



AN EXPERIMENTAL SYNTHESIS

Socialism Is Here. Communist America Could Follow.

The Fukushima Effect in American Politics

Lev Neymotin | *Uncompressed Thinking*

A few days after I released my podcast and essay *Communist America*, Peggy Noonan published a Wall Street Journal column titled *Socialism Is Here - and It's Serious*. The timing was a coincidence, but the overlap was striking. Noonan argues that socialism is no longer a passing fashion on the American left. It is becoming an electoral force, and its opponents are dangerously mistaken if they believe its historical failures will defeat it automatically. I agree. But I believe the conventional discussion of socialism describes only the first stage of the danger. Noonan asks us to take socialism's arrival seriously. My question is what may follow - and what happens when that movement joins another radical force.

The Fukushima nuclear disaster offers a warning far beyond nuclear power. The plant had protections against a major earthquake. It also had protections against a tsunami. But when the earthquake

triggered the tsunami, the two dangers became one cascading event. Outside power was disrupted. Backup systems needed to cool the reactors were disabled. Defenses built around separate hazards were overwhelmed by their combination.

I see a similar danger developing in American politics. A socialist movement capable of turning economic dissatisfaction into a demand for centralized political control is dangerous enough. Radical anti-Western religious ideology is dangerous enough. But when the two merge politically, they do not merely add to one another. They can amplify one another. Like Fukushima, the greatest danger may lie in the combination, and in our failure to imagine what that combination could do.

That is why I shudder when I hear almost giddy predictions from conservatives and mainstream Republicans that the Democratic Party's shift to the left will destroy it and produce a Republican landslide. My sense is that Trump may think along the same lines. The assumption is that American workers and the middle class have always supported capitalism and will instinctively reject socialism or communism once those words are spoken clearly. Nothing in recent politics justifies that confidence.

Noonan supplies evidence that the movement is already more serious than many opponents admit. She cites a CNN/SSRS poll reporting that 34 percent of Democrats and Democratic-leaning adults identify as democratic socialists. She points to Abdul El-Sayed's success in winning the Democratic nomination for the U.S. Senate in Michigan. More revealingly, she describes a national leader of the Democratic Socialists of America openly endorsing long-term goals that include abolishing the Senate and ICE, remaking the presidency and Supreme Court, eliminating borders, sharply reducing the Pentagon, abolishing much of the prison system, and placing most large corporations under public ownership. That is not simply a Scandinavian safety net with an American label. It is a program for transforming the constitutional and economic structure of the country.

Why can such a movement win? Noonan's explanation is persuasive. A 25-year-old voter was a child during the financial crash of 2008. He may remember frightened parents and lost jobs, followed by bailouts and the impression that powerful people escaped responsibility. Today that voter sees artificial intelligence advancing, home ownership moving out of reach, and institutions that appear unable or unwilling to secure his future. The Cold War is no longer a living memory. Soviet shortages, censorship, secret police, and economic lifelessness sound like an old story. Socialism, by contrast, is presented as healthcare, housing, education, dignity, and a friendlier version of Scandinavia.

The collapse of confidence in Congress, universities, the media, churches, and courts adds to the danger. When people no longer believe institutions can be repaired, radical movements become more attractive. When they no longer believe those institutions can restrain anyone, dismantling them begins to sound less frightening. Social media then rewards intensity, not moderation. Today's socialist

organizers are media-native. They understand how to create a feeling and an impression before an argument has time to form.

Noonan's most penetrating point is that capitalism enters this contest at an emotional disadvantage. Capitalism presents itself as an economic mechanism. Socialism presents itself as a moral belief. Capitalism speaks about incentives, productivity, markets, and growth. Socialism speaks about justice, belonging, and care. Reason has difficulty competing with faith in an age organized around sensation.

Defenders of capitalism make the problem worse when they describe every failure as somebody else's fault. Capitalism can be brutal and unjust. A mixed economy, including a safety net for people who fall too far, is imperfect, costly, and always in need of repair. But it remains reformable. No system can eliminate suffering or injustice, and a system promising to do so will eventually require coercion to explain why reality refuses to obey. If defenders of a free economy refuse to acknowledge genuine economic pain, they surrender the moral language to people who promise the impossible.

Here, however, the distinction between socialism and communism becomes essential. They are not identical, and not every welfare program is a step toward communism. A democratic country can choose public benefits, regulation, and redistribution while preserving private property, political competition, and constitutional limits. But the word socialism must not be allowed to hide the direction of a movement. When its leaders seek to abolish or neutralize the institutions that limit power, replace private ownership on a large scale, and make political permission the basis of economic life, the argument is no longer about a larger safety net. It is moving from reform toward revolutionary control.

I come from the former Soviet Union. Communism is not, for me, an abstract insult to throw at an American politician. Its history is too real. I recognize not only its final brutality, but also the attractive language that comes first. It begins with fairness. It begins with promises to ordinary people. It begins by identifying a class that has too much and another class that deserves what has been denied. It rarely introduces itself by describing censorship, confiscation, fear, and political prisons.

This takes me back to Russia's October Revolution, not the February Revolution. Marx created an ideological weapon with enormous intellectual reach. Lenin, clever and importantly charismatic, turned it into a method for gaining power. He appealed to workers and peasants with promises of political power, land, peace, and control over their future. Behind the appeal stood the principle: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." We know how it ended. Soviet communist rule lasted 74 years.

People do not normally vote for economic systems in the abstract. They vote for promises, especially when they are told that someone else will pay. Mamdani's political success shows the modern form of that appeal: free services, redistribution, and expanded government presented not as ideology, but as

fairness. Mamdani is not Lenin, and it would be unserious to claim that he is. The point is not equality of caliber. The point is recognition of the mechanism. Dissatisfaction becomes grievance. Grievance becomes entitlement. Entitlement becomes a demand to transfer wealth and power. A sufficiently capable leader can then turn that demand into political control.

Noonan writes that as religion recedes, politics takes its place. That is a powerful explanation for the quasi-religious appeal of socialism among secular Americans. But it is not the whole religious story. At the same time that traditional religion is receding in parts of the West, radical religious ideology is becoming more political. I see an emerging alliance between the revolutionary left and radical Islamist political ideology with a strong anti-Western current.

The distinction must be stated clearly. I am not speaking about Islam as a religion or about Muslims as people. I am speaking about Islamism in its radical political form: an ideology that rejects essential Western democratic values while using Western democratic freedoms and institutions to gain influence. Its alliance with the revolutionary left is ideologically contradictory. Communism is historically hostile to religion, while Islamist extremism claims religious authority. But political alliances do not require a shared final destination. They may require only shared enemies. Each side can believe it is using the other. They can cooperate long enough to weaken the institutions both oppose, then fight over what remains. The damage can occur before the marriage ends.

Each force supplies something the other lacks. Communist ideology supplies economic grievance, the promise of redistribution, and the machinery of centralized control. Radical Islamist ideology supplies ancient identity, moral absolutism, a transnational cause, and, among its most extreme adherents, a willingness to sacrifice themselves and others for victory. Joined to a radical political movement, an ideology claiming authority from a 1,400-year-old religious tradition has a different time horizon and motivational force from the secular communism Russia experienced.

This is the Fukushima effect. One political force can exploit economic pain and erode confidence in capitalism. Another can exploit identity, resentment, and civilizational conflict. American institutions may have ways to resist each separately. They may be far less prepared for a coalition in which the two reinforce one another, overwhelm the same defenses, and normalize the same hostility toward the constitutional order.

The answer cannot be another round of cheerful predictions that the left will destroy itself. Republicans and conservatives must stop assuming that the words socialism and communism are self-discrediting. Democrats and liberals must stop treating revolutionary objectives as merely the energetic edge of an otherwise conventional coalition. All sides must refresh their Western brains.

That means teaching communist history as lived reality, not as a collection of faded Cold War slogans. It means distinguishing a reformable safety net from a movement that seeks to dismantle constitutional restraints. It means defending capitalism while correcting the failures that make young people feel they have no stake in it: unaffordable housing, insecure work, concentrated privilege, and the fear that technology is eliminating their future. It also means defending religious liberty without surrendering the right to identify and confront political extremism. If the West cannot make these distinctions, it will alternate between denial and indiscriminate anger, and both will strengthen the radicals.

We are taking enormous chances. Jeffries, AOC, Tlaib, Mamdani, El-Sayed, and today's other figures may not possess Lenin's intellect, political skill, or charisma. Their limitations should not make us comfortable. A movement can prepare the vocabulary, the coalitions, and the political ground for a leader far more capable than those who came before him.

Watch out.

We may wake up tomorrow and discover a new Lenin.

*Source note. This experimental synthesis draws on Lev Neymotin, *Communist America: The Fukushima Effect in American Politics*, and Peggy Noonan, *Socialism Is Here - and It's Serious*, *The Wall Street Journal*, August 6, 2026. Noonan's arguments and reported examples are paraphrased and attributed; the Fukushima/Lenin framework and the religious-amplification thesis derive from Neymotin's essay.*