On the novelty of our cultural predicament.

The theme is “Western civilization at the crossroads.” Far be it from me to doubt that the West is on the precipice of something enormous. But “crossroads” implies a map. Do we have one? Is a piece of paper showing the way forward—whether predictive or hopeful—even possible?

I’ve noticed that a lot of people more or less “on my side,” or who see things basically as I do, are extremely confident that they know what is going to happen next. Their certainty is entirely independent of what they think they know.

Some believe that the end—the collapse of present ruling arrangements—is imminent, if not tomorrow or next week, then soon, within a year or five. Others assert that the present regime is stable and not only can but will last for decades or even centuries. Some insist that the regime will fall of its own incompetence, others that its end will require an external push—which some are certain will come, and others are equally sure will not.

When I have thought about this, I have been in some part inclined to the opinion that present arrangements are unstable and may be approaching their end. Yet in thinking it through further, I am forced to admit that our times are marked by so many unprecedented trends and events that making predictions seems foolhardy.

But before going into those differences, let’s first consider the one historical parallel that all sides of this debate draw on for precedent: the rise, peak, decline, and fall of Rome. At first glance, the two cases seem to have a lot in common. Not only was the United States founded by men educated in the classics who took Roman pseudonyms and named the government’s top legislative body after Rome’s, and not only did those founders revive
republicanism after centuries of abeyance following the transformation of the Roman republic into an empire, but our country’s history itself seems to have tracked Rome’s, if not precisely then certainly thematically.

Both Rome and America were founded by kings—or, in our case, under the auspices of a king. In both instances, the descendants of those kings ruled in ways their subjects found intolerable and were overthrown. Both peoples then established a mixed-republican form of government, with monarchical, aristocratic, and popular elements. Both of those governments were, at first, weighted toward their aristocratic elements but gradually—owing in part to popular discontent and strife—became more balanced and eventually biased toward the popular element. Both societies fought constant wars, self-justified as “defensive” but more often than not expansionist. Both rapidly conquered what we might call their immediate “neighborhoods”—the Italian peninsula and major Mediterranean islands, the North American continent, respectively—and then went on to win major wars against competing “superpowers,” in the process becoming world-bestriding hegemons. Indeed, we may say that no other power in history, save for perhaps the British Empire, acquired such extensive spheres of influence and so dominated their respective eras for so long. If other empires held more territory, or perhaps technically lasted longer, none exerted nearly as much enduring influence on the rest of the world.

The Roman case

In Rome’s case, its government formally made the transition from republic to empire after a long expansion that bloated the treasury, increased the size and power of the military, concentrated wealth in the hands of a few who controlled not just the economy but the government, and impoverished ordinary citizens. While much of that may sound familiar, much is different, making the analogy (like all such historical comparisons) inexact. Rome conquered and directly administered territory throughout the entire Mediterranean basin and over most of the (then-) known world. America’s “empire,” by contrast, is quasi-metaphoric or at the very least indirect; the only external territories of any consequence it controls are Puerto Rico and Guam. Then there are all the differences in religion, philosophy, society, economics, technology, and so on, far too numerous to list. (One might also ask: where’s our bloated treasury?)

America has yet formally to transform (if it ever will) from republic to empire. Yet in all important respects, our country is no longer a republic, much less a democracy, but rather a kind of hybrid corporate-administrative oligarchy. This lack of formal transition causes some to speculate that America is in the “late republican” stage, with the republic (it is alleged, or hoped) soon to fall to a “Caesar.” Those who assert that the transition, however informal its appearance, has already happened are more likely to place America in the “late imperial” stage, i.e., much closer to total collapse and replacement by an entirely new order.
Cycle theory predicts that every more or less good regime—whether monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy—falls when it inevitably becomes overbearing and odious. All such speculations presuppose the truth of the classical theory known as the “cycle of regimes.” Just as Rome was born, grew, matured, peaked, declined, and eventually fell, so will—and must—America. Cycle theory predicts that every more or less good regime—whether monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy—falls when it inevitably becomes overbearing and odious. Thus do monarchies degenerate into tyrannies, which are replaced by aristocracies that decay into oligarchies, which are overthrown by democracies that descend into mob-rule or even anarchy. In that case, we should expect our present oligarchy, sooner or later, to give way to democracy.

While that possibility cannot be dismissed out of hand, the prospect seems laughable. If there is to be, as cycle theory predicts, a popular revolt against our corrupt oligarchy, it would seem much more likely to be led by a charismatic, centralizing figure who ascends to the leadership of the popular party and then installs himself as the head of government—in other words, Caesarism. And even that would depend on a Caesar of sufficient talent and institutional support, as well as a sufficient level of spirit and virtue in the people (and on much else besides).

More fundamentally, classic cycle theory presupposes an ethnically, linguistically, and religiously unified people. Indeed, in his *Politics*, Aristotle says that “dissimilarity of stock is conducive to factional conflict,” i.e., ethnic differences in and of themselves, irrespective of disagreements over regime form (typically few versus many), can drive revolution. Aristotle seems to admit the possibility of assimilation: dissimilarity, he says, leads to conflict “until a cooperative spirit develops.” But he cites no examples, forcing one to wonder how likely it is for this theoretical possibility to be actualized in the real world. It seems, instead, that the fundamental conflict between the few and the many emerges only where the more fundamental conflict between differing peoples is absent. Where it is not, the few and the many alike rally to their fellow ethnics; ethnicity itself, rather than “class,” is their prime motivator.

Multi-ethnic polities are hardly unknown to history. Of these, Aristotle gives several examples—all of which ended up fighting civil wars along ethnic lines.
The most common (one may say only) way that multi-ethnic societies have been successfully governed is centrally, from the top, by some form of one-man rule, whether monarchical, Caesarist, or tyrannical. This, ultimately, is how Rome “solved” the problem of admitting so many foreigners to citizenship, to say nothing of its far-flung conquest of peoples whom it never made citizens. In more recent times, one may think of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Tito’s Yugoslavia.

**America today**

Consider, now, the contemporary United States of America. At first glance, it seems to belie Aristotle’s implied assertion that regime-ending ethnic conflict is unavoidable wherever more than one group lives under the same government. Americans pride themselves, and their country, on their exceptional track record of assimilating peoples from all over the world.

Yet before we congratulate ourselves overmuch, let us reflect, first, on the fact that the United States has not merely abandoned but utterly repudiated the traditional understanding of assimilation, which is now denounced by all elite opinion as “racist” and evil. Not only does no American institution encourage (much less demand) assimilation, they all foment the opposite. Immigrants to America are exhorted to embrace their native cultures and taught that the country to which they’ve chosen to immigrate is the worst in world history, whose people and institutions are intent on harming them, and that their own cultures are infinitely superior. In this respect, one supposes, immigrants are encouraged to “assimilate”—to the anti-Americanism of the average Oberlin professor.

Be that as it may, no nation in recorded history has ever willingly opened its doors to millions of immigrants only to insist that they must never adapt to the traditional ways of their new country—indeed, insisting that they forever remain as foreign as the day they arrived. Similarly, no country in recorded history has ever welcomed millions with the message that their new country, along with its existing citizens, are inherently evil and out to get them.

Second, assimilation works best among peoples with some common underlying similarity, whether political, linguistic, ethnic, religious, or cultural (preferably a combination of all these). Its effectiveness declines as the differences among the disparate peoples increase. Historically, the closer in the above categories an immigrant group was to founding-stock Americans, the more quickly and smoothly its members assimilated. American immigration policy and practice has drifted steadily away from prioritizing this practice. In particular, since the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act and the de facto (since the 1970s at least) non-enforcement of America’s borders and immigration laws, newcomers to America have become more and more distant—not just from existing Americans but from one another. America now takes in, and has been importing for more than fifty years, people from every part of the globe, of every faith, speaking every language. This, too, has never before happened in world history.

Third is the size of the wave. Precise numbers are hard to come by, but if we count immigrants
legal and illegal plus all their direct descendants, then something like a hundred million newcomers have arrived in America since 1965. Only fourteen countries today have total populations exceeding that figure. In 1965, there were just under two hundred million Americans. Today it is estimated that 333 million live within our borders. At least two-thirds of that growth has been immigrant-driven. This large a migration wave, in so short a time, to one country, from so many different sources, has also never happened before in human history. Need a “respectable” source to vouch for that? Here’s Bill Clinton in 1998:

But now we are being tested again—by a new wave of immigration larger than any in a century, far more diverse than any in our history. Each year, nearly a million people come legally to America. Today, nearly one in ten people in America was born in another country; one in five schoolchildren are from immigrant families. Today, largely because of immigration, there is no majority race in Hawaii or Houston or New York City. Within five years there will be no majority race in our largest state, California. In a little more than fifty years, there will be no majority race in the United States [applause]. No other nation in history has gone through demographic change of this magnitude in so short a time.

Note the applause. The venue of the above speech was a university commencement: a sitting president addressing freshly minted college graduates and their parents, i.e., the elite speaking to the elite. Demographic decline was literally applauded. And this is only one example. Mere months ago, when the Census announced that, for the first time in American history, the white population had declined in absolute numbers, The Tonight Show’s audience cheered. No native-born population of any country has ever literally cheered its own dispossession.

That which cannot be said

The “Great Replacement” is happening, not just in America but throughout the West. Elites both deny and affirm it. When they write op-eds in The New York Times entitled “We Can Replace Them,” that’s a good thing and the phenomenon under discussion is absolutely right and just. When you notice and express the mildest wish not to be replaced, it’s a racist conspiracy theory that you are evil for even mentioning—your evil being further proof that you deserve to be replaced. They get to say it; you’re required not merely to pretend that you didn’t hear it but also to insist that they never said it. No majority stock in any nation has ever deliberately sought its own replacement, much less insisted that those who might have misgivings lie to themselves that it’s not happening.

The “Great Replacement” is not just happening; under the Biden-Harris regime, it is accelerating. Among the few promises Biden has kept are those not to build a single new inch of the border wall or to enforce immigration laws. As a result, illegal migrants are pouring across the southern border at an unprecedented rate. The ridiculous former practice of “catch-and-release”—catch an illegal immigrant, release him on American soil—has been replaced by “catch-and-bus” or even “catch-and-airlift.” The U.S. government places illegal border-crossers on buses and planes and distributes them throughout the heartland, unannounced, often followed by official denials.
Naturally, none of these people is vetted in any way—not for covid, which has the rest of us in semi-permanent lockdown, nor for criminal records or anything else. Couple this with the regime’s policy to settle throughout middle America as many unvetted Afghans as possible—some of whom are likely terrorists, several of whom have already committed sex crimes—and it is fair to describe current practice as demographic warfare. The concept is not exactly new; tyrants have been known from time immemorial to move populations around so as to hold conquests more securely. What’s unprecedented is a regime importing foreigners to harm its own people.

The question of immigration is inseparable from that of race. “Critical Race Theory,” much in the news lately, is but the latest iteration of intellectual and academic anti-whiteness that has been central to leftist ideology since the mid-1960s. The ur-specimen is Susan Sontag’s 1967 belch that “the white race is the cancer of human history.” Examples are so numerous today that cataloguing them all would be a full-time job for an entire think tank—but a pointless one, since the Left will in the same breath deny and affirm their own words quoted back to them: “We didn’t say that, and it’s good that we did.” Many whites, apparently, believe they deserve to be replaced because their race makes them uniquely, and irredeemably, evil. While cultural self-loathing is hardly unknown to history, I know of none so explicitly race-based or widespread—or so eager to pursue self-abnegation all the way to the end.

This hatred of the core stock of the nation, by other members of that same stock, also appears to be unprecedented. Examples can be found of a new elite rising to preeminence above an older one, which it then displaces with prejudice. But of a ruling class coming to despise its own (broadly speaking) ethnic group and seeking ways to rob their fellow co-ethnics of power, standing, and influence? I can’t think of any other such cases.

The matter becomes even more complicated when one reflects that this is mostly an intra-white civil war. One group of whites pronounces the entire white race evil, seeks policies to hurt it, but somehow exempts itself. So far, these upper-caste whites have found ways to protect their own privilege but haven’t developed consistent rhetoric to defend that privilege. They appear to believe that no matter how much anti-white poison they vomit or how many destructive policies they enact, none will ever blow back on them. In particular, they seem to believe that the “allies” in whom they stir up anti-white hatred will never turn and bite them; at least, they appear not to have seriously considered the possibility. This situation, too, is unprecedented.

Tyranny old & new

Tyrants or ruling classes that despoil their countries for personal gain are nothing new. If that were all we had today, our situation would be much more understandable. And we do, in part, have that. Our ruling class is rich and rapacious—rich because rapacious, and eager to be richer still by taking what little you have left.
Yet elite enthusiasms extend well beyond mere greed. There is a malice in them atypical to the native despot, one found historically only or largely among the most punitive conquerors. A tyrant fears a healthy population, to be sure, because such is always a threat to his power. This fear typically inspires little beyond efforts to ensure that the population is dependent and unarmed—two aims of our overlords, it need hardly be added.

But our elites also go much further. They seem determined to make the American population fat, weak, ugly, lethargic, drug-addled, screen-addicted, and hyper-sexualized, the men effeminate and the women masculine. Those last two actually barely scratch the surface of the agenda, which includes turning males into “females” and vice versa—or into any one of a potentially infinite number of “genders.” (The number varies depending on which source you check; sixty-three is the highest I could find. Needless to say, no establishment source stops at “two.”)

The regime promotes every imaginable historic form of degeneracy—and then invents new ones undreamt of by Caligula, the Borgias, or Catherine the Great. All these it pushes through every available media channel, social and legacy, in programming and advertising alike, even in books stocked in elementary-school libraries. As I write, the Virginia governor’s race is being roiled by the presence in said libraries of *Gender Queer: A Memoir*, an illustrated “children’s” book as sexually explicit as 1970s hardcore pornography—and arguably illegal to boot, since it depicts minors. One candidate for governor and his supporters indignantly insist that this kind of material must be forced on your kids at public expense and that only Nazis object. Degeneracy in tyrants is of course as old as the hills, but prior despots had the “decency,” if one could call it that, to restrict their perversions to the satisfaction of their own private pleasures. To force degeneracy on the whole of society, with the explicit intent of bringing the rest us to our knees, literally and figuratively—that, I think, has never happened before.

An odd feature of our time is the coupling of mass hyper-sexualization with mass barrenness. Some argue, plausibly, that the link is direct: hyper-sexualization disconnected from procreation inevitably leads to fewer babies. The degree to which crashing fertility is simply an effect of modernity versus a deliberate plan by our rulers is an open question. It is certainly true that every economically and technologically developed society, regardless of region, culture, race, or religion, suffers from cratering birthrates.

But it’s also true that our rulers advocate and celebrate careerism, consumerism, self-centeredness, casual sex, delayed marriage, (let us say) “non-fecund” couplings, and, where and if all that fails, small families—“for the environment,” you understand. In other words, when and where the
(allegedly) inexorable process of modernity is overcome by the innate human desire for love and family, the regime eagerly steps in with propaganda to bully men and women out of such longings. I suppose there is a near-historical precedent for this, namely China’s one-child policy, in effect from 1980 to 2015. But that was implemented to relieve (it was thought) a looming Malthusian crisis, a fear that cannot reasonably apply to contemporary America, whose birthrate is 1.64 and falling like a stone. China itself, whose leaders want its people to live on, abandoned the policy. Meanwhile, America unofficially does everything it can to suppress native births. Has this ever happened before in a country not even plausibly facing a “population crisis”?

The promotion of ugliness deserves special attention. The autocrats of old wanted to be known for their patronage of beauty, the arts, and great works. This is one meaning of Shelley’s “Ozymandias,” and also of Augustus’s boast that he found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble (to say nothing of having commissioned the Aeneid). A stroll through any city in Europe, and in most of the Americas, finds the same sentiment everywhere—until about the middle of the twentieth century, when suddenly everything turned brutalist, and brutally ugly, and not just the buildings, but the art, the literature, the music, almost everything.

One attempts to state the following as delicately as possible, even though regime propaganda on this score is anything but delicate, but today the ugliness extends to people. One hesitates also to say anything that could be interpreted as praise of underwear ads, but, within living memory, the sirens of Times Square billboards were lithe and lovely; today they are, quite deliberately, obese and angry. That is, when they’re not cross-dressers or pierced like an East Village junkie and tattooed like a C-list porn star. All this, we are commanded to believe, is “beautiful,” though no healthy person does. The point seems to be humiliation: forcing us little people to say “the thing which is not.” That trick is also as old as the hills, but the deliberate promotion of ugliness seems to be a new way to play it. Antiquity abounded in wicked tyrants, yet try to find an ancient statue anywhere near as hideous as a modern lingerie model.

But in terms of what we choose to elevate, nothing illustrates the perversity of present America more than the deification of George Floyd. There are now monuments to him all over the country that are treated as sacred. In a rare instance when one is defaced, the resultant outcry resembles the Athenian people’s reaction to the desecration of the Hermai. One may insist that George Floyd did not deserve to die the way he did and still see that neither did he live his life so as to make the possibility remote. He was convicted of eight crimes and charged with or detained for at least nineteen (though one must here concede the difficulty of finding reliable relevant information, since unflattering facts about Floyd’s life are effectively suppressed and are taboo to discuss). The worst of his crimes was an armed robbery in which he pointed a gun at the belly of a woman who may (or may not) have been pregnant. Floyd’s admirers insist she wasn’t, but more careful sources assert only that no one has ever definitively proved she was. Floyd was the father of five children, from whose lives he was by all accounts absent, and none of whose mothers he ever married. At the time of his death, Floyd was in the process of being arrested for yet another crime and was not
cooperating with the arresting officers. A serial drug abuser, he had in his system not just methamphetamine but a potentially lethal dose of fentanyl—an extremely dangerous synthetic opioid—which may well have contributed to his death. Even if one fully accepts the trial court’s finding that the drugs played no role, one must still admit that had Floyd only gotten into the back of the police vehicle as officers instructed, he could not have died in the way prosecutors (and the media) alleged. Above all, we must confront the painful fact that Floyd did not, according to moral standards that for centuries were taken for granted, live a life worthy of admiration, much less of veneration. Yet our society treats him as a saint, if not something higher. The pagan gods were not always well-behaved, to say the least. But has any people ever chosen such an undeserving object of worship?

Bad education

We may tie these points together under the broad rubric of “education,” though that word is risibly inapt to what is “taught” today. The word’s root is Latin and means “to lead forth” —that is, to coax out of imperfect but improvable human nature that which makes each human being better. Or, as the classics understood it, not merely to impart knowledge but also to form character.

In both respects, our system does the opposite. It teaches lies, attacks and suppresses truth, and encourages people to behave worse. It tells children to hate themselves (or their classmates) because of their race and to hate their country. It encourages boys to declare themselves girls, and vice versa. It badgers kids into professing themselves attracted to members of the same sex, or of all sixty-three sexes, regardless of, or despite, their natural inclination. It firehoses them with sexualized messaging and imagery, always taking care to decouple orgasmic self-indulgence from love and family.

The people who run the system, or many of them, can only be described as sadists. How sick does one’s mind have to be to think it a good idea to teach a black kindergartner (through the taxpayer-financed public education system, no less) to hate his white classmates, or those white classmates to hate themselves? A sane society would call this child abuse.

The system now protects predators at the expense of the vulnerable and attacks parents who object. In Virginia, a boy in a skirt entered a girls’ bathroom and raped a student. The school and the district hushed it up and transferred him to another school—where he did it again. When one victim’s father complained at a school-board meeting, cops roughed him up and arrested him. The superintendent, principal, and all others in authority furiously denied that any assault had ever taken place—that is, except for the father’s impassioned plea, which the school board referred to the Attorney General of the United States, who then ordered the FBI and U.S. attorneys to investigate outspoken parents as “domestic terrorists.” This is not merely insane but deliberately evil. The Carthaginians cast living children into furnaces to satiate their (false) god Baal; we sacrifice our children’s mental heath and adult futures to appease our false god Woki. Plus ça change
(We may note in passing that when similar atrocities occurred in the pre-woke Catholic Church, an institution the ruling class feared and despised, demands for “accountability” were deafening. Today, the only sounds one hears are from establishmentarians and their Conservatism, Inc., enablers: this isn’t happening, it’s a “culture-war trope” ginned up by maga “racists,” and anyway it’s no big deal so lighten up.)

The most prevalent failures of education in history, it is widely accepted, have stemmed from a lack of it: failing to teach the poor basic skills such as reading and writing, or even deliberately depriving them of such learning. Now we have come full circle, but worse. We barely teach kids to read, write, or add anymore—indeed, the most “progressive” corners of the education system denounce such emphasis on standards and core knowledge as “white-supremacist.” There’s ample historical precedent for widespread illiteracy. But for teaching one’s own citizens self-hatred, degeneracy, and despondency—without teaching them to read and write?

Barbarians at the gates

The typical tyrant enjoys wealth and power, which are easier to extract from a productive populace than from zombies. He therefore, typically, does not prioritize degrading his population beyond measures necessary to produce obedience. The serial humiliations inflicted on our people by its ruling class—not all of which, to say the least, generate profits—appear to be another element of contemporary life without historical precedent.

Crime is a case in point. No society, whether free or despotic, benefits from crime, all else being equal—though it’s certainly true that a tyrant can find it useful to exempt his own partisans from criminal enforcement, and even to encourage them to terrorize his enemies. Criminals being criminals, this is a hard dynamic to keep from spinning out of control. In 2020, for instance, the ruling class unleashed blm hordes and Antifa predators, plus assorted rioters and looters, to despoil and burn some 220 American cities.

Sacking was not uncommon in the ancient world. Rome was sacked many times, but always by foreigners and never at the instigation of her leading citizens: the senate never riled up the plebs to scorch the Capitoline. Yet in the summer of 2020, our ruling class actively encouraged, through state-aligned media, the repeated sacking of Manhattan, the very beating heart of the Davos Archipelago, where our richest and most powerful overlords live and work. They fired up mobs to trash huge swaths of Washington, D.C., their cherished imperial capital, which to this day has yet to recover. Why did they do that? Was there some nefarious plan to derive benefit that I don’t understand? Or was this an instance of losing control of the shock troops? Either way, the events were unprecedented.
Then there are the related issues of technology and our fake economy. These subjects are far too large to explore here and so must be treated cursorily. Let us merely say that modern digital technology is unlike any previous “advance” in human history. It threatens not only to become man’s master and destroyer (other technologies have also threatened that) but also to remake his very soul—or kill it.

The modern economy that technology enables is similarly anti-human. It deprives billions of the dignity of meaningful work at fair remuneration while it enriches a tiny minority adept at manipulating bits and bytes to no discernible purpose or benefit. The world has had to endure oligarchs for millennia. But our empty plutocrats create nothing but new ways to waste time and enervate the spirit. They are, like the technologies that make them rich and powerful, an entirely new phenomenon.

Finally, there is the endless insistence that every new dawn must begin a fresh Year Zero; we must start continually anew. What was acceptable yesterday is anathema today and will be more so tomorrow. All that came before must be swept aside and destroyed with extreme prejudice, on a rolling basis.

The most ferocious revolutionaries of yesteryear didn’t do this. The Jacobins changed the calendar and guillotined a lot of nobles but otherwise allowed France to remain French. The Bolsheviks did not touch the Russian literary or concert canons; to the contrary, they celebrated both. Mao made an attempt to start over—until the more sensible Party bosses realized that the old man (and especially his wife) had lost their minds and were destroying China, sidelined him, and quietly put an end to the Cultural Revolution four years before formally declaring mission accomplished. The Ayatollah did not ban Nowruz or other cornerstones of Persian tradition beloved by the Iranian people, but which predated his puritanical version of Islam.
Our overlords, by contrast, insist on changing everything and will not stop until everything familiar is gone. When this is pointed out, they smirk about the “slippery-slope fallacy” and gleefully lie. That will never happen, they say, until they insist on it, and, once accomplished, move on to the next target. They are cultural locusts devouring everything in their path. If the internal “logic” (if one may use that word in this context) of their passionate hatred is allowed to play out, no statue can be left standing, no traditional holiday observed, no name unchanged. If that outcome does not come to pass, it will not be because those driving toward it have a change of heart, nor is it likely to be because the Right suddenly becomes effective in opposition. It will rather be because the locusts destroy too many of the country’s remaining functioning parts too soon, causing the system to collapse before their program is complete, thereby making further “progress” impossible.

Any one of the above elements would appear to be unprecedented; just a few of them in combination surely are. All of them together?

How, therefore, can anyone be confident that he “knows” what is going to happen—whether imminent collapse, drawn-out decline, or centuries of tyranny?

The end?

If forced to bet, I would have to place my chips somewhere between imminent collapse and drawn-out decline. I occasionally read theories of triple bank-shots and four-dimensional chess—they really know what they’re doing!—only to marvel. Our regime cannot, at present, unload a cargo ship, stock a store shelf, run a clean election, handle parental complaints at a school board meeting, pass a budget bill, treat a cold variant, keep order in the streets, defeat a third world country, or even evacuate said country cleanly. And that’s to say nothing of all the things it should be doing, that all non-joke countries do, that it refuses to do. If our ruling class has a plan, it would seem to be to destroy the society and institutions from which they, at present, are the largest—one is tempted to say only—beneficiaries. Do they think they can benefit more from the wreckage? Or are they driven by hatreds that blind them to self-interest? Perhaps they’re simply insane?

Whatever the case, couple all this unprecedentedness with all this incompetence, and going long on Wokemerica seems a sucker bet. But, to end where we began, the very unprecedentedness of our situation means that all bets are off.

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