

This Time, the Far-Left Surge Might Succeed in the United States

By Daniel Pipes

Street riots, eminent liberals fired, America's Democratic party veering sharply Left: these developments trace directly back to events of fifty years ago.

"The 1960s" (which in fact ran from 1965 to 1975) was a decade of massive change, a rebellion against the stability, growth, and (yes) smugness of the immediate post-World War II era, 1945-65. The 60s are now remembered primarily as a time of youthful rebellion, of sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll. University hippies in Volkswagen microbuses decorated with peace signs represented the vanguard; mellow students followed. Woodstock represented the heights and Altamont Free Concert the depths. British poet [Philip Larkin](#) memorialized this spirit in a famous poem with its first line, "Sexual intercourse began/In nineteen sixty-three/(which was rather late for me)."

But it was not all fun, the leftists of yore adopted classic themes of Marxism-Leninism, focusing on imperialism and insisting that the Western wealth came from plundering the rest of the world. The imperialist system, with its perpetual drive for new markets on which to dump its industrial surplus, stood as humanity's central evil; the war in Vietnam supremely represented its rapaciousness.

Ethnicity and race hardly mattered. Yes, it was the decade of civil rights, but leftists did not drive this transformation; outside of parts of the Deep South, a national consensus emerged that Blacks finally deserved full citizenship.

I experienced this would-be revolution first hand, especially during my [college](#) years, 1967-71. As a budding conservative, I crossed “picket lines” to eat the dormitory food and to attend the classes my parents paid for. Sadly, not being a leftist felt terminally uncool. It also seemed like the leftist hegemony would spread from the university to the rest of society.

Of course, that did not happen. After the communist horrors that followed America’s 1975 defeat in Vietnam, left wingery lost momentum. Worse, the Soviet Union imploded and China abandoned Maoism for state-sponsored capitalism. Vietnam became a mini-China and Cuba decayed beyond redemption. Venezuela hardly inspires.

Progressives self-isolated in the “counterculture.” Old ideas did not burn out but remained mostly limited to the educational system. In retrospect, that proved to be a wise long-term investment. For today’s full-blown leftist revival fifty years later results directly from generations of assiduous left-wing indoctrination.

As financial theories at the heart of Marxism-Leninism collapsed, identity politics took their place. Culture replaced economics. Marcuse and Gramsci replaced Marx and Lenin; *Repressive Tolerance* replaced *Das Kapital*. Ethnicity replaced the class structure. Transgender rights replaced workers’ rights. White privilege replaced the bourgeoisie. Racism replaced imperialism. Palestinian victims replaced the Cuban paradise. Taking the knee replaced black power fists. Immigrants replaced the Third World. Safe spaces replaced

sex. Local foods replaced drugs. Pride parades replaced rock 'n roll. Islam replaced Buddhism.

The Left then had dreams, today's has nightmares. That one had fun, this one suffers.

But this one also has a far greater reach in "the real world." Democratic politicians and labor leaders resisted leftist pieties a half-century back and submit to them now. The schools, media, and arts then tolerated a range of viewpoints hardly imaginable in this era of suffocating progressivism. The church of Black Lives Matter, with its outrage at even the slightest dissent, epitomizes this "Great Awakening" era of cancel culture and de-platforming.

For all their differences, the Left of the two eras shares a fundamental similarity in its anarchism, its arrogant innocence, and its (Saul Alinsky-style) treating opponents as enemies to be destroyed. Obsessive hatred of Nixon transferred neatly over to Trump. David Horowitz' observation, "Inside every progressive is a totalitarian screaming to get out," holds true in both eras.

And the Right, as ever, fails to keep step. The kids flock to Bernie Sanders who mixes promises of free stuff with rage against the 1%. Concepts like microaggressions and intersectionality meet no conservative response. #AbolishICE inspires street demonstrations, #ProtectTheBorders barely exists. #ClimateChange swamps #SecureTheGrid. #BlackLivesMatter tromps over #StopRacialPreferences. Which has more caché, #MeToo or #AbolishTheAdministrativeState? The Left says "trust women" when Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh is accused but nimbly switches to innocent-until-proven guilty when Joe Biden is in the dock.

America's first far-left surge prepared the way for the second. Decades of hard work by dedicated cadres has paid off.

Western civilization is in play, threatened from within. Today's deeply grounded movement could succeed in taking over; after all, it is doing just that through most of Europe.

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