

THE REVIEW

Why American Citizenship Is on the Wane

by William P. Hoar

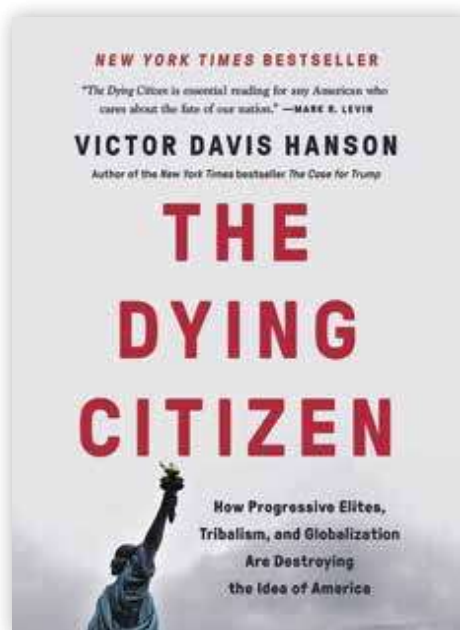
The Dying Citizen: How Progressive Elites, Tribalism, and Globalization Are Destroying the Idea of America, by Victor Davis Hanson, New York: Basic Books, 2021, 432 pages, hardcover.

The nation has been thrown into reverse, as Victor Davis Hanson discerns, going from celebrating independence, self-reliance, and liberty to the growing acquiescence of swelling government dependence. The author shows in this work, convincingly and thoughtfully, how the very nature of responsible American citizenship has been eroded.

A senior fellow in military history at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, Hanson is professor emeritus of classics at California State University, Fresno. A columnist on world affairs, he is also the author of more than two dozen books (including *The Case for Trump*) ranging in topics from ancient Greece to modern America.

As has occurred for years, Hanson makes his arguments lucidly and in depth. His reasoning is based on his appreciation of what makes America (and by extension Western values) so special.

This is a familiar theme for him. For example, as co-author of the 1998 book *Who*



Killed Homer?, Hanson expressed his dismay over the disappearance of classical education from high schools and universities when it had for two millennia been “acknowledged to be the perfect training for nearly every profession.” As a military historian, in his 2001 *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power*, Hanson hailed individualism, among other features. Cited, for instance, was the June 1942 Battle of Midway, in which “American air commanders ignored standard operational orders and thereby found the Japanese [fleet] through their own initiative.”

In the volume under review, the author emphasizes that citizenship is not an entitlement and requires work. Yet, as Hanson writes, “too many citizens of republics,

ancient and modern, come to believe that they deserve rights without assuming responsibilities — and they don’t worry how or why or from whom they inherited their privileges.” He distinguishes between republics and democracies, as so many these days do not. The Founders certainly did. Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, for instance, as Hanson reminds us, “in drafting the Constitution, sought to avoid Athenian-style democracy and imperialism though federalism and the checks of a constitutional republic.”

This book is making positive waves. Not long ago, *The Dying Citizen* was named the winner of the Conservative Book of the Year Award for 2022 by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute. In addition, the author has prepared an online eight-lecture course based on the volume with the help and under the auspices of Hillsdale College.

Residency Is Being Conflated With Citizenship

There are two major parts to the book, “Pre-citizens” and “Postcitizens.” Each half has three chapters. The chapters in the initial section are the “Peasants,” “Residents,” and “Tribes”; in the latter half we find the “Unelected,” “Evolutionaries,” and “Globalists.” Most of the volume, according to the author, was written between 2018 and early 2020. An epilogue updates events through early March of 2021.

And, yes, Hanson also discriminates between “residents” and “citizens.” His discussion in this regard largely centers on massive illegal (and legal) immigration — noting how this (among other ills) lowers wages, strains government resources,

energizes tribalism, fuels identity politics, fosters racialism, and imports poverty. It's a larger problem than many people recognize. As he writes:

In real numbers, by 2019 almost 50 million American residents had not been born in the United States. Perhaps nearly 40 percent of that number resided here illegally. The majority of them arrived from Central America and Mexico. Some resident estimates peg the non-native population as even larger, given the inability to ascertain accurately the number of foreign-born residents who are here illegally.

Meanwhile, by large margins, Americans do not support illegal immigration or giving illegal aliens the same rights as citizens. One poll in 2018, for instance, found that more than 70 percent of Americans opposed granting voting rights to both illegals and legal non-citizen residents. But “progressives” — the ones who claim to support the “people” — don't want to “restrict” voter rights; in essence, they are favoring the government's cancellation of the vote of citizens and replacing it with those of non-citizens.

“Globalists” also appear to have little problem with equating the rights of non-citizens with those of citizens, giving credence to the theory that the reason history repeats itself is that nobody was listening the first time.

Putting on his classical professorial garb, Hanson recalls that in A.D. 202, “money-hungry emperor Caracalla” issued an edict declaring that all free residents living within the Roman Empire were instant “(and thus now much-needed taxpaying) citizens of Rome.” However, as the author observes, simply declaring one a Roman citizen “did not ensure that he would come to speak Latin, adopt the original values of Italian republicanism, or shoulder the responsibilities of citizenship rather than just enjoying its rights.”

Federal Bureaucracy Has Absorbed Congressional Power
The deep or administrative state,

including the hordes of unelected bureaucrats and regulators, also comes under scrutiny. Among these are the 2.7 million bureaucrats manning 450 federal agencies (as of 2019), with their 175,000 or so pages of codes, growing yearly (at least until the Trump administration). Members of this anointed class, as Hanson writes, all too often “exude disdain and condescension for what they see as transitory, mostly clueless officials who come and go in Washington — and the ill-informed citizens who put them in office.”

Looking across the years once more, the author recalls that this administrative state is not a new development. “Even by the time of the latter fifth century [B.C.],” he writes, “the Athenian bureaucracy was a constant butt of the comic dramatist Aristophanes's jokes for its graft, irrelevance, and self-importance. In the fourth century BC, some eleven hundred magistrates headed various boards and civil service organizations at Athens, whose citizen population numbered no more than thirty thousand adult males.”

More recently, such deep-staters coluded right from the beginning against the Trump administration. This included the intelligence community. Former acting

CIA chief John McLaughlin, as Hanson recalls, “proclaimed in a public forum, ‘Thank God for the deep state!’” He was not alone in expressing such views. The author continues:

“Deep state” was no longer a pejorative. It had become the brag of a Washington caste that felt itself more entitled to power and legitimacy than those elected though “democratic and constitutional politics.”

Even Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), a left-winger not in the president's party, warned Donald Trump shortly before his inauguration, “Let me tell you: you take on the intelligence community — they have six ways from Sunday at getting back at you.”

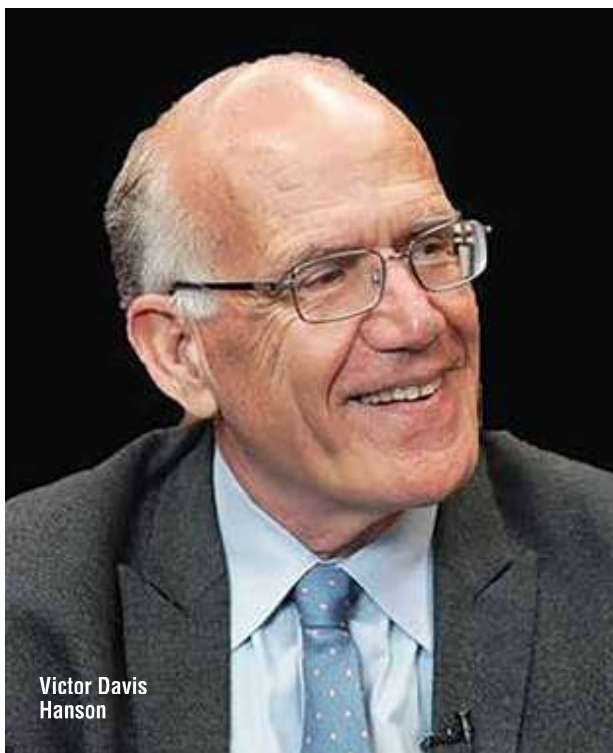
Enlighted Moderns Seek to Dismantle Constitutional Citizenship

Also arrayed against the republican strictures of the foundational framework of the government — and augmented by the allied media — are political activists, judges, and politicians who see the U.S. Constitution as outdated. Amendments are too slow for such left-wing advocates. These are among the “evolutionaries” cited by the author. These elitists are sure they know better than the Framers — never mind that they are usually inferior people with superiority complexes.

As Hanson writes, rarely

in American history have so many powerful and influential Americans become so unhappy with the US Constitution and its emphases on liberty and individual freedom rather than on government-mandated equality. Most critics see the need for a far more powerful presidency to ensure that an obstructionist Congress does not stymie progressive issues such as immigration expansion, climate change, and income redistribution.

It's a broad group. As one example, the author notes that the supposed protector of the First Amendment, the American Civil Liberties Union,



Victor Davis Hanson

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to 3 million of its citizens in “reeducation camps” on the basis of unorthodox religion or thought. It is a communist government with a direct lineage to Mao Tse-tung’s Communist Party, which was responsible for between 50 million and 70 million deaths of Chinese citizens. In Kerr’s mind, the toll of 373 deaths due to supposed U.S. government laxity was the moral equivalent of 70 million deaths at the hands of the Chinese Communist Party.

Not surprisingly, there are places where this reviewer’s views and those of the author are at variance. Here’s one: As occurs so often when mentioning certain iconic figures who have been placed on undeserved public pedestals, Martin Luther King, Jr. gets a (partial) pass from Hanson. He terms MLK a “great civil rights leader.” This, despite the fact that King was, in Hanson’s words, “later found” to be a “serial adulterer” and a sometimes “callous” abuser of women and a plagiarizer of “part” of his doctoral thesis.

That, among other points, conveniently overlooks pertinent facts involving national security — including King’s subversive affiliations and his activities and relationships with Soviet agents. King’s true record was known widely within the government, to the point that even President Kennedy took MLK into the White House’s Rose Garden and warned him of his leading associates, saying, “They’re Communists. You’ve got to get rid of them.” King would not. Perhaps we’ll see a revision in a subsequent edition.

In his epilogue, amid a discussion about the Covid crisis, Hanson does point to the “baleful wages of globalism” involving Communist China and overseas pharmaceutical ingredients. Also noted is how the United Nations and World Health Organization “sent out not just false information but also data supplied by the Chinese government known to be inaccurate but useful for political purposes.” That’s no surprise either.

The author gives Mark Twain the opening lines in his book. We’ll echo them as an apt denouement: “Citizenship is what makes a republic; monarchies can get along without it. What keeps a republic on its legs is good citizenship.”

now has different marching orders. As Hanson puts it, the “ACLU no longer believes in its past defense of the First Amendment (or Second Amendment), which it now sees as an obstacle to banning purported ‘hate speech.’” Its eventual goal, in this case, seems to be “equity.”

Such folks tend to think themselves above the hoi polloi. One collective term for a subset of globalists is “Davos Man” (as coined by Samuel Huntington); they meet in Davos, Switzerland, at the World Economic Forum. Essentially borderless, they look down upon the nativists who are not as cosmopolitan as they. Privileged, most are also against the “West,” seeing themselves as citizens of the world.

Here is Hanson on this crew: The crowds of

... Davos are often insensitive to the effects of their policies and methods of global wealth creation on the middle classes and poor of their own countries. Instead, they feel nationalist efforts to retain regional and local traditions often impede superior transnational government organized by elites such as themselves and reflect a lack of education or awareness among the working classes of the world beyond their borders.

And, no, these alarmist-prone anti-

“climate-change” advocates — think John Kerry, multiplied, and on steroids — don’t give a whit about the carbon-emitting aircraft that brought them to the Alps. Such concerns are for the underlings, menials.

Meanwhile, globalists are happy to gripe about domestic political matters (say, female public restrooms in North Carolina), but Communist China is held to a different standard. Hence the National Basketball Association’s kowtowing to Beijing about, for example, cracking down on Hong Kong. Thus (in an account related in *The Dying Citizen*), the coach of the San Francisco Warriors — with an eye to the communist regime’s sponsorship of the NBA — made excuses about being mute over the communists’ suppression. His reasoning: No one is perfect. Moreover, nobody in China, said the selectively tolerant Steve Kerr, asked him about people in this country “owning AR-15s and mowing each other down in a mall.”

Hanson offers context — pointing (*inter alia*) to the 14,500 or so “murders by firearms” in the United States, where “just 373 people in a nation of nearly 330 million died in mass shootings and tragedies such as ‘mowing each other down in a mall.’” (Emphasis in original.) In contrast, notes Hanson,

The Chinese communist government currently detains about 1.5 million