

Thoughts on Coming Apart and the Coming Great Reset



**Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer**

Kit Webster

**The Rubicon Has Been Crossed And I Have
Strong Mixed Reactions**

January 24, 2025

Themes and Theses - Why I'm Contemplating Out Loud

(Initially formulated in the early 90s, following decades of reading history, philosophy, psychology and a lot of contemplation, particularly on the subject of cycles. In the end, this is a relatively straightforward story about human nature and of history rhyming.)

The US will enter a period of crisis in the early 2000s. In the late 90s, I incorporated Strauss' and Howe's terminology of the Fourth Turning (without incorporating their generations paradigm) and agreed with Howe that the end stage of the crisis began with the Great Financial Crisis and would last into the early 2030s. We are not yet to the middle of the end stage of the crisis.

The crisis will be serious and could be existential.

Internal strife will increase, up to and including secession and civil war.

International conflicts will increase as the vacuum created by the weakening of the US is filled by other players.

There will be many threads to the crisis, but the primary thread will be debt, deficits and entitlements. Other factors include, eg, demographics, a loss of meaning and myth and a loss of self-discipline.

Politics will move leftward as citizens look for some refuge from the chaos. The US will become increasingly susceptible to a (man) on a white horse, who can come from either the left or the right.

Inflation, as the most likely way to address debt since austerity is not politically acceptable, will significantly lower standards of living, exacerbating the civil crises.

Eventually, the dollar will be inflated away and lose its reserve status.

Once the old rot is cleared out, and assuming continuity, there will be the basis for the establishment of a new order.

(Added around 2020) The loss of faith by our youth in our founding principles means that the new order will at least partially be based on new principles. As yet, I have no visibility as to what those principles might be.

(Added in the early 00s) While humans are contributing to global warming, policies implemented to address manmade global warming will create a significant energy crisis, probably toward the end of the Fourth Turning.

(Added in 2023) The lowering / elimination of standards in education, the judiciary, law enforcement, the military and other segments of our society will create a population unable to adequately comprehend, do or respond to the challenges of democracy and culture.

Quotes to Contemplate

That no free government or the blessings of liberty, can be preserved to any people but by a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality, and virtue and by frequent recurrence to fundamental principles. - State of Virginia Declaration of Rights

> Primary Ideas in This Week's Post

I am both exhilarated and appalled by the recent actions of Biden and Trump. They are moving the country into very dangerous and unstable territory. Much to cover on Biden's extraordinary behavior going out and Trump's extraordinary behavior coming in. However, this feels like a key moment in history.

The Rubicon Has Been Crossed And I Have Strong, Mixed Reactions

On January 10, 49 BCE, Julius Caesar (as he was to become known) crossed the Rubicon River on his way back to Rome from his triumph in Gaul (basically France). By law, armies were not to be led into Italy (actually, governors had to be invited back to Rome, but the point was for them to not be leading armies), and Caesar's actions indicated that he intended to change the Roman Republic. As it turns out, for all intents and purposes, the Roman Republic ended that day. Since that time, "crossing the Rubicon" has come to indicate crossing a line, when, once it is crossed, you can never go back - the coming of a significant, irreversible change - a point of no return. For what it's worth, Rome's apogee would come some hundreds of years later under emperors, with the Republic only a faint memory.

I have lived long enough to know that one can get carried away in the emotions of the moment. Actually, that's what people do - they ascribe tremendous importance to the present, when life is usually just "one damned thing after another." A football game, a hurricane, an atrocity, a political event. One needs perspective in order to comprehend a major event. Historians evaluating Biden's, Obama's, Trump's first, or even Clinton's presidency are simply engaging in misleading malpractice. Think about all the major milestones you have witnessed that are no longer a part of conversation, much less included in history books.

Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon seems like an obviously really big deal, but that is only in hindsight. History is replete with this general or that duke rebelling against

something or another to no real effect to the point that they are often barely footnotes. It is replete with this group or another rising up in rebellion against real or imagined affronts. And then, even if they succeed, often nothing interesting results.

That's where we are. We have crossed the Rubicon. This looks really big, but 100 years from now, will Trump be perceived as a Howard Taft or Martin Van Buren? Will the 2028 election be so momentous that it relegates Trump to a footnote? (I actually think there is a reasonable chance of that.)

With that understood, I think we are crossing a major Rubicon, not because Trump is a great man, but because his election marks a reflection of the social mode and resistance against the decline and decay of the US. He embodies trends and forces much larger than himself. We will see whether he, on the whole, rises to the occasion or fails.

Please understand when reading these comments that I did not vote for Trump and I do not like him as a person (his public persona - I do not know the man). Having said that, one of my "laws" is that every person and act incorporates both the good and the bad. It is important to understand both aspects, and I would like to summarize my view of each side of the discussion. I will start off by saying that he is self-serving and corrupt; he has authoritarian tendencies; and that he is doing many things that simply must be done.

But, we are crossing Rubicons, here - for better and for worse.

Let's start with the bad.

Democracies are messy. We are in a period of democratic dysfunction in which Congress has basically abdicated its responsibilities. The country is devolving socially into a state of all-against-all. Our fiscal house is an abomination. We are clearly heading in a very wrong direction.

In times like these, forces of both reform and destruction rise up to either correct the current trend or to embody a different view of the way society should be organized. One tendency is for someone to stand up in the middle of the mess and yell, "Cut This Shit Out; Stop It Right Now." That's the authoritarian way. That is not the democratic way. That is hundreds of executive orders. But, sometimes the Gordian knot must be cut; sometimes Captain Kirk must invoke the Kobayashi maru. Sometimes Lincoln suspends habeas corpus; sometimes FDR closes all the banks; sometimes Nixon takes the US off the gold standard. It is not clear that we are at that point, but we are behaving as if we are.

Trump is reversing Biden's policies, wholesale. Now, Biden is guilty of governing-by-executive-order and some of his actions as he went out the door were highly questionable. But that is not justification for authoritarian actions, and continuing rule by executive order and the continuing extraordinary use of pardons. I think that January 6 was a complex event that is described by a simplistic narrative. IMO, many of the prosecutions were unjust, but there were violent actions. One can debate the

appropriateness of many of the pardons, but Trump's commuting and pardoning the violent actors and those clearly trying to overthrow the government were out of line. We are a country of laws. Trump's not enforcing the shutdown of TikTok could not be a more blatant ignoring of his role and duties as president. Congress had passed the law with bipartisan support. The Supreme Court had validated it. It is Trump's duty, job and obligation to enforce it and he did not. Really, really bad. If this is not a one-off, it could be a Rubicon in and of itself. Basically, an unconstrained president. And to go to the heart of his character, he launched a crypto coin the day before the inauguration that serves no purpose other than to enrich him and some of his supporters. Makes some of his predecessors look like small-time grifters. Just fundamentally corrupt.

Despicable presidents have, in the past, done some good things. Andrew Jackson, Woodrow Wilson and LBJ come to mind. Let's look at what I think Trump's "good" deeds have been so far, remembering that I think ruling by executive order is fundamentally wrong in the first place. But, if you are going to cut Gordian knots, which ones are worth cutting?

Birthright citizenship. I would not have started this fight because all legal precedent is against it. However, birthright citizenship is a major motivating force behind illegal immigration and doing away with it would be imo a good thing.

Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate change. Another nothingburger on its surface - the agreement was never implementable and always symbolic, and the US Senate never ratified it. However, symbolism is important and Trump is making a statement. Climate change is off his agenda list, as it must be to support many of his energy initiatives. So, is the whole Trump energy movement good or bad? I think manmade climate change is real. I also think that almost all of the things we are doing are kabuki and are not making a difference - I don't think - I know. So, we are fiddling while Rome burns because support for real action against climate change - you know, the kind that actually significantly negatively impacts your standard of living - is very thin and probably not realistic any time soon. The practical alternatives are having fun or running around cutting ourselves to no avail. My vote is for firm, coherent action, but that is not on the table. While I cannot in good conscience condone a, what the hell, attitude, I understand it and it will sell very well.

Speaking of running around and cutting ourselves, the DEI thing is very problematic. Three things are true: we need to respect our fellow humans, identity politics is corrosive and DEI is a continual-picking-at-the-scab. Dumbing down our country by patronizing blacks is the ultimate destructive wound. This is a fundamental, potentially unresolvable problem, but we are on the wrong track. Throwing the DEI baby out with the bathwater is probably not a good idea, but may be the basis for a reset that can lead to a more constructive approach.

Immigration - gotta change. Biden's approach during the early years of his administration was simply destructive. Again, Trump is probably overdoing it, but my hope is that it leads to a reset and review of the system.

Deportation - Deporting criminals seems like a no-brainer. Deporting illegals, by definition, is a reasonable response. However, our approach to illegals has been so dysfunctional for so long that many have established lives here and are contributing to our country. Strictly speaking, they should be deported. Practically, they cannot and will not be. Again, I am hoping that Trump's cutting this knot will lead, finally, to reasonable discussion of the subject.

Tariffs - stupid in and of themselves - good negotiating currency.

Withdrawing from the WHO - I have been a strong critic of the WHO since the pandemic. They need reform. This is a good way to draw attention to that.

Federal hiring freeze - good symbolism.

Federal workers have to come in to work - very good. Productivity ridiculously low in the best of times.

Two sexes - male and female - another intractable problem that we were running around cutting ourselves over. Maybe this stops the running around and cutting, lowers the temperature, and allows consideration of particular instances and challenges.

There are several more - some ok, some chicken shit, that don't matter. I really liked the revocation of the security clearances of those who said Hunter's laptop was a Russian plot. I shouldn't like it so much, but it's good to see some pushback to some of the more egregious behaviors of our federal law agencies.

Bottom line - we have a long way to go. Our system will be severely tested by Trump. Significant forces will rise up in opposition to him. He will not fix our fiscal problems and with an almost certainty will make them worse, which I think is existential. But maybe his ham-handed, sweep-the-pieces-off-the-table approach is what we need to provide some space for some constructive conversation.

I am skeptical, but that is my hope.

There is a Ben Hunt column on this subject at the bottom of this post. He is not optimistic.

Following is from the *Economist*:

Maybe you are in the habit of applying a hefty discount to claims by Donald Trump; no one could blame you. But he really does have the chance to lead America into the golden age he proclaimed in his second inaugural address. Historic circumstances, political dynamics and his own audacity could also enable him to achieve the legacy he wants as “a peacemaker and a unifier”. His party has fallen into lockstep; his adversaries at home are confounded and enervated, and America’s opponents abroad are preoccupied with their own

troubles. Mr Trump has battled for ten years against anyone he perceived to have crossed him. His most formidable adversary still standing is probably himself. From their pens to god's ears.

Ian Bremmer:

Over time, this structural uncertainty and policy volatility – combined with the cronyism and pay-for-play that will flourish during Trump's transactional presidency – risks eroding the foundations that have made America the world's premier economy.

The *Free Press*:

I'm calling it now: We're about to enter an era of scams previously unimaginable. Scams that will surprise and delight. Scams with little side scams attached. America has entered her shameless corruption era, and my bet is that Trump's enthusiasm on this front will touch us all.

Markets

[Updated Charts](#)

- > No change in outlook. In all likelihood, the dollar has peaked, as have oil and long-term rates.
- > Luke Gromen makes a lot of good points. One of them is that Russia, a country with 1/10 the GDP of the US, is out-manufacturing the entire West when it comes to providing weapons for fighting in Ukraine. The overstated but important point is that their GDP consists of manufacturing capability and ours consists of financial stuff, Google and Facebook.
- > Trump's term will likely begin with a market downturn that could be significant. He should, however, experience a nice rally, later.

So, You Say You Want A Revolution?

- > Jonah Goldberg also captured it well - "Biden is leaving office dropping one lawless, norm-defying, justly impeachable un-democratic transgression after another. That'd be bad enough. But these are all precedents for the successor he thinks is a threat to democracy. It's reckless, spiteful, and incandescently stupid."
- > Biden is out the door and on his way out declared that the Equal Rights Amendment had passed, even though it very clearly had not and will never - its time for ratification ran out in 1982. And, further to my comments last week on Yellen, the US hit the debt ceiling the day after Trump came in. And, I'm with Ben Hunt on this one -

"Wait. The incoming President doesn't like a law that was duly passed and 9-0 okayed by Sup Ct and so the outgoing President says lemme do you a solid and so the law just doesn't happen? ... Hahahahaha! We are so fucked."

> And, he did it - preemptive pardons, including to Milley, Fauci and Cheney. We are so fucked. Just a horrendous precedent. Most countries only have the honor of arbitrary rule by one (man). We have had the privilege for the past few weeks of having two (men). Biden was motivated by the wildly inappropriate, threatened vengeance of the Trump team, so we have extraordinarily bad ideas compounding.

> Then, he pardoned his family - wonder what that was all about. He pardoned James B. Biden, his brother; Sara Jones Biden, James's wife; Valerie Biden Owens, Mr. Biden's sister; John T. Owens, Ms. Owens's husband; and Francis W. Biden, Mr. Biden's brother. There is much discussion about how members of his family received portions of the payments from foreign governments, and they are routinely referred to as a "crime family." These pardons make me wonder. Hope the book comes out soon.

> Mark this down on your calendars. I am giving good odds that Trump pardons himself as he walks out the door.

> You probably know about Trump's merch - that's pretty much normal these days. However, he just launched a meme coin, the Trump last Friday. It is not clear how much of it Trump owns, but the price has skyrocketed. As I write this, the market cap is \$8 billion. It's good, for now, to be king. Not good in the corruption - reaping personal rewards department. My rule that humans take all trends to their extremes is playing out in spades. Personal gain by Obama and Pelosi is trumped by Trump. We are so fucked. From *The Free Press* -

Trump's crypto meme coin took a 36 percent dive following the launch of his wife's meme coin, \$MELANIA, on Sunday. In a nod to his crypto-loving supporters, the incoming president announced his meme coin on Friday in a Truth Social post celebrating his election win. Despite his wife's token stealing the spotlight, Trump's coin \$TRUMP is still up 7,000 percent from its debut. Indeed, it appears that Trump's coin may never surrender as it continues to sell for around \$47, while \$MELANIA costs a meager \$13.

> I'm afraid Trump is going to turn up the Biden technique of issuing questionable executive orders and letting the courts sort it out to 11. Congress, on a bipartisan basis, 352-65 in the House and 79-18 in the Senate, said TikTok must be gone by January 19 if not sold to a non-Chinese owner and the Supreme Court upheld the law. So, based on no authority whatsoever, Trump issued an executive order delaying the shutdown by 90 days. The CEO of TikTok attended Trump's inauguration.

> In the theme of taking trends to an extreme, Trump issued -- executive orders. We are so fucked. Here's a list:

Immigration - Declares national emergency at the southern border •Remain in Mexico is back •Sending troops at the southern border •Cartels are now considered foreign terrorist organizations

Birthright citizenship - moved to end (this will almost certainly never work)

Tariffs - federal agencies are to investigate previous trade deals and also determine whether additional tariffs were warranted - he did not impose any tariffs. He did say that 25% tariffs on Canada and Mexico were coming, and a 10% (!) tariff on China.

Paris Agreement - Trump withdrew the US. Separately, directed a review of the Biden administration's finding that greenhouse gasses are an endangerment.

Energy - declared a national emergency and eased regulations on oil and gas production - attempt to reverse Biden's ban on offshore drilling. Began repeal of tailpipe emissions rules. Roll back energy-efficiency regulations for dishwashers, shower heads and gas stoves. Open the Alaska wilderness. Restart reviews for new LNG terminals. Halt leasing of federal waters for offshore wind farms. Eliminate environmental justice programs.

TikTok - delayed enforcement of ban for at least 75 days.

Investment of \$500 billion in AI infrastructure.

"Putting People Over Fish" to start moving more water from Northern California to Southern California.

So, we get to the movie, *Chinatown*, about how LA got its water from the north in the first place. LA basically shouldn't exist and much money and many lives were spent in bringing it into existence. Now, the whole structure is being challenged by environmentalists, creating new distortions. Trump will challenge the environmentalists at every tiny smelt and blind spider. This pendulum is starting in a new direction, also - toward development and away from the preservation of obscure species. Many court challenges loom.

Remote work for federal employees ended.

Federal hiring frozen, with exceptions, such as the military. He specifically mentioned freezing the hiring of IRS agents.

World Health Organization - withdrew.

January 6 - pardoned or commuted everyone. Ended ongoing investigations.

New existing regulations put on hold pending review.

Review investigative actions of Biden administration "to correct ... the weaponization of law enforcement and the weaponization of the intelligence community."

Granted top secret security status to White House staff without the usual vetting.

DEI - terminated all programs across the federal government.

Gender - recognize two sexes - male and female; removed protections for transgenders in federal prisons, which means trans are placed into the prison with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Rename Mount Denali and the Gulf of Mexico.

Implement DOGE.

Revoked the security clearances for 51 signers of a letter suggesting that the contents of Hunter Biden's laptop could be Russian disinformation.

Free speech - says that the government will not abridge it.

Revoked Biden's order regarding AI safety.

More to come.

> Now we wait to see if the secrets are actually revealed - JFK, drones, the Epstein list, who ordered Epstein's death, the P Diddy list, the actual effects of the Covid vaccinations. Are we really going to clean out the Aegean Stables? Perhaps the threat of radical transparency was part of the motivation for the Biden pardons of friends and family.

> In other news, Houthis said that American and British ships could safely pass through the Red Sea.

> Speaking of inaugurations, this one was the first to be attended by foreign leaders, including China's Vice President Han Zheng, Argentine President Javier Milei, and Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni.

> Rumor is that team Trump, particularly Elon, did not find Vivek all that helpful - actually irritating - so now he is off to run for governor of Ohio.

> Interesting

Supreme Court Decision:

- **Case Citation:** 236 U.S. 79 (1915)
- **Majority Opinion:** Written by Justice Joseph McKenna.

Key Points:

- **Acceptance of Pardon:** The Court held that a pardon, while an act of grace, is not effective unless accepted by the person pardoned. **Acceptance of a pardon implies an acknowledgment of guilt.**

> Federal Reserve withdraws from global regulatory climate change group

> The Musk Nazi salute thing is somewhere between silly, stupid and brain dead. People insist in magnifying minutia all out of proportion.

> Trump is sending around 1,500, perhaps as many as 10,000, troops to the Mexico border.

> This is where he can cause real damage - Trump says he will "demand that interest rates drop immediately."

> He ordered that disclosures be made on the deaths of JFK, RFK and Martin Luther King, Jr. He sent the pen he used to sign the order to RFK, Jr.

> Flying any flags other than the American flag at US embassies is banned (primarily directed at LGBTQ and BLM flags).

Short Takes

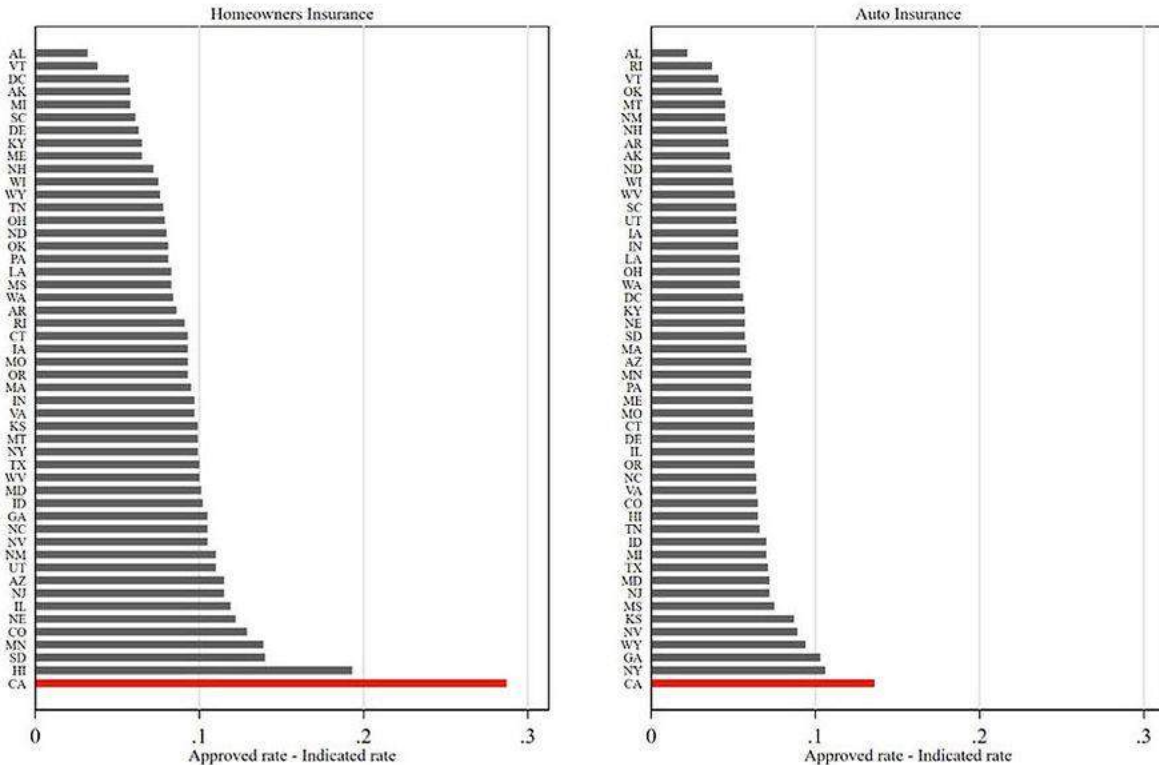
- > A federal appeals court Friday upheld a lower court ruling that found protections for so-called Dreamers to be unlawful, suspending the program in Texas while otherwise limiting its ruling in the event of an appeal.
- > The ruling upholds a lower court ruling that found Biden administration efforts to codify the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program violated immigration law. (This whole thing started with an Obama unconstitutional executive order. These things can live for a long time.)
- > White supremacy in action (and a metaphor)

3M fosters curiosity and learning through the Young Scientist Challenge



- > I talked about our coming insurance crisis caused by regulatory rate suppression by the states and being exposed by the Los Angeles fires. Following is a graph showing the difference between an actuarially-sound rate and the actual rate charged by state. This is the reality check that is now upon us. California, of course, leads the way, but all states are and have been playing politics with insurance rates.

FIGURE V: Regulatory Rate Suppression by State, 2018-2022



Grep Io of the *Wall Street Journal* basically summarized my previous comments - Earlier this month, JPMorgan estimated the fires around Los Angeles had inflicted \$50 billion in losses, of which only \$20 billion were insured. One reason for the gap: State regulators have prevented insurers from charging premiums commensurate with rising property values, construction costs and wildfire risk exacerbated by a warming climate. Many thus stopped renewing policies. Hundreds of thousands of homeowners shifted to California's state-run backstop, the Fair Plan, whose exposure has tripled since 2020 to \$458 billion. It has only \$2.5 billion in reinsurance and \$200 million in cash. If the Fair Plan runs out of money, it can impose an assessment on private insurers to be partly passed on to all policyholders. In other words, the costs of the disaster will be socialized.

> There is no such thing as a free lunch. The world extensively uses and depends on fertilizers in order to feed billions of humans. Then, there's this - Using high levels of common fertilisers on grassland halves pollinator numbers and drastically reduces the number of flowers, research from the world's longest-running ecological experiment has found. Increasing the amount of nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus doused on agricultural grassland reduced flower numbers fivefold and halved the number

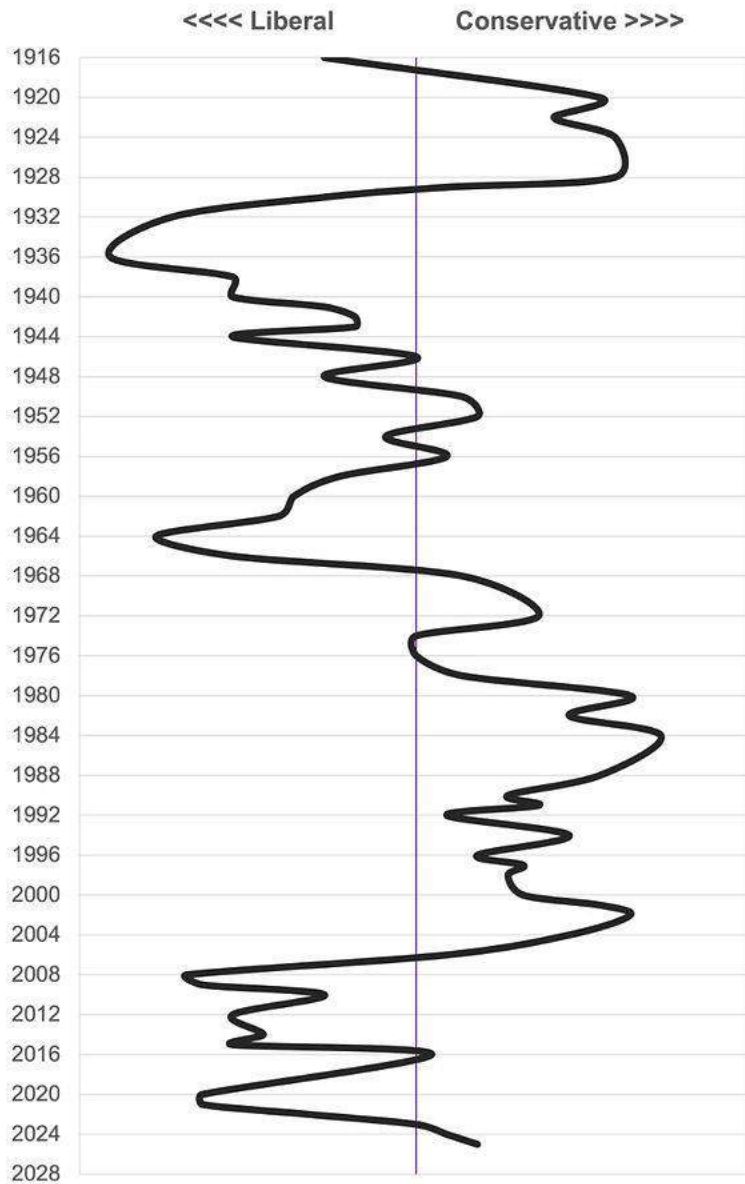
of pollinating insects, according to the paper by the University of Sussex and Rothamsted Research.

Bees were most affected – there were over nine times more of them in chemical-free plots compared with those with the highest levels of fertiliser, according to the paper, published in the journal npj Biodiversity.

> Pills now account for about two-thirds of abortions.

A French woman has won a ruling from Europe’s top human rights court, with a panel of seven judges unanimously saying she should not have been blamed in her divorce for not having sex with her husband.

> Can you say, pendulum? Nate Silver put this together - national mood.



Where Did All The UFOs (UAPs, Drones) Go?

Miscellany

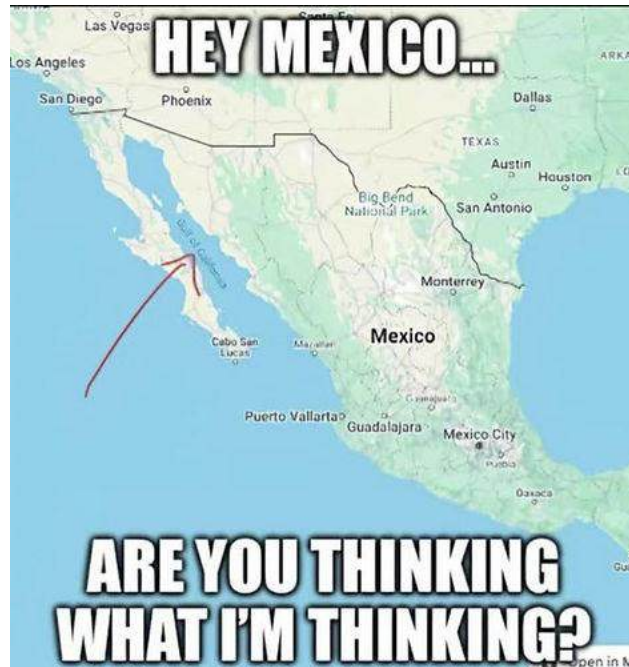
Nice!

Mark Antony and Octavian



Is it just me, or does no one disappear in the Bermuda Triangle anymore?

Difficult to read, but that's the Gulf of California.



me: I need a passport so I can go to australia

clerk: have you ever been convicted of a crime?

me: is... is that still necessary

That sounds right

The key to eating healthy? Avoid any food that has a TV commercial.

It is a tribute to our times that competitive fornication is now a thing

 **Daily Loud**  @DailyLoud · Jan 23

Bonnie Blue accuses Lily Phillips of stealing her idea to sleep with over 100 men in a day.



Ben Hunt

Dear subscriber,

This weekend we had the memorial service for my wife's grandmother, who died a few weeks ago. She was a wonderful woman, very much la doña for this Hispanic side of the family, very much more of a mother than a grandmother to my wife, and she was the last of her generation. The get-together of family and friends was a celebration of her life, and it was the kind of party I think we would all want – certainly the kind of party I'd like for myself when the time comes – with tears, sure, but more laughter and shared stories of love than anything else.

For my wife, the loss she experiences most keenly is the loss of her grandmother-the-person and the special bond they had. I feel that, too, but obviously more as a reflection and without the unique closeness. That slightly distanced perspective, however, let me experience a different sort of loss, the loss of her grandmother-the-idea and the unifying force she emanated across all of those family and friends.

Because what hit me hard as we were saying our goodbyes was that I won't see most of these people ever again. It's not that I don't want to see them again – they're nice, loving people and I very much enjoy my time with them – but there's no reason for me to see (or even think about!) most of these people ever again.

I'm sure I'll see some of my wife's close family members again, because there are direct connections of friendship and shared experience that exist alongside the reason for connection that my wife's grandmother provided. But it's harder now. While my wife's grandmother was alive, it took zero effort for my wife to think about her cousin, say, or her uncle, and vice versa. The connections of family and the thinking about family and the news of family and the occasional get-togethers of family were part and parcel of the meaning of her grandmother, and so long as her grandmother was alive, so were those connections of meaning.

It's not that those connections of meaning just vanish with the death of a matriarch or patriarch, but now everyone has to make an intentional effort to keep those connections alive, and that is NOT easy. We get busy. Life gets in the way. Old grievances resurface and strengthen, often under the stress of divvying up (literally disconnecting) money and property. It's nobody's fault and everyone is doing the best they can, but the loss of a family-unifying parent or grandparent isn't just the loss of a physical person, it's also the loss of a family-unifying idea in its natural and organic and effortless form.

It's not just families where we experience the loss of a unifying idea and a shared meaning of community. If you've ever worked for a company that failed, you know exactly what I mean. If you've ever worked for a political campaign that lost, you know exactly what I mean. It's possible to stay connected with your coworkers, with your 'work family', and maybe you will if you put a lot of effort into staying connected. But you probably won't.

I think we had a death in the American family over the past few days, and with it the death of the America-unifying idea.

I think the office of the President of the United States — the personification of the idea that there is a shared meaning in being an American — is now dead. Yes, the Presidency has been sick for many years now. We all know that. But for me at least, and I suspect many others, it threw in the towel for good this week.

What were the last gasps of the Presidency? What were the acts that forced me to come to grips with the fact that there's no coming back from this, that the Presidency I grew up with as the focal point for my patriotism and pride in being an American was dead?

It was Biden's 'pre-emptive' pardons and 'declarations' of Constitutional amendments. It was Trump's 'executive orders' on Tik-Tok and 'issuance' of memecoins. Two parties. Two Presidents. One single oligarchic, self-serving, rules-for-thee-but-not-for-me, Hunger Games death rattle of a 235-year-old institution. It sounds corny, but despite all recent experience I was holding out an inkling of hope that somehow, someday there was a path to reclaim a shared meaning of America, that Presidents would miraculously emerge with a commitment to the common pursuit of the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity, that we could emerge from

this equilibrium of constant defection, defection, defection for private gain over common good, that there was still meaning in an oath of office.

But no. The rot of I-got-mine-Jack is too strong, too far gone throughout ALL of our political institutions and ALL of our political 'leaders'. I am now certain that there is zero hope for the unifying idea of America that I grew up with. And I feel like a fool for ever believing that there was.

Today I know that the meaning of the American Presidency is dead, and like the loss of a beloved family matriarch it's a loss I'll never get over. I know that I have to accept it, but I'll never get over it. And right now I'm still pretty angry at ALL of them. The thing that makes me angriest of all is that the only rational course of action for me as an American in the Obama/Trump era is to defect as well, to avoid the sucker's payoff of giving these self-serving 'leaders' even the benefit of the doubt, much less my loyalty. Nope, it's every American for themselves now. It's the only move we've got.

I know there's a community of meaning out there somewhere, unified by the ideas of an autonomy of mind and a sharing of spirit, and for my children's sake and my children's children's sake — for a future of human hope — I'm gonna find it. But I no longer believe there is a natural, organic and effortless idea of the United States of America that supports that community, and that's a really hard thing for me to say. I used to be a really patriotic guy. I still am, but it's to an America that I don't think exists anymore.

And now I'm wondering if it ever did.

Yours in loss,

Ben