

## Answering the existential question

The Coronavirus pandemic has taught me one very important thing about life in these United States at this particular time in our history. And that is that we are facing perhaps THE most existential question we've had posed to us in decades. That question is: "Will the actions we have taken during the pandemic place us on an irreversible path towards collectivism that will ultimately chip away our individual freedoms?"

Societies, countries, governments and the governed aren't often faced with this type of question because many of them have already answered it and have decided which system to adopt. Granted there are those, especially in the developing world, that alternate between 'giving' their citizenry more freedom and 'taking' it from them as they move within the realm of totalitarianism and dictatorships. In a strange way, we in the United States find ourselves in a similar situation with the change of political leadership by the Democrats or the Republicans every four or eight years.

On that point, I would argue that both parties have clarified their allegiances to one political ideology or the other. The Republicans overwhelmingly support personal freedom and individual rights while the Democrats overwhelmingly support the rights of the masses (collectivism) over those of the individual. If you accept my premise that the parties have achieved a kind of moral clarity and certitude on whose 'rights' are more important then I think you will see that the way we are handling the Coronavirus pandemic places us at a cultural and political crossroads. This crossroads will present us with even more questions of a fundamental nature that must be answered.

If we choose to go Left towards more centralized bureaucratic government control, this decision will have profound existential consequences for our individual liberties. Going Right will empower the individual voter and, I would argue, improve our chances of achieving a more resilient and personally responsible society. The reasoning is simple: individual good neighbors make good neighborhoods which trickles upwards to making better states and ultimately a better country for all of us. I would also submit that the Left loves control more than they love liberty (at least personal liberty) and that they truly believe that they and they alone know the 'right' thing to do, the 'right' direction to take and have the right to initiate laws that institutionalize and codify their ideology into the bloodstream of America.

If you believe that characterization of the Republicans (I include Conservatives and Libertarians in that group) and the Democrats (I include Progressives in that group) then you will see that the measures our Federal and state governments have taken to limit our personal freedoms (which they claim are *for the good of the general population*) have already indicated which direction they are planning to take us as we move out of one phase of the pandemic and into another. It's plain to see that Blue state governments have become emboldened to create 'lebensraum' (living space) for the next stages of their collectivist central government-planned power grab. If permitted, their decisions on a whole host of cultural and economic issues will have a lasting impact on our civil and personal liberties.

Some of those issues are:

- expansion of abortion and euthanasia,
- the legalization of harmful drugs;
- the release of criminals from our jails and the downgrading of sentencing for crimes;
- implementation of centralized government-controlled medical care;
- the re-institution of the 'fairness doctrine' in the media;
- the adoption of 'free (read: limited) speech' laws;
- top-down federally-administered election reform;
- the development of 'racial equity' programs that will include reparations;
- the creation of radical educational reform that includes 'woke culture' curricula;

- the passage of severe penalties for earning more than one's *fair share* (a share which will be determined by federal bureaucrats);
- the watering down or eradication of the Second Amendment through escalating and onerous regulations on gun ownership;
- the imposition of new racial and gender quotas in every segment of American life;
- the de-gendering or re-gendering of Americans;
- the relentless pursuit of 'domestic terrorists' who are guilty of nothing more than disagreeing with the liberal orthodoxy or the prevailing 'approved' wisdom;
- the packing of the Supreme Court;
- giving Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico statehood;
- removing any required form of voter ID for voting in Federal elections;
- opening up the southern border to allow millions of illegal immigrants in;
- awarding blanket amnesty to all illegal immigrants already living in the U.S.;
- levying crushing taxes and surcharges on fossil fuel producers and their products; and
- picking winner and loser industries based on their environmental footprint.

These are but a few of the radical directions the Left would take us using the justification *it's for the greater good of the population at large* (the collective). That's why our post-Coronavirus time period is so critical to our future. The actions that are taken in support of the masses over the individual will either place us under the boot heel of a central government obsessed with power or free us to remake America in its own original image - as a country based on individual freedom (to succeed or fail) to worship (or not) and to live out our dreams without government's permission. As a Conservative, I see my role and of those who prioritize the sovereignty of the individual, as demonstrating my unrelenting opposition each and every time any law, regulation or action is proposed by any Federal, state or local body that would dilute our God-given rights. That is my answer to the existential question.

*Stephan Helgesen is a retired career U.S. diplomat who lived and worked in 30 countries for 25 years during the Reagan, G.H.W. Bush, Clinton, and G.W. Bush Administrations. He is the author of ten books, four of which are on American politics and has written over 1,100 articles on politics, economics and social trends. He operates a political news story aggregator website, [www.projectpushback.com](http://www.projectpushback.com). He can be reached at: [stephan@stephanhelgesen.com](mailto:stephan@stephanhelgesen.com)*