

Dispatches From a Disintegrating Society



By Steven Yates

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"We were living in the future, *now those days are gone.*"
—Shriekback, *"Now Those Days Are Gone"* (*Without Real String or Fish*, 2015)

"One person's craziness is another person's reality." —Tim Burton

If I can believe my newsfeeds, civility in the U.S. is disintegrating. Some of it is political; some isn't. What it suggests is a society cracking up, one person at a time.

"You can't be naked in here!"

A couple of weeks ago, I saw a report of a guy who didn't appear to realize, he couldn't strip naked in a crowded theater where *Barbie* was playing. Supposedly this was at the Regal Cinema in downtown Denver.

"Dude, you can't be naked in here!" he was told by security, accompanied by shouts from onlookers saying things like, *"Get that perv outta here, I'm with my kids!"* Supposedly he was forcibly dressed and forced to leave, all the while acting confused about what he'd done wrong.

Alas, I couldn't find the report again, so I can't confirm it. But it's no worse than a lot of things easily verified, so it's not crazy to think it *might* have happened.

Theater owners agree, after all, that behavior in their establishments has deteriorated. We hear of people talking loudly on their phones while the movie is playing, partying with friends, being intoxicated, taking videos to upload to TikTok, etc.

It's not just theaters. "Bad behavior" is now epidemic. Seemingly ordinary folks are flipping out over little things, e.g., on airplanes. If it's a woman, she becomes the "Karen of the week" on social media. A *Karen*, in cultural Marxist lingo, is an "entitled white woman." It's conceivable, she [might have been struggling with some invisible personal issue](#), reached a tipping point, and now has to deal with the instant infamy of being uploaded to a dozen platforms where virality makes money for Big Tech at the expense of people's wellbeing and sometimes personal safety. That said, I've lost count of the number of claims of flight attendants having to deal with out-of-control passengers, flights diverted, etc.

Similar things are happening in restaurants. Servers report having food thrown at them, or worse. Franchise owners complain bitterly of being chronically short-staffed. I wonder why! Talk about a hostile work environment! Not to mention absurdly low pay! Were I a twenty something right now I wouldn't do it. It's not worth it.

We see unacceptable behavior at concerts, where musicians are complaining of having objects thrown at them. A pop singer named Bebe Rexha doing a show in Manhattan reported being struck in the face with a cellphone thrown by a 27-year-old male who, when arrested, called what he'd done "funny." [Performers are complaining bitterly about this dangerous trend.](#)

I've also lost count (long ago!) of road rage reports, some ending in assaults or fatal shootings. My wife and I witnessed two minor league incidents when we visited Miami-Dade Co. just over a year ago. Picture two strangers, both male, blocking

lanes, shouting at each other, traffic moving cautiously around them. The two of us, on the sidewalk, wondering if we should drop to the ground, just in case one or both of these nutcases pulls out a gun and starts shooting wildly.

Unprovoked assaults have become commonplace, especially in and around cities. Whether leftists like to admit it or not, the assailants are usually black and usually in groups. They've cornered a lone white male (sometimes it's a lone white female). Black-on-white violent crime has always been *much* higher than white-on-black violent crime, rarely reported because it doesn't fit the official narrative. Statistically, black-on-black violent crime surpasses both put together.

Countless stores, finally, also in big cities, have experienced "flash mobs": dozens of black teenagers enter, help themselves to merchandise, then flee past helpless clerks and even security personnel. The latter don't dare use firearms if they have them, both because they *know* they would be quickly overwhelmed by the mob, and even if they get out in one piece, *they* will be the ones accused of racism and brought up on "hate crime" charges.

Again, jobs in such places are going unfilled. But why would anyone in his right mind work in such an environment?

End Times: Elites, Counter-Elites, and the Path of Political Disintegration.

Although the bulk of its focus is on recent history and geopolitics, Peter Turchin's [just published book](#) (that's the title) may shed light on some of this. You might not agree with everything he says (I don't), but Turchin's ideas merit a place at the table.

He's another cycles-of-civilization theorist, and [cliodynamics](#), the political-philosophical paradigm he is working within, seems worth knowing about. I wonder if such thinkers seeming to come out of the walls is yet another sign

of civilizational decline. The first two I encountered were William Strauss and Neil Howe, whose [*The Fourth Turning*](#) appeared back in 1997 and predicted the crisis era we've since entered.

When societies are healthy, do its scholars ponder such things? Do they need to?

What Turchin sees when he looks at America: *first*, a past order in which we achieved a level of stability – political, economic, and for a time, cultural – followed by a slow unraveling caused more by structural factors as anything done by individual political actors. Economic stability began in the late 1940s and continued until around the mid 1970s. A rising tide indeed lifted all boats, or it was sincerely desired that it do so. Well-intentioned movements urged equal pay for women and nondiscrimination against blacks, so that their prospects would improve through their own efforts which is always the ideal.

Then, intertwining forces began to intrude. First, the number of well-educated, independent-minded, and ambitious people began to grow: *elite-aspirants*, Turchin calls them (using the term *elite* in a broader sense than I do, but never mind that here). The number of elite-aspirants soon exceeded the number of jobs able to make use of their skills. These either stayed the same or shrank (as in academia). Competition for those jobs grew increasingly fierce, and some were bound to lose out. Some competitors began to break the rules to get ahead. This always presages unraveling.

Meanwhile, even those trying to adhere to the rules grow resentful and increasingly angry. Their mindset worsens if they get the sense that the winners cheated, working the system instead of working to *earn* a place in it.

From the latter eventually came early-adopters of emerging *counter-elites*, Turchin calls them. Trump is a counter-elite

in politics. Steve Bannon and Tucker Carlson are media counter-elites. To be a counter-elite, no less than an elite, you have to have money – and very good networking skills. Trump was and is a billionaire. Neither Bannon nor Carlson are hurting financially. All three excel at gaining and keeping attention in what has become an attention economy.

Another factor worsening the mindset of the have-nots is what Turchin calls *public immiseration*. What is this, and how does it come about?

By the end of the 1960s, the federal government was expanding by leaps and bounds. Civil rights, voting rights, environmental causes, etc., were creating new bureaucracies, all of which had to be paid for somehow.

By 1971, Nixon had a choice. He could call the biggest tax increase in U.S. history, which would have gotten him hated more than Watergate did.

Or he could take the radical step of “closing the gold window” and allowing the Federal Reserve / U.S. Treasury Dept. complex to create money out of nothing.

As we know, he chose the second. The national debt has since gone from the \$475 billion when he left office to its present \$32.6 *trillion*.

Money printing destroys a currency’s purchasing power. Thus waves of inflation. Some inflation was hidden. A lot of newly created money went to the Wall Street investment class. A system of welfare-statism in reverse, I’ve elsewhere called it, began to develop: redistribution of wealth upwards.

Turchin’s term for this is a *money pump*.

It explains the meteoric rise of the Dow and Nasdaq, especially in the 1990s.

If the elites cheated, this system was one of their primary

instruments.

Its effects are felt as a cost of living that soon rises faster than wages. People are immiserated when their lives become a worsening scramble to pay the bills, and when neither political party seems able to do anything about it. For the system comes to depend on easy credit. Eventually this alone becomes a source of instability. It crashed in 2000, and crashed harder in 2008. Some believe an even bigger crash is coming.

Add to this mix “free trade” agreements such as NAFTA, GATT II, etc., which decimated our manufacturing base while enabling corporations to get richer. As conventional economists were describing this at the time, manufacturing was replaced by services. The former paid reasonably well. The latter did not.

The result: an increasing percentage of this population, many already stymied in their searches for occupations of their choosing, having a progressively harder time keeping a roof over their heads. Complaints are legion of people being forced to choose between paying the electric bill and paying the mortgage.

Credit card debt escalated.

Life, for an ever-increasing percentage of the population, became a scramble of the cash-strapped, with many trapped in jobs (sometimes more than one) they despised.

This is public immiseration, and it is capable of provoking chronic stress. Some people manage stress reasonably well, although eventually doing so damages one's health.

Others flip out and become the “Karen of the week.” Or the next road rage casualty.

I've left out things like skyrocketing tuition for the college

degree the “experts” all say you need to get ahead, despite arguably diminished quality: universities went corporate while their faculties went woke. The former looked to beautify their campuses, put in health clubs, and hire legions of “administrators,” i.e., more bureaucrats to oversee it all, including “diversity, equity, and inclusion” bureaucrats (no straight white men need apply!).

Student loan debt has risen to over \$1.5 trillion, another drag on people’s lives and source of chronic stress.

Financial elites reap the windfalls of all this debt, of course, and this aggravates what Turchin describes as another obvious destabilizing feature: massive inequality, with the haves openly flaunting their status.

Summing: Turchin sees two factors which destabilize societies: increasing numbers of frustrated elite-aspirants whose faith in the system is slowly eroded, and public immiseration, caused when the cost of living escalates past the ability of large segments of the public to cover it. Both find themselves losing ground – sometimes a *lot* of ground. Legions of those unable to pay escalating rent ended up homeless!

I have yet to hear university wokesters set aside their obsession with “transgenders” long enough to recognize the homelessness epidemic in every major city in the U.S.

I think there’s a third factor, one a lot of us (myself included, at times) have experienced: *atomization*.

The 1950s and 1960s were the heyday of the nuclear family. One breadwinner (usually Dad) could feed a family of four. Families were stable. Divorce was frowned upon, and the divorce rate was relatively low.

Blacks may have faced racial discrimination and prejudice, but their families tended to stay together.

Both radical feminism and the rising cost of living gradually tore the nuclear family apart. The first sought to discredit and demonize men (think of terms like *mansplaining* and *toxic masculinity*). The second, as we've already seen, made it ever harder, and finally impossible, for a single breadwinner with a modest salary to support his family. His wife had to work whether she wanted to or not.

Economics as much as ideology drove women into the career smorgasbord.

No-fault divorce had appeared. The divorce rate increased, sometimes because *she* realized she didn't need *him*. And because the two-parent family was losing ground culturally. Stigmas disappeared.

We began to hear of single-parent homes and latch-key children.

The former grew into increasingly atomized adults. As families deteriorated and the incentive to marry declined (destructive family court policies contributed to this), the population of single never-married and single-and-divorced adults multiplied. It continues to grow to this day.

Oftentimes the atomized male finds himself ridiculed and humiliated as an *incel* (short for *involuntarily celibate* – although many, seeing what was available, may have *chosen* celibacy). I think of that pre-French Revolution line used by elites, *let them eat cake*.

And we wonder why a tiny percentage of these guys pick up weapons and become mass shooters. Another means of flipping out.

Atomized females are not ridiculed but not meeting with better fates or mindsets. They might not pick up weapons but experience eating disorders, addictions to Big Pharma's drugs, etc.

Substance abuse and self-destructive behaviors are increasingly common in both sexes. Suicide rates have risen, along with what Turchin among others call “deaths of despair.”

We are not wired psychologically to be totally on our own, alone, friendless. In many respects, we are tribal beings. We *need* groups, both for companionship with like-minded others, to find suitable mates, and to connect with associates with whom we can divide our labors, able to help us if we need help and allowing us opportunities to help them when they need it.

I think this is why solitary confinement is often so psychologically devastating, probably the worst form of punishment industrial civilization has devised. It is less torturous physically than, say, the rack, but its damage isn't visible. I'm sympathetic to those who would end solitary confinement as a form of “cruel and unusual punishment” unless there is a very good reason for keeping a prisoner isolated (e.g., personal safety considerations).

Perhaps Turchin's book helps us see why, collectively, America is descending into crazy, one person at a time. Millions have been frustrated in their career aspirations, just told to “reinvent themselves.” Already under-employed, they are then immiserated as the cost of living skyrockets, their money having lost most of its purchasing power, while their salaries stayed the same or diminished through coerced career changes. And they've been atomized: populations of isolated singles having exploded over the past few decades – atomization having been made even worse by the plandemic which left millions of people with a sense of having even less control over their lives.

“What Happens When an Irresistible Force Meets an Immovable Object?”

The immiserated naturally turn to someone whose very presence suggests a way out: a loud and brash counter-elite who tells

them, “I can fix this!”

We’ll doubtless see hundreds of analyses of the period in U.S. history that began in 2015 when Donald Trump descended the infamous escalator. Most, sadly, will be written from an elite point of view, make no attempt whatsoever to understand the immiserated perspective which empowers counter-elites, and so consist of worthless academic exercises.

It is clear: the elites (using that term now in my original sense of those with visible political power and/or economic prowess) *hate* counter-elites like Trump, as well as generally supportive media mouthpieces such as Tucker Carlson.

I think they fear such people as well. Most elites could never survive in the attention economy without huge, well-moneyed support systems around them, and they know it.

The counter-elites despise the elites just as much, and would replace them at the centers of power if they could. Sometimes they can, at least for a little while. They aren’t “supposed to.” Hillary was supposed to be “our” First Woman President, after all.

Neither one considers the other legitimate.

We’re not really talking about irresistible forces here, merely forces that aren’t going to go away simply because corporate media demonizes them as “threats to democracy.”

Nor are we talking about immovable objects. Empires *do* fall, repeatedly. Governments are transformed beyond recognition.

But you get the idea (I hope).

It’s not just the U.S., moreover. A few days ago I encountered an article about the “[fury of a silent majority driving a global ‘right wing’ counter-revolution](#).” Such articles are bound to provoke extreme anxiety in superelite and elite classes everywhere.

It began with Brexit: the U.K. kicking out the globalist EU. Then came Trump's upset victory. Modi had risen in India, defending traditionally-minded Hindu populations there. Then came Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil. Orbán had won reelection in Hungary. More recently: Giorgia Meloni in Italy.

Now, we have the rising Alternative for Germany (AfD) in the wake of Angela Merkel's disastrous globalism and further harm done by the official (NATO-driven) Ukraine narrative which spans a Europe in increasing trouble. Naturally, Germany's corporate media Establishment is demonizing the party; considerations of [bans](#) are underway, without even a sense of irony when those initiating the bans say they are "protecting democracy."

In Argentina, a leading candidate for the next presidency is described as an "anarcho-capitalist" ready to kick out the leftist Peronistas that have spent the past decades running that country into the ground.

Eventually, a lot of people figure out that the globalist-leftist alliance is not only not their friend, but that everything it touches, it screws up!

Paraguay just elected a "right-winger": Santiago Peña.

Chile veered left in its last election, as did Brazil. The Gabriel Boric presidency is struggling, with an approval rating under 30 percent. If the next election were held today and ultraconservative José Antonio Kast were his opponent, Kast would win. Chilean media predictably demonized Kast, associating him with Pinochet, for whom he'd (unwisely, in my view) expressed admiration.

When people are struggling to feed themselves, though, such things don't matter. Elites don't get this. My prediction is that Chile, too, will turn "right" and put Kast in the presidency if he runs again in the next election.

Brazil? The “Lula-ista” neo-communists are back in power there, but how long will it be before the same corruption that once got Lula tossed in the slammer comes roaring back, and Brazilians return to their senses?

Those are just the cases I’ve thought of while writing this article. I am confident there are others.

Were I a superelite, ensconced in the WEF or just the Asylum on the Potomac, I’d be very worried right now. Were I in the U.S., I’d be doing everything in my power, supporting the sort of lawfare that throws 91 felonies at the opposing party’s leading candidate, however dubious the reasoning behind many of them, to prevent another four years of counter-elitism in charge, able to seriously monkey-wrench the superelite agenda for the world. I would do everything in my power to tie up his finances and tie up his time. He can’t campaign when he’s defending himself in court.

As I’ve observed repeatedly, all the narratives globalists and leftists relied upon – “globalization will make you rich,” “diversity is our strength,” etc. – have collapsed.

No sensible person believes those things anymore, if they ever did!

They have *stayed* collapsed, therefore. They aren’t going to be revived.

When the globalist-alliance can’t get what it wants by either persuasion or subterfuge, it is liable to engage in more drastic action.

Hence the real worry, about which I’ve floated several scenarios: *what will the superelites do to stay in power?* How much damage will they do, some of it to entire populations they regard as the moral equivalent of cattle?

What is clear is that they are doing now is not working. The

GOP base, for example, is not abandoning Trump, because it sees the allegations against him as political. Continue with the lawfare, of course, and some of those 91 felonies might stick. The machinations by servile Democrats may keep Trump out of the White House. They succeed with the official narratives and repetitive language [I've documented](#), e.g., "we're saving democracy."

This will not quell the societal discord and unrest, which is likely to worsen, its manifestations ranging from mere unfocused "bad behavior" caused by the unrelieved stress of living in the world the elites have made, to more organized counter-elite campaigns of opposition. They will not succeed in preventing someone else from standing up and channeling that unrest – possibly someone we haven't seen yet (I'm losing faith it will be Ron DeSantis).

The Establishment doubtless sees itself as an immovable object. It isn't. What is coming – other things being equal – is a force that may not be totally irresistible but will be extremely difficult to put down.

Expect breakage, whatever happens next year (or sooner). Expect a lot of breakage.

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