OPINION

Victor Davis Hanson: America Faces a Radical New Political Reality

VICTOR DAVIS HANSON • November 4, 2026

Editor's note: This is a lightly edited transcript of today's video from Daily Signal senior contributor Victor Davis Hanson. Subscribe to our YouTube channel to see more of his videos.

Hello, this is Victor Davis Hanson for the Daily Signal.

I'm speaking late on midterm night, and it looks like this blue wave materialized in the way that the Republican red wave did not in 2022. Why did it happen, and why does it seem to be so big?

Well, we got to first start with history. In the modern period since 1900, in that 126 years, the party occupying the White House in 90% of the elections loses House seats.

In 75% of the midterm elections, they lose Senate seats. We don't know if this will be as big a win for the Democrats as the Republicans won against Bill Clinton in 1994 and Barack Obama in 2010, which, along with the FDR wipeout, were the three biggest setbacks in modern history, but it could be.

A couple of other things to remember.

The blue wave doesn't necessarily mean that [President] Donald Trump is paralyzed, and I say that again as a historian. If you look at Bill Clinton and Barack Obama after they lost control of the Congress … Remember, they both came in in 1992 and 2008 election, started in 2009, with huge congressional majorities.

But by the last two years of their administration, they had lost them. What did they do? Remember, in domestic policy, Bill Clinton met with Newt Gingrich, and he had two more balanced budgets. He fought off, he had fought off in the conviction in the Senate with the Monica Lewinsky impeachment.

Abroad, he bombed Serbia for 77 days without congressional authority. It had no effect. He had a big peace summit the last few months in office. In the case of Obama, he just said, "I have a pen and phone," and he ruled by executive order. In foreign policy, he just said, "I don't believe that the Iran deal or the Paris climate accord is a treaty."

I didn't approve of that, but he just bypassed them, and he signed us on to both, I think disastrously so. He recognized Cuba, kind of a communist hardcore enemy of the United States. He normalized relations without any regard to Congress, none at all.

So, in the imperial presidency of the modern era, Donald Trump can pretty much do what he wants based on prior precedent abroad, and he can do pretty much what he wants domestically if we keep in mind a couple of caveats.

A president has to have a veto-proof Congress. I don't think that the Republicans will end up with only 40 seats. If they end up with 45, 48, then it's imperative that they have absolute solidarity. In other words, that when Trump vetoes a crazy piece of left-wing legislation, and beware, that's going to happen very soon, along with lawfare, subpoenas, and possible or probable impeachment.

But when he vetoes something, he can't have renegade senators joining the Democrats to get a [67-vote] majority, override on the veto. We'll see what happens. The other couple of things that happen to a lame duck president when he loses the Congress, as is the situation facing Trump, their polls go up.

Obama hit at one point 37% popularity, Clinton 38. Clinton left with almost 70% approval. Obama was 60%. Why? Because they sort of were above the fray, and when a party wins a large tsunami like we see tonight, they overreact. They get too overconfident. They get too extreme. They get too boisterous, and the president, if he's wise, is above the fray.

"Now, now, you guys, calm down. I'm the president," kind of. In the case of Obama, the more you didn't see him and didn't hear him, the more the idea of him was appealing. Same thing maybe with Clinton. And then the campaigns heat up, the presidential campaign. Al Gore versus George Bush. Clinton stayed out of it.

Al Gore didn't even want him to campaign, and he let them kill each other off and alienate everybody. It was a hard-fought campaign. Remember the hanging chad and all that? And Bill Clinton was above the fray, and he ended up very popular. Same thing with Obama. Trump and Hillary [Clinton] battled it out, battle out Russian collusion, "Access Hollywood", and Obama was playing golf.

I'm not suggesting I approve of that. I'm just trying to, as a historian, suggest to you that it's likely that Trump's favorability will go up. It's likely that this will not have a large effect upon him if he keeps discipline among the minority

senators.

And one thing we do know, he will not make judicial nominations.

This Congress will stop every one of them, and that's a tragedy, but it's true. why did it happen? Why did it happen? And to answer that question, go back to 2022. Midterm election, Joe Biden, 40% approval rating. History, we just said, gave you a 90% chance of picking up House seats and a 75% picking up Senate.

And what happened? The red wave was a ripple. They only picked up nine seats. They barely got the House. They lost one Senate seat in a midterm. Why? The economy was … Let me re-reiterate that. The economy was in worse shape in 2022 in that midterm than it is now. Let me explain. GDP was lower. The inflation rate was three times higher at 9.1 than 3.3 as it is now.

Per family income was $14,000 less than it is now. The price of gas, it reached $5, $5 in July, and it got down to about $4.03, not much different than it is now. The stock market was 20,000 points lower in 2022. And yet nobody talked about affordability. Nobody talked about, the economy quite like they did against Donald Trump.

Why? Well, one was the media kept downplaying the economic woes of Biden, and they kept exaggerating those of Trump. I mean, after all, we had 3.4 GDP just announced today. Manufacturing activity was at an all-time high. The median family income is at an all-time high, $87,000. The poverty rate is at an all-time low.

Projections are 5%. The GDP will grow. The stock market's an all-time high. That didn't come across. That was, one, because the media. But the other thing very quickly is lowering prices is not the same as lowering the inflation rate. Biden came in with 1.9% inflation rate that he inherited for Trump. Only 7% something over four years.

So when he went up to 9.1. It was traumatic, but we hadn't had a prior inflation, so prices could absorb that a little bit. When Donald Trump came in, he was facing an average of 5.1 every year, or 21% rise in prices. So he said, "We're make everything affordable." But what he meant was, "I'm going to lower the inflation rate."

He did just that in the first year. He cut it from 5.1 to 2.4. Even this year with the oil spikes, it'll probably be about 3.4. Almost, you know, two points, one and a half points less than the Obama. But what he didn't do, and what he couldn't do, and what no one can do, unless you want a depression, is suddenly whack off 21% of the price of food or insurance.

It's very hard to do that without a recession. That was never explained. Never explained. So, that was a very different perception of a better economy in 2026 that people despise, whereas in 2022, a worse economy, they were not bothered by it as much.

And again, the media and the fact that they were coming—Biden was coming into a low inflation inheritance that had not raised prices, and Trump was coming into a sky-high inflation where prices were 21% higher when he entered office than when he had left, and there was no margin of any increase given that unaffordability issue.

The other was the Iran war. It wasn't that the people were against the idea initially. They were scared of Iran getting a bomb. They were scared of Iran dominating the entire Middle East. They knew that Iran had killed more Americans than any other terrorist organization except al-Qaida on 9/11. But they were confused that on February 28, after a magnificent campaign of 38 days.

We were only into early April, and we had pretty much defanged the Iranian regime, but we hadn't yet really tightened the noose on sanctions. We wouldn't do that for months. But then we started talking. Talk, talk, talk, a few bombings, talk, talk, talk, and everybody, including myself, said, "Okay, we better do something because we're eight months away from the midterms.

We're seven months. We're six months. We're five months. We're four months. We're three months." What the American people wanted to do was something what Bill Clinton did in Serbia. He hit dual use. They wanted to take out the bridges. They wanted to stop all the rail links to China and Russia, all the highways, all the travel in the Caspian Sea, and they wanted to arm the Kurds.

They wanted to stir up the pot. They wanted to hit Pickaxe Mountain. They wanted to completely reassure there was no nuclear plan. They wanted another 28 days, and then they wanted to go home. And they wanted to leave a crew to keep the Strait of Hormuz open, which we are now opening, and they wanted ironclad sanctions, which we have.

But they did not want us fighting Iran anymore. They wanted it nuclearly defanged and in terrible shape and let it stew in its own juice and arm the dissidents and let them sort it out and hope, like the Berlin Wall fell, and then a year or two later, the Soviet Union did. That's what the idea was.

But talk, talk, talk. We're right around the corner. It's going to end. That's not a prescription in a war to win, not in a democracy. People have finite patience. They want victory, and then they want to go home. They do not want victory kind of talk, talk. Victory maybe talk, talk, especially with people who are completely unreliable and can't tell the truth like the Iranians.

There are some really important things finally about the midterms, and that is the 2028 election. No socialist had won, I don't count Bernie Sanders as a socialist Islamicist, but no anti-Israel socialist radical had won a statewide. Yes, they won congressional districts. Yes, they won a mayorship, but not the whole state of Michigan or not all of Texas. Angie Nixon almost won the Florida state.

So they control the Congress now. They don't control the White House. They can't legislate because it will be vetoed, and they won't be able to override it if Trump can maintain discipline against the Senate majority. They will block all judicial nominations, all of them. They will go after the entire Trump family, and they will do a lot of investigating and subpoenaing, but they will not make legislation.

However, what's going to happen is the socialists are going to say, "We did this." Tomorrow, Hasan Piker said, "See, I told you, the more radical and Islamicist socialist you are, the more we win. We are the youth. We are the charismatic people. We are the future." Look at [James] Talarico. He was much more charismatic than [Ken] Paxton.

Look at [Abdul] El-Sayed. He could talk his way out with [Mike] Rogers. This is the future. If they were to go on in 2028, and if they were to win and hold that Congress, there's no stopping them. And they would do exactly what they said. They would open the border. They'd bring in another 10 or 12 million people. They'd give mass amnesties for 30 million to change the demography for ballot reasons.

They would shut down fracking fossil fuel and go to the whole European nihilistic green social program. They would pack the court. Forget the Constitution. They would eliminate the Electoral College by hook or cook. They would bring in new states without following the Constitution. I think they will end the filibuster in January anyway.

They will structurally change the United States so that the socialists can have a long tenure, and we would not know America. We wouldn't recognize it.

Let me just finish then with some known unknowns of the next years. First unknown, will the hard left, as I suggested, overreach and start impeachment, do the same old lawfare, subpoena people, showcase the new radicals? You get sick of hearing El-Sayed's "Yes, yes, I like the Muslim Brotherhood" type of stuff, and "No, I didn't say that."

Talarico will go back to his vegetarian, anti-beef, anti-oil, pro-trans talk. Yes, he will. And will people get tired of them? We'll see. Or will they be smart and keep quiet and build a constituency? I hope not, but they might. Will the current 3.4 GDP be the beginning of an economic gigantic boom? As I said, 5% is predicted in the fourth quarter.

We've had more manufacturing activity, and the inflation rate is pretty tolerable. It'll go down with the oil coming down. AI is going to expand the economy. The full effect of tax cuts, deregulate. Will that grow the economy in such a way that it will nullify this victory? I don't know, but that's a possibility.

Iran. What, are we gonna go back to talk, bomb, talk, talk, bomb, bomb, talk, talk, talk, endless Iranian hag-haggling? Or will we end with the complete destruction of their nuclear program, the continuation of the sanctions and arming the dissidents so that the regime is under enormous pressure, and we go home and we don't engage in them?

That's something that's gonna be very important. Americans want a quick victory, a decisive victory. They do not want an Afghanistan, an Iraq, a Vietnam. And we can do that, but we to decide that we're not going to talk. We're going to do enough damage, so they will not have a bomb for 10 years, and they will have the Strait open and oil will flow.

Finally, a couple of other things. Vance-Rubio. Do we really think that the arrangement where [Vice President JD] Vance will run for president and [Secretary of State Marco] Rubio will not, as he said, and they will be the ideal ticket and that will heal the rivalries and they will win? I don't know about that. I think Rubio is under enormous pressure as his polls go up.

In some he's ahead of Vance, that people will come and say to him, "I'm not going to vote for Vance given his opposition to Israel, given his opposition to a lot of the things I stand for, and therefore you have to run." There'll be enormous pressure. On Vance, Vance is a very good debater. He's a very good communicator.

Will he then say to himself, the primary role of the vice president, whether you like it or not, is to protect the president of the United States? That's his first mission. That's his existential mission. You can't have a vice president when somebody, with Tucker Carlson on others' audiences are saying that your president is satanic, that he wants to use a nuclear bomb, that he should be impeached, as has been said, and not call him out and say, "Well, I don't attack my friends. I just don't agree with them."

No, your job is to attack the person who's trying to destroy your president. That is the prerequisite of a vice president, and that is the indicator of whether you're going to be president. And so, he's gonna have to make that decision very quickly. Otherwise, we're gonna have a big fight in the Republican Party at a time when the socialists are solidifying around this new Islamic socialist communist coalition.

And what will be the Democratic agenda? We haven't heard any agenda. It's Trump, Trump, Trump, Trump, Trump. Hate Israel. Hate Israel. Don't like the Jews. What's the agenda?

Are they ever gonna come out and say, "We are for biological men. We're gonna make sure that biological men can play in women's sports. We wanna open the border. We want more immigrants. We wanna defund the police. We wanna defund [Immigration and Customs Enforcement]. We want to stop fossil fuel exploration. No, no more new lease. Stop fracking," as both Biden and Kamala Harris were on record for that.

And will they have that agenda? If they have that agenda, they're 30% issues and they will lose badly.

Or will they moderate? We'll, we'll see.

A couple of final things. If this Congress continues into 2028 after that election, by that I mean sizable majorities in the Senate and House, and if an [Alexandria Ocasio-Cortes] or an El-Sayed or a radical from that group, and we've seen it before with the Democratic Party with [George] McGovern following the 1968 defeat, 1972 he was nominated.

He had some pretty radical ideas, but not as radical as these people. If they were to run, and if they were to win, we would see historical changes in the United States. We would become a de facto supporter of the Palestinian cause, and we would be an enemy or an opposition to the only democracy in the Middle East, Israel.

And we would be opposed to the reform movements in Europe and be propping up a decrepit and failed EU system. And we would be telling all of those new 26 to 28 countries that have flipped from communist, socialist, totalitarian governments to free market democracies and pro-America that you missed the boat.

We're against you now. We're on the side of the people you overthrew.

So, what I'm getting at is there is going to be a radical revolution in American foreign policy. We are going to go from the protectors of democratic capitalist societies and the protectors of America preeminence and exceptionalism to a globalist, neutral foreign policy, but mostly we will favor left-wing socialist governments funded by an expanded USAID program.

And that's the future of this country if these midterms that we've seen tonight were to continue with a presidential victory and another congressional victory in 2028.

So, it's not the time for recriminations. It's not the time for the blame game. It's time for constructive criticism. See why with a better economy in 2026 we didn't have the wave that Biden avoided in 2000.

We didn't have the wave in 2022 that the Democrats had in 2026, even though, and by all economic indicators, there was a worse economy and worse foreign policy, and we have to figure out why that happened.

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