discuss frivolous matters that would not have mattered in the least had they been disclosed." In other words, she was a total cipher as SoS whose electronic correspondence (sent and received) was utterly trivial and required no protection against unauthorized disclosure. Not some of it. *All of it.*

Well Okay then! Who am I to disagree that Hillary was a cipher?

But if that's her defense, why the extreme measures to prevent disclosure of this information? Why protect the banal and irrelevant? Why have a private server in the first place? Why fight tooth and nail to delay and impede turning over even paper copies of the allegedly trivial email? And most tellingly: *why wipe the server clean?* The latter act particularly suggests guilt.

All of these questions answer themselves. It was impossible for her to perform her official duties without keeping information that required protection against unauthorized disclosure on her precious server.

The wiping of the server raises another serious issue. It seriously impedes, and perhaps makes impossible, any forensic examination of the server to determine whether it had been hacked.

It's also worth noting that apparently Hillary's server utilized a spam service that opened, decrypted, and read every email to make sure it wasn't spam. (Heaven forbid Hillary get unsolicited ads for yoga pants!) Well, what if her spam service was hacked? Just how many potential holes were in her email system, anyways?

Further, it now appears that the classification designations had been illegally removed from things sent to Hillary. Very sensitive things, including information related to satellite intelligence/national technical means. As an aside, Jonathan Pollard spent decades in prison for revealing information related to intelligence satellite capabilities.

The legal violations are self-evident.

The appalling lack of judgment is also evident. But it's important to note that she is not just guilty of lack of judgment as the term is usually used, to indicate thoughtlessness, carelessness, or negligence. She made the conscious judgment to place her own selfish interests above those of the country. It's not so much bad judgment, as malign judgment.

One wonders how long this can go on. There are two mechanisms for terminating her political career, as is only just and necessary. The first is political: voters will realize that she is unfit for any office, let alone the presidency. The second is legal: the Justice Department will prosecute her.

I have my doubts that either mechanism is sure-fire. The second is particularly interesting. Obama does not like Hillary: his Svengali, Valerie Jarrett, positively hates her. Will he let her twist in the wind for a while and then let a prosecution proceed? Or will he decide that the blowback from a war with the notoriously vicious Clinton machine (a) could distract him during his last year in office, and detract from his precious legacy, and (b) increase the odds that the even more hated Republicans could take the presidency, and undo some of his actions.

I can see it both ways, but think it more likely that Obama will stay the Justice Department: taking her on would be an extremely risky move. I therefore think that the more promising mechanism is a political judgment by the American people that Hillary is categorically unfit for the presidency. Promising, but not inevitable. Intense partisanship, combined with the fact that the Republican party is currently a mess and being ripped apart by whatever the hell Trump is doing, could mean that despite her manifest flaws as a person and a politician, Hillary could become the next president.

Orange County Register

Obama, the Left downsizing the American Dream

by Joel Kotkin

Barack Obama has always wanted to be a transformational president, and in this, at least, he has been true to his word. The question is what kind of America is being created, and what future does it offer the next generation.

President Obama's great accomplishment, arguably, has been to spur the evolution of a society that formerly rested on individual and familial aspiration, and turn it into a more regulated and centralized regime focused on broader social and environmental concerns. This tendency has been made much stronger as the number of Americans, according to Gallup, who feel there is "plenty of opportunity ahead" has dropped precipitously – from 80 percent in 1997 to barely 52 percent today.

The shift away from the entrepreneurial model can also be seen in the constriction of loans to the small-business sector. Rates of business start-ups have fallen well below historical levels, and, for young people in particular, have hit the lowest levels in a quarter century. At the same time, the welfare state has expanded dramatically, to the point that nearly half of all Americans now get payments from the federal government.

In sharp contrast to the Bill Clinton White House, which accepted limits on government largesse, the newly emboldened progressives, citing inequality, are calling for more wealth transfers to the poorer parts of society, often eschewing the notion that the recipients work to actually improve their lives. The ever-expanding regulatory state has powerful backing in the media, on campuses and among some corporations. There is even a role model: to become like Europe. As the New York Times' Roger Cohen suggests, we reject our traditional individualist "excess" and embrace, instead, Continental levels of material modesty, social control and, of course, ever-higher taxes.

Progressive advances

Three ideas prevail in shaping today's new politics: sexual liberation, racial redress and environmental determinism. The first notion has made rapid progress, in that gay marriage now is, rightfully, legal, and women are making steady gains across the employment spectrum. No matter how much Republicans fulminate in debates or on the campaign trail, this aspect of the basic progressive agenda has been largely accomplished, and is particularly accepted among the young.

The second major thrust of the reconstituted American Dream is the imposition of a regime of permanent racial redress. In contrast to assuring equal rights, the new drive is to guarantee similar results. In every aspect of life, from immigration and housing to school and work, “people of color,” which increasingly excludes Asians, will be categorized by race. This includes the call for “reparations” for African Americans and essentially open borders for undocumented immigrants.

This logic carried to extremes can be seen in the “disparate impact” rules promulgated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and now blessed by the Supreme Court. Under this concept, any town can have its zoning and planning upended if the bureaucracy, or some plaintiffs, decide the town is too white, too Asian or too affluent to meet the standards of “social justice.” This could be extended down the line to every institution, from the workplace to the university. The new approach could be accurately characterized as affirmative action on steroids.

The Green Dilemma

When the United States took big steps in the 1960s to open its society, the economy was basically very strong, with lots of jobs, making initial accommodations to new entrants, minorities or women, much easier. But economic growth in the current “recovery” has been somewhat meager and wage gains all but nonexistent. Any attempt to extend the new version of “civil rights” protections – essentially taking opportunity away from the majority – would be far riskier at a time of economic torpor.

Worse still, the third major lodestone of current reigning ideology – environmentalism – increasingly tends to tilt against broad-based economic growth. Environmentalism, defined as a movement of conserving resources, extending parks and improving environmental quality could co-exist with an expanding economy, generating the funds to finance such improvements.

But today’s climate-change-focused environmentalism increasingly opposes economic growth *per se*, seeing in it a threat to the planet. For some people, the solution for the planet lies in depressing living standards by such steps as ratcheting up the cost of basic necessities, from energy to housing. Environmental advocates often work in concert with those who benefit from subsidies for everything from solar energy to transit lines, but the goal remains to constrain consumption and raise prices for such basics as housing and energy.

Yet these negative impacts don’t mean much to many green activists who, notes the Guardian’s George Monbiot, see the climate struggle as a way to “redefine humanity.” The target here is the economy itself, which remains driven largely by the desire for material wealth, upward mobility and support of families. Monbiot envisions a war against what he calls the “expanders” by the rational legions of green “restrainers” who will seek to curb their foes’ economic activities.

The celebration of economic stagnation is accepted openly among European greens who support an agenda of “degrowth.” It is also reflected in American calls for “de-development,” a phrase employed by President Obama’s Science Adviser John Holdren. The agenda, particularly in high-income countries, seeks to limit fossil fuels, raise energy prices, stem suburban development and replace the competitive capitalism system with a highly regulated economy that favors designated “green” energy industries over others.

what of future generations?

Constantly expanding pressures to accommodate both the environmentalist credo and the demands of protected identity groups may continue to shift older Americans to the political right. Forced to pick up the bills while enduring insults about their unconscionable “privilege,” it’s hard to see how they, for the most part, can become anything but more alienated by the progressive credo.

One worry for the older generation is their kids and, particularly, their grandchildren. Parents today generally see things getting worse for their offspring and grandchildren, with only 21 percent, according to a Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll, expecting things to get better for the new generation, compared with 49 percent in 2001. These sentiments may make older folks more solicitous about helping their own, but one doubts how much they desire to pour out their retirement savings to save someone else’s kids.

The biggest impact of the new politics, however, will be felt by the new generation. Some of their attitudes are certainly congenial to the progressive positions in such areas as interracial and gay marriage, and a certain commitment to greater social justice. Yet they might find they, too, need a little “justice” themselves, since their incomes, adjusted for inflation, are actually *lower* than those of their counterparts in 2000, or even 1980. They may be better educated than their predecessors, but it’s not quite paying off.

Take, for example, that more millennials are living with their parents than in predecessor generations. Many also are burdened with enormous student debt, which makes moving forward, for example, by starting a business or buying a house, more difficult. Most disturbingly, pessimism about the future is greatest among the youngest millennials, those still in high school.

This decline in prospects – as evidenced by consistently weak income and growth numbers – could, ultimately, reshape politics. Millennials may have different social attitudes than their parents, but that doesn’t mean they reject their parents’ aspirational dream, most notably to buy a house, preferably with some decent space. Although they have been far less able to achieve homeownership, surveys consistently show that most millennials want to own a house, get more space and seem increasingly willing to move to the suburbs, even the exurbs, to get it.

This will no doubt prove a disappointment for the highly influential cadre of generally wealthier, environmentally focused baby boomers, who celebrate millennials being satisfied as apartment renters – for life. Perhaps this is one reason that, in recent surveys, young people have been less likely to identify as “environmentalist” than previous generations.

Similarly, millennials may be very tolerant and welcoming of diversity, but one has to wonder how many – particularly those outside the protected classes – are likely to chafe at a regime that disfavors their own prospects. The fact that white millennials have been trending Republican should be seen by Democrats as something of a warning sign.

Ultimately, the future of American politics will not be determined by those mostly graying legions rallying to Donald Trump. It will be largely forged by young people seeking some way to transcend a weak, and largely unpromising, economy. They will be the ones to decide whether the aspirational model still fits America, or how far they want to embrace a new, more Europeanized version imposed from above.

Orange County Register

Progressive policies drive more into poverty

by Joel Kotkin

Across the nation, progressives increasingly look at California as a model state. This tendency has increased as climate change has emerged as the Democratic Party's driving issue. To them, California's recovery from a very tough recession is proof positive that you can impose ever greater regulation on everything from housing to electricity and still have a thriving economy.

And to be sure, the state has finally recovered the jobs lost in the 2007-09 recession, largely a result of a boom in values of stocks and high- end real estate. Things, however, have not been so rosy in key blue-collar fields, such as construction, which is still more than 200,000 jobs below prerecession levels, or manufacturing, where the state has lost over one-third of its employment since 2000. Homelessness, which one would think should be in decline during a strong economy, is on the rise in Orange County and even more so in Los Angeles.

The dirty secret here is that a large proportion of Californians, roughly one-third, or some 3.2 million households, as found by a recent United Way study, find it increasingly difficult to keep their heads above water. The United Way study, surprisingly, has drawn relatively little interest from a media that usually enjoys highlighting disparities, particularly racial gaps. Perhaps this reflects a need to maintain an illusion of blue state success. If Republican Pete Wilson were still governor, I suspect we might have heard much more about this study.

State of Poverty

The United Way study – “Struggling to Get By” – delves well beyond even the recent Census Bureau analysis, which, by factoring in housing costs, already established California as the state with the highest percentage of poor people, at roughly one in four. United Way expanded this percentage by calculating what the charitable organization called the “Real Cost Budget,” which includes not only rent but also costs for child care, medical, health and transportation.

By United Way's calculation, roughly one in three Californians can barely make ends meet, despite the state's relatively generous transfer payments, subsidies and general assistance. Latinos and African Americans, as one might expect, fare worse, but roughly one-in-five non-Hispanic whites and 28 percent of Asians also are deemed struggling.

Roughly half of Latino households fall into this condition of poverty or near-poverty, as do a similar share of African American households. Those who do worst generally are poorly educated single mothers and their children. Poverty and near-poverty are greatest among Latinos, who also are bearing the majority of children. It is hard to imagine a more urgent wake-up call.

Not surprisingly, many of the foreign-born, the source of much of California's population growth in recent decades, have fared poorly. Only 25 percent of households headed by native-born Californians fall below the United Way “Real Cost Budget” line for economic distress, but it's 45 percent for those headed by the foreign-born, and nearly 60 percent for families headed by a noncitizen. The highest percentage is among Latino households headed by a noncitizen – a staggering 80 percent fall below the minimal level.

Geographic variations

California's rising ranks of poor and near-poor – essentially the proletarianized middle class – are not heavily concentrated in the Bay Area, which has sparked the state's ballyhooed comeback. There, only one in four fall under the minimal "Real Cost Budget," the best result among California's major urban regions.

In contrast, in both Los Angeles-Orange County and the Inland Empire, some 35 percent of households fall below this level. The toll is particularly extreme for Latinos in greater Los Angeles; some 54 percent can be counted poor or near-poor, the highest proportion of any California region. Overall, the worst poverty in the state appears to be in the Central Valley, where, despite lower housing costs, 37 percent of residents struggle to make ends meet.

Orange County, it should be noted, does better than either Los Angeles or the Inland region, with 29 percent of O.C. residents falling below the United Way's budget level, significantly better than L.A.'s 37 percent. But this number is too high and results from, in large part, nearly 36 percent of Orange County residents having to spend more than 30 percent of their incomes on rent, a burden that is particularly extreme in the older, less-affluent sections of O.C.

When researchers drilled down to see the most destitute neighborhoods, they were clustered disturbingly close to home. In parts of Santa Ana, almost three in five households are below the United Way's minimum income level. But the five worst-off areas in the region are in a broad arc of Los Angeles, from Watts to the neighborhoods around the University of Southern California, south of Downtown. Overall, 60 percent to 80 percent of households in these areas are struggling to make ends meet.

Political Implications

Given the avowed commitment of progressives to addressing inequality and poverty, one would expect that there would be a renewed focus on spurring economic growth. But, instead, in part due to the bizarre policy choices made by many Latino legislators, the state keeps ratcheting up the prices for both energy and housing through its quixotic – and, fundamentally, narcissistic – attempt to single-handedly reverse climate change.

These policies – and their predecessors over the years – are at the heart of rising housing and electricity costs, which are plaguing California's massive population of struggling households. As a recent Manhattan Institute paper reveals, over 1 million Californians already face "energy poverty," paying upward of 10 percent of their incomes to keep their lights on. The most hard-hit areas, the study found, were in inland communities, particularly the Central Valley, where the climate tends far more to extremes than in the more affluent coastal regions.

My recent column attacking the fecklessness of California's Latino political class, not surprisingly, drew some criticism, including from my old friend Manuel Pastor. Manuel claimed Latinos, according to polls, regard climate change as a major issue. Besides the fact that I didn't address what people thought, this assertion seems a bit misleading. Like most Californians, Latinos are concerned about climate change but the environment hardly registers as a major concern compared with such challenges as the economy, employment or the drought, which is particularly troubling in the heavily Hispanic inland of the state. Only 5 percent of Californians, according to the Public Policy Institute of California, identify the environment as the leading challenge for the state.

In order to placate the rising numbers of poor and near-poor, California's climate-obsessed political elites are offering expanded subsidies for housing. Some \$130 million from cap-and-trade funds – the very mechanism helping to drive higher energy costs – will go for affordable

housing. Yet this is the most full-bore tokenism imaginable. At a cost per affordable apartment unit of about \$300,000, at best only a few thousand Californians will benefit, making it essentially irrelevant in a state of almost 39 million people.

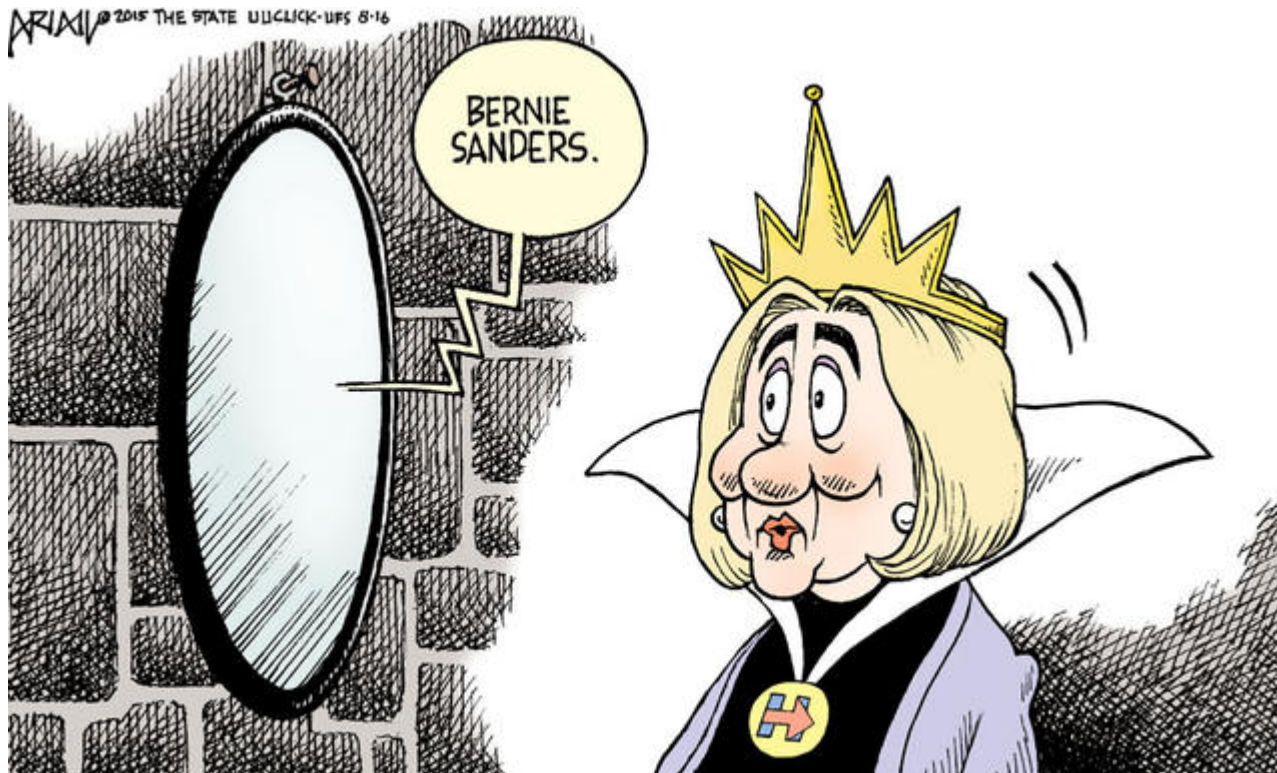
California's rising poverty – driven in large part by relentlessly rising rents – cannot be addressed seriously by such gestures. High transportation costs for most Californians certainly won't be eased much by Gov. Jerry Brown's \$70 billion high-speed rail project, which, if and when it is finished, will be too expensive for most of these people to ride, and it certainly won't address how to cheaply get from Riverside to Irvine or from East Los Angeles to the Westside. Something more enduring and broadly uplifting must be tried.

What can be done? We might start by reversing our frog-walk toward ever more extreme greenhouse gas reduction goals, which will only boost housing prices, threaten middle- and working-class jobs and make things worse overall without doing much of anything for the climate. Spending on vitally needed infrastructure – like water storage, seawater desalination, port and road improvements – could spur jobs and the economy. Measures to at least slow down, or even reverse, some of the most regressive taxes, and perhaps reduce the burden on potential job-creating businesses, might be considered.

This is a debate all of us in this state need to have. California can continue to work to reduce greenhouse gases in a reasonable way, but with a goal of not further victimizing our increasingly large population of poor and near-poor.

Anyone who criticizes the current policy drift, no matter how social democratic their perspective, will likely be written off as a “denier” or right-wing, or simply ignored by the mainstream media. In contrast to the people-centered progressivism of a Gov. Pat Brown or President Harry Truman, today's Left increasingly seems unconcerned about their policies' true impact on the poor and struggling middle class. **Call it progressive heart failure.**







HILLARY G. ROBINSON

