

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نپاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

PATRICK LAWRENCE

30.01.2025



PATRICK LAWRENCE:

Where Have All the Liberals Gone?

The new liberal consensus, born of a shared “exhaustion,” is that it is time to “tune out,” or “take a break,” or simply close one’s eyes and ears.



Capital slurry. (Michael Galkovsky, Flickr, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

I simply cannot figure American liberals and “progressives”—’pwogwessives,’” as the late Alexander Cockburn used to call them.

They do nothing when faced with calamitous events and call it hard work. Then, when the political process (such as it is) takes a radical turn for the worse and there is serious work to do, they announce that they are exhausted and must “take a break” from it all.

And then they go off to Mexico City or Barbados or the Cotswolds.

Can’t figure it. When the going gets tough, liberals get... tickets to Santorini or Sicily.

I propose a brief investigation of the conduct of liberals during the Biden years and now, as Donald Trump takes office, not as a matter of ridicule, although at this point there is much in the culture of American liberalism that is ridiculous. No, my concern lies in the larger implications of what amounts to mass frivolity.

Liberals have never struck me as a very reliable lot. Their stated positions and “values”— a ridiculous word in its own right — are by tradition always of the highest order. But they so frequently and predictably cave to reaction.

Cold War liberals proved the worst in this regard: Ever prepared were they, whenever authentic political principles were challenged, to line up behind conservative Cold Warriors.

O.K., there is a long, unfortunate history here. But since the Clinton years in the 1990s, matters have taken another turn. Capitulation itself has become the position, the value.

This became perfectly obvious once Hillary Clinton — warmonger, interventionist, cultivator of coups, all-around authoritarian — assumed a prominent voice among liberal elites. Since the 2016 political season, and one can scarcely fail to notice, liberals have vigorously favored ... wars, interventions, coups, censorship, a certain apple-pie authoritarianism.

They count the military and “the intelligence community”— a term that reflects the liberal embrace — their allies and friends. They are, in a phrase, the direct descendants of the Cold War liberals of decades past.

I have this acute urge to write the following sentence. American liberals trust the Central Intelligence Agency.

Clean, simple, bald and bold, irrefutable. Just seven words give a useful idea of how far things have gone. And you will know now what I mean by ridiculous.

The Biden regime’s four years in power and Trump’s election last November cause us to mix an alloy of ridiculous with critical, maybe even grave, as we characterize the culture of liberals.



Official inaugural portrait of President Donald, Jan. 15. (Daniel Torok, Wikimedia Commons, Public domain)

We have witnessed in this period the collapse even of the weak, drowsy liberalism of the past. I see a qualitative difference I mean to say, between the liberalism of yore and what has become of liberalism these past years.

Liberalism as we find it out our windows seems now to consist of little more than performance and signifiers. You have posturing and authorized speech, and you have consumption patterns certified as a sort of semiology by way of liberal media.

Look at any day's edition of *The New York Times*: What are effectively latter-day Good Housekeeping seals of approval—"T-shirts we love," the right olive oil, "our favorite banana bread" — are considerably privileged above anything resembling serious news as measured in column inches.

And you have above all, the rest being subsets, a shockingly submissive worship of authority. And this, in turn, induces among liberals something between a refusal to act and an inability to act, a paralysis.

You could read liberalism's slide in the direction of the supercilious in all those supposedly panicked cries as Trump's momentum gathered during the 2024 political season. Fascist,

tyrant, totalitarian, dictatorship, and above all, an existential threat to democracy: It was all very grave, historic in magnitude.

But I had to wonder what all the people saying these things were doing about so menacing a prospect as a second Trump term. I couldn't find much; it was all signification. Saying was somehow sufficient, all that needed doing by way of political action.

Turning the matter another way, while there were great reservoirs of alarm about the prospect of a Trump presidency, and setting aside the principled minority who demonstrated on university campuses and elsewhere, liberals seemed to have little to say as Joe Biden dragged the United States into a genocide.

Where were these people? I still want to know.

It was good enough by way of action, it turned out, to pull the lever for Kamala Harris last Nov. 5 — this even as she endorsed Israeli terror as openly as the president.

Routines of Entitlement



Luxury sports car solidarity fist, Washington, D.C., November 2020. (Diane Krauthamer, Flickr, CC BY-NC)

I had to laugh after the election when a conservative commentator whose name I cannot recall wondered in print why all the liberals flinging around “fascist,” “dictator,” “tyrant,” and so on hadn't taken to the hills in the manner of the old French *maquisards* — you know, the wartime guerrillas who gave up work and family to wage armed actions and sabotage ops against the Nazi *Wehrmacht* from mountain hideouts where they subsisted on leaves and weeds.

Such a vacuum of silence and what amounts to indolence.

Ridiculous is as ridiculous does not, I say. How can you take seriously people who tell you that they now live under a fascist dictatorship while going about their business entirely per usual?

Maybe the word I seek is infantilization — the infantilization of liberalism. Is there a better term for what has become of liberals since Trump's ascendancy?

At the very moment, according to the liberal narrative, political action of a great variety is urgent in the cause of saving our republic, the new liberal consensus, born of a shared "exhaustion," is that it is time to "tune out," or "take a break," or simply close one's eyes and ears.

How many news reports have I read to this effect? *Politico*: "The resistance is not coming to save you. It's tuning out." The Associated Press: "Americans are exhausted by political news. TV ratings and a new poll show they're tuning out."

And from *The New York Times*: "Certain kinds of left-leaning, reflective New Yorkers declare... they were drained, exhausted, resigned, ready to choose a plaintive ignorance."

I just love the *Times* some mornings. Reflective New Yorkers — left-wing, of course — retreating honorably into ignorance. You just can't beat this kind of thing.

Bingeing on chocolate, watching British crime dramas morn 'til night, people wearing themselves out on treadmills: Move over to social media and you discover all sorts of close-to-the-ground modes of escape. And then, of course, you have the virtuous travelers.

You have to have clearance to indulge in this kind of thing, let us be clear. You have to have the sanction of a new liberal consensus, and these come thick and fast nowadays, a new consensus every time you look. Worry not, liberals: the *Times* is once again here for you.

This is Charles Blow, the arch-liberal *Times* columnist, in a piece that appeared in the Dec. 18 editions under the headline, "Temporarily Disconnected from Politics?":

"Should anyone feel guilt for choosing not to constantly ruminate or pre-emptively panic? For choosing to take a breath and a beat before re-engaging in the fight... that is almost surely in the offing once Donald Trump returns to power?

Absolutely not."

Re-engaging with the fight? What fight was that? He must mean voting the "Joy and Vibes" ticket in the polling booth last November. I gather from all this it was exhausting.

The now evident consensus — see what I mean? Another one — is that so long as the liberal American feels the right feelings, the approved feelings, it is sufficient: There is no need actually to do anything. Nothing can be permitted to break the liberal's routines of entitlement.

And we find, too, a flat refusal to address or even acknowledge the half of America that, having put Donald Trump in office, does not conform to the liberal version of reality.

This is what I read in the sudden impulse to travel: It is a flinch, a turning away, nothing more. Anything to avoid recognizing the grievances of the non-liberal majority, anything to avoid facing the true composition of the American polity, anything to protect the liberal bubble from a puncture.

How did it come to this? Again, I cannot figure it. Scholars now debate the future of American liberalism and whether it can be salvaged or salvage itself to serve some useful purpose in the polity. I cannot figure this, either.

I do not like to think of liberals as representative of anyone other than themselves, but to the extent they may reflect anything close to prevailing sentiment in America their conduct of late saddens me. Are we a nation so pathetic as they?

Are we lost, as they seem to be, in memes and narrative dreams that seal us protectively from reality and relieve us of all responsibility to act?

By Patrick Lawrence

Special to Consortium News

January 29, 2025

Patrick Lawrence, a correspondent abroad for many years, chiefly for the *International Herald Tribune*, is a columnist, essayist, lecturer and author, most recently of *Journalists and Their Shadows*, available from Clarity Press or via Amazon. Other books include *Time No Longer: Americans After the American Century*. His Twitter account, @thefloutist, has been permanently censored.

TO MY READERS. Independent publications and those who write for them reach a moment that is difficult and full of promise all at once. On one hand, we assume ever greater responsibilities in the face of mainstream media's mounting derelictions. On the other, we have found no sustaining revenue model and so must turn directly to our readers for support.

*I am committed to independent journalism for the duration: I see no other future for American media. But the path grows steeper, and as it does I need your help. This grows urgent now. In recognition of the commitment to independent journalism, please subscribe to *The Floutist*, or via my Patreon account.*

The views expressed are solely those of the author and may or may not reflect those of Consortium News.