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The Nation's New Crime Boss



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A great deal of energy was expended recently to influence who would be the next president of the criminal enterprise that is the United States of America. The nation's criminality was established historically by its extermination of indigenous populations inconvenient to its imperial goals and its enslavement of Africans expressly imported into the country under hideous conditions for the further ease and enrichment of the already wealthy. Although these were crimes initiated long before the formal constitution of the U.S., when the slave trade was belatedly outlawed in 1808, slaves were bred in the Upper South and driven in chains across the country or shipped down the Mississippi to be sold in the Deep South. There, they joined their brothers and sisters in an industrialized system of enforced labor cruelly driven by the whip. The expansion of cotton across the south required the removal of Indian tribes

who lived on the land the plantation owners wished to cultivate. Their forced removal included documented acts of genocide.

The nation's criminality continues into the present, most egregiously but not exclusively, by its refusal to make adequate reparations for these historical acts of inhumanity; by its acceptance of the violently racist policing of minority populations; by its ongoing program of mass incarceration of non-white men and boys; by its deportation of so called 'illegals' and by its frequent refusal to give asylum to those fleeing dire political, economic, and environmental conditions south of the border for which the U.S. is primarily responsible. Government sanctioned domestic executions, extra-judicial drone hits on foreign subjects, which may on occasion also kill American citizens, and numerous instances of psychological and physical torture inflicted on its perceived enemies, domestic and foreign, further impugn the probity of the state. A federally sanctioned health care system that is leveraged for corporate profit rather than human need represents a systematic attack on the well-being of large sections of the civilian population, and thus can be considered a crime against humanity. All the while, the nation's nuclear-armed war machine, embedded in its planetary network of military bases, pursues declared and undeclared wars, creating a global backdrop to the nation's domestic offenses.

The current president has done nothing to correct this underlying criminality. Indeed, he has exacerbated it by his personal corruption, his fostering of the inhumane treatment of migrants at the country's southern border, his explicit support of racist, white nationalism and, arguably, his criminal mismanagement of the federal response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The incoming president, however, is deeply enmeshed in the vicious turpitude of Empire, a condition to which he has either actively contributed or passively countenanced during his thirty-six years in the Senate and his eight years as vice president.

Now that the leadership decision has been made, most of the population is split between jubilation and anguish. On the other hand, I spent the long and fevered days of this election in a state of relative equanimity, invested in neither the continued leadership of the family currently at the helm nor in the now imminent installation of a family that not only has a long history of enabling this criminal enterprise but has also personally benefited from its association with the highest echelons of the Empire's leadership. It would have been useful to have maintained the illusion that the recent contest was between private notions of corruption as practiced, for instance, in the world of casinos, real-estate development, hotels, private clubs and golf resorts, versus the public corruption of influence peddling as practiced, for instance, in the Empire's outlands where it can be sold in markets awash with armaments and cold hard cash. But such distinctions are razor thin. Thus, there is little reason for either jubilation or anguish at the result. More meaningful perhaps, is to gauge the erstwhile contestants' wider responsibility, as accessories to the maintenance of the establishment under which the broader sins of Empire are permitted to flourish.

In this time of a recalcitrant lame duck who, it is widely proclaimed, threatened and continues to threaten ‘democracy’ – the fig leaf of respectability under which the nation’s criminality festers – liberal triumphalism is shadowed by a residual anguish that rises to fever pitch when confronted by criticisms of Biden, or suggestions raised, in the enclaves of the enlightened, that he is not the savior whom we all seek. Those liberals whose egos are bound up in the defeat of the incumbent remain immensely fragile – their inner core beaten to a pulp by the ungainly, ungrammatical, incoherent, Trump, and their sense of propriety deeply wounded by the déclassé president.

In early November, sufficient ballots made their way into the hands of upstanding election officials for reliable confirmation that Trumpworld had foundered on the shores of the deep state. The president’s political insurgency is now forestalled, at least until 2024. But this is hardly cause for celebration when his defeat has resulted in the reaffirmation of business as usual, a business which, for half a millennium, has thrived on the exploitation of the great many for the enrichment of the very few, and which, in the modern state, is now expressed as neoliberalism – an ideology which comfortably accommodates the state’s criminal offenses. While this criminality is primarily predicated on an invidious taxonomy of human worth, the government’s gaping ethical void also allows for the relentless breeding, fattening and killing regimes of factory farmed livestock, and permits the gross, unsustainable exploitation of botanical, lithic, and chemical elements for industrial use. The nation’s vast historic and contemporary mining of fossil biomass and its conversion into cheap thermal energy has significantly contributed to the chemical restructuring of the Earth’s atmosphere and to the resultant global warming. The cheap energy of oil and gas has metastasized urban development and enabled rural monocropping which together have decimated the biological diversity of the U.S. land mass. These profoundly existential planetary ills exist as the ultimate brand extensions of the criminal enterprise that is the United States.

Almost four years of the Trump insurgency have not changed these fundamental realities, but they have shifted the terms of the debate. Generals, politicians, lawyers, financiers, the intelligence community, tech entrepreneurs, factory farmers and developers lay awake at night because one of the levers of power over which they believed they had some control was wrested from their hands by an uncultured, overweight, racist, loud-mouthed, sexist pig. For that we should be grateful, for it exposed a vulnerability that has rarely been evident in the almost impregnable bastions of wealth, power and privilege that exist at the core of this nation. It was, as so many in this country recognized and related to, a moment in which the cunning of the uncouth triumphed over the self-serving venal noblesse oblige of the well-born, well-educated, well-dressed and well-mannered.

Now, we are about to return to a time when the evils of Empire operate with impunity, fully protected within the carapace of democracy, that shell of legitimacy that occludes its own fraudulence and shelters the broader larcenies of the state. The porcine face of corruption

soon departs to be replaced by the establishment candidate who has, over his almost five decades in subaltern power, faithfully served the super-rich and the egregiously powerful whose interests are served by their government's inhumane criminality.

Any euphoria experienced in Trump's dismissal must surely be tempered by the depression that descends upon consideration of the impending elevation of Biden, poster-boy of the Peter principle, to the highest political post in the land. A career politician deeply mired in mediocrity, connivance and compromise; he reached his apotheosis in the eight years he served as Obama's wingman. Infinitely less patrician and vastly less intelligent, he was nevertheless an appropriate ornament to Barack's imperial presence, emphasizing the president's blackness in ways unavailable to the man himself. Now, he will be assisted in his work of walking back every mildly progressive program blithely promised during his lackluster campaign, by Prosecutor Harris: younger, smarter, more ambitious and far more ruthless than her boss. Thus threatened, we can be sure that her role in the traditionally thankless task of vice-president will be further trivialized by 'The Big Guy' and reduced to a token signifier of his commitment to The Movement for Black Lives.

Biden's elevation to the Presidency will critically constrain the development of a progressive agenda within the Democratic party for a further four or eight years and likely assure a more aggressive foreign policy. In the last half-century, there was never a military action, CIA assassination, or trade sanction against a foreign power that he meaningfully opposed. Despite campaign trail disavowals, we can expect a continuation of Obama's criminal war in Yemen as well as the cessation of troop withdrawals from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. The generals will be back in charge.

Long-time recipient of thin blue line union support, Biden is incapable of delivering peace on our streets – which demands a defunding of their militarized police presence. The future president's commitment to the continued success of the health insurance industry will fatally constrain the development of socialized health and welfare provisions. Wall Street will continue to be privileged over Main Street. Already reneging on his campaign promise to ban fracking, he remains supportive of the country's oil industry and seems increasingly confident in his eschewal of the Green New Deal.

The nation's new crime-boss-elect is a man of mind-numbing mediocrity, but he will, I suspect, be hugely successful in sustaining the criminal enterprise with which the electorate has entrusted him.

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