

A Reckoning Approaches



by Bruce Bawer

How to sum up 2023? Pondering the year gone by, I'm aware of having frequently experienced a sense that America, and to some extent the world, was approaching a day of reckoning – a sense that events on a wide variety of fronts were advancing toward a decisive climax of a yet indeterminate nature. Another way to put this is to say that it was the year in which the enemies of freedom began to practice their perfidy with unprecedented aggressiveness and to purvey their preposterous narrative with a new degree of reckless abandon – even as that perfidy became more transparent to the average American citizen and the narrative seemed to take significant steps toward collapsing.

In 2023, millions of Americans finally recognized that Donald Trump hadn't been lying or exaggerating about the dangers at the southern border, and that only a bigot could believe in

the wisdom of a border wall. The Biden Administration's frequent claims to the contrary, the southern border is wide open and the Department of Homeland Security and other government agencies are helping armies of illegal aliens to enter the U.S. unvetted and, without asking for proof of identity or putting them through ordinarily security procedures, are flying them to cities around the country to be resettled. Many of these illegals are minors, which means that their federal facilitators are, in effect, child traffickers; others are members of Latin American drug cartels who are responsible for America's fentanyl crisis – another horror that the Biden administration, far from addressing responsibly, seems incomprehensibly eager to exacerbate. Still other illegals are members of criminal and terrorist organizations who have found their way to the southern border from all over the Eastern Hemisphere.

The authorities at the Department of Homeland Security – whose very name can now be seen as nothing other than a sick joke – have tried to carry out all this human smuggling in secret, but in 2023 the facts began to be reported a good deal more widely than before. Americans who have been subjected for over two decades to absurd procedures at airports, being forced to discard toothpaste and fingernail clippers before getting on a plane, now know that the same people who ordered them to be put through these paces in the name of national security are violating national security every day in a way that you'd think had been devised by America's most dedicated enemies. As a result, Americans are only beginning to recognize that they've been played for dupes, that their trust in their leaders has been outrageously exploited, and that in the years to come they and their posterity will be paying an unimaginable price for those leaders' traitorous duplicity.

It's now almost two years since Russia invaded Ukraine, an event that almost certainly wouldn't have taken place if Trump had still been president. America and its allies have poured

billions of dollars into Zelensky's pockets and have taken in tremendous numbers of Ukrainian refugees, leaving hardly a corner of the Western world where those refugees haven't strained public services such as housing, schools, and health care. As 2023 wore on, it became increasingly clear to many Americans that the Russian-Ukrainian conflict was not one of pure evil versus pure good. It emerged that opportunities for a brokered peace had been squandered for reasons that remained unclear but smelled nefarious. Increasingly, informed observers acknowledged that aid to Ukraine couldn't continue indefinitely. And it became more and more obvious that, far from humbling Putin, the West's continuing support for Ukraine seemed only to have intensified his saber-rattling and made NATO seem less formidable than in years.

Which brings us to China, whose leaders – taking in our manifest military decline under Biden (as illustrated by the Afghanistan debacle and the flagrant wokeness of our recent armed-forces PR) and mindful as they are of their own substantial financial investment in our beloved head of state – may well decide that our entanglement in Ukraine provides the perfect opportunity for an invasion of Taiwan. On both the Russian and Chinese fronts, indeed, there's a growing awareness among Americans that the world would be a considerably safer and stabler place, and America a stronger actor, with Biden out and Trump back in.

Then there's the Middle East. During his term, Trump brought an unprecedented degree of peace to the region with the Abraham Accords, which were built on the insight that a Palestinian settlement was not necessarily a precondition for an accord between Israel and its Muslim neighbors. On October 7, 2023 – with the White House again under the control of feckless people who hate Israel, sentimentalize the Palestinians, and feel obliged to send "humanitarian aid" to a terrorist government that redirects that money to nefarious ends – Hamas invaded Israel with a brutality that shocked

civilized people around the world. Millions of leftists, including leftist Jews, who previously had championed a two-state solution, had expressed belief in the existence and pervasiveness of a cruel and unfounded form of bigotry known as “Islamophobia,” and had even viewed terrorist groups like Hamas with a degree of sympathy, quickly snapped out of their delusions and recognized the existential danger posed to Western civilization by populations raised on barbaric, seventh-century notions of violent Islamic conquest.

This awakening represents a sea change of historic dimensions – and with potential consequences that at the present moment can only be guessed at. Over the last half century, the steady growth of Islam in Western Europe, and to a lesser extent in North America, has been an increasingly contentious issue. Consistently, leftist elites have defended the Islamization of the West as a virtuous humanitarian project and a source of cultural enrichment; when skeptics have dared to point out the disastrous current consequences and long-term existential menace of mass Islamic immigration, the left has routinely smeared them as hysterical, know-nothing racists. The exact degree to which Western attitudes toward Islam have changed as a result of October 7 has yet to be clearly determined, but the Dutch electorate’s shock and horror over that event seems to have been very largely responsible for the surprisingly impressive victory of Geert Wilders’s Freedom Party in the Dutch elections of November 22.

The Hamas invasion of Israel has had another major consequence. When, in the wake of the invasion, Israel acted to defend itself in the only way that made sense – that is, by crushing Gaza and eliminating Hamas and its war apparatus – Muslims and privileged young left-wingers around the Western world protested *en masse*. The scale of the anti-Semitism revealed by these demonstrations stunned many observers, as did the depth of ignorance about the Middle East on the part of so many supposedly well-educated Western youth. For the

first time, many Western liberals who'd dismissed complaints about far-left ideological brainwashing in schools and colleges as hyperbolic recognized that millions of young people have been convinced by mischievous so-called educators that all whites (including Jews) are oppressors, and hence always in the wrong, whereas all "people of color" (including Arab Muslims) are victims of oppression, and hence always in the right.

The breathtaking comments made by the presidents of Harvard, MIT, and the University of Pennsylvania at that historic House committee hearing on December 5 underscored the magnitude of the current crisis in higher education, and the response to their self-damning testimony by many rich donors suggests that in 2024 major action will be taken to begin to rid our institutions of higher education of the reality-defying ideas about race that, going by the name Critical Race Theory, dominate the humanities and social-sciences faculties. Also on the chopping block should be the hiring policies that are rooted in these ideas about race, and that made it possible for an utter mediocrity like Claudia Gay – who on her merits and accomplishments alone would have been lucky to secure an adjunct teaching job at a bottom-rung community college – to be named president of America's oldest and most respected university. It should be added, of course, that young Americans don't need to wait until they get to college to be exposed to appalling views on race: millions of young minds in primary and secondary schools, for example, are being shaped by the manifold mendacities of Nikole Hannah-Jones's 1619 Project (first introduced in the *New York Times* in 2019) and are being told that, if they're white, they've been white supremacists from birth, or, if they're black, that they're lifelong victims of white racism.

But these twisted teachings that center everything in life on racial identity aren't the only problems afflicting America's schools and universities. It was while their kids were

attending school via Zoom during the COVID lockdown that many American parents first became aware of the takeover of countless schools by teachers and administrators who, in addition to serving up a host of racist and anti-American inanities, were routinely encouraging their young charges to reject their biological identities. In 2021, Rachel Levine, a self-declared trans woman and Navy admiral, no less, was sworn in as the U.S. Assistant Secretary for Health – exposing all of America to the grotesque spectacle of an obviously disturbed individual being given responsibility for the country's psychiatric well-being. And in June 2022, the media reported widely on the appointment of Sam Brinton, a bald young man who wears bright red lipstick and calls himself non-binary, to a high position in the Office of Nuclear Energy. (Later that year, Brinton was fired after being filmed at several airports stealing baggage containing high-end women's apparel.)

Few ordinary Americans believe that a man can literally become a woman or vice-versa, but this ludicrous truth claim has become an orthodoxy throughout almost all of the establishment institutions in the English-speaking world. To challenge it can mean losing one's home and livelihood – and being treated as a moral outcast by local clergy, media, doctors, and politicians. A parent who tries to keep his minor child from being pushed by self-styled experts onto the transgender assembly line – receiving first puberty blockers, then sex hormones, and finally surgery – risks being denied his parental rights in a court of law. In 2023, this madness advanced in many jurisdictions, with several states declaring themselves “sanctuary states” for those wishing to mutilate minors, but the pushback against this madness also intensified, with several states banning “gender-affirming care” for children and more and more parents speaking up against transgender ideology (as well as against Critical Race Theory) at school-board meetings. Also in 2023, an increasing number of detransitioners – people who were subjected to sex-

change “treatments” in their youth only to realize later that they’d been talked into undergoing unnecessarily irreversible surgical voodoo – began to speak up publicly and file lawsuits against their psychologists, endocrinologists, surgeons, and hospitals.

In 2023, more and more Americans came to realize just how much they’d been lied to by the Biden Administration and the mainstream media. An increasing number of voters recognized that Donald Trump had been right about a great many things and that their own highly negative views of him had been shaped not by facts but by leftist propaganda. During his presidency, Trump had faced a breathtakingly comprehensive coordinated effort to use a concocted (albeit ridiculous) tale of Russian collaboration to bring him down; this particular scheme failed, but Trump’s establishment enemies proceeded to impeach him, on the flimsiest of grounds, not once but twice, and then began battering him with lawsuits around the country with the goal of destroying his businesses and denying him another White House run.

It was in 2023 that the full dimensions of this illicit campaign became frighteningly clear: Lilliputians in the state and federal legislatures, in prosecutors’ offices and courthouses, in government and party bureaucracies, in intelligence services, and in the mainstream media had worked together feverishly – and were still working together feverishly – to lash Donald Trump, like Gulliver, to the earth and thereby keep him from regaining the presidency. If it was an all-out effort that at times appeared to take on cartoonish dimensions and that, if properly prosecuted, would land a good many famous and powerful people behind bars, it was worth the risk to the participants because, if Trump were to return to office, they *would* end up behind bars, and their attempt to dismantle our constitutional liberties would go down in flames. In 2023, as the flagrant dishonesty and breathtaking scale of this campaign of destruction became increasingly

clear to ordinary Americans, most of whom never imagined that the three-letter agencies for which they'd always rooted – from the CIA to the FBI – could be so thoroughly corrupted, many of those Americans found themselves prepared, for the first time, to hear out hypotheses about the JFK and RFK assassinations (among other historical events) that had previously been considered conspiracy theories.

What else? It was in 2023 that the “defund the police” movement fell apart, its sheer recklessness proven by skyrocketing crime in cities around the country. It was in 2023 that the “insurrection” lie took a major hit from reality. So did the climate-change hoax. So did the colossally ruinous George Floyd narrative. (As recently as last Wednesday, as if to signal at least the beginning of the end of the BLM delusion, the city of Seattle dismantled the Black Lives Matter garden that had been planted in the wake of Floyd's death.) In 2023, many Americans learned far more than they had ever suspected about the nefarious designs of Bill Gates, George Soros, the World Economic Forum's Klaus Schwab, and other would-be masters of the universe who seek to replace individual liberty with an updated version of feudalism. In 2023, TV and movie projects drenched in woke propaganda brought unprecedented financial losses to the entertainment industry, suggesting that in 2024 Hollywood and Netflix execs will have to break out of their ideological bubble if they want to stay in business.

It was in 2023 – just a week ago, in fact – that the *New York Times*, which in 2020 had undergone extensive institutional convulsions over a relatively commonsensical op-ed by Senator Tom Cotton urging a military response to Antifa and BLM riots, ran an op-ed by the Hamas-appointed mayor of Gaza – a perfect illustration of the fact that our corporate media's determination to censor dissent from its doctrines is rivaled only, perhaps, by its eagerness to proffer propaganda by bloodthirsty, conscienceless enemies of freedom and

decapitators of infants.

It was in 2023 that the heroic Elon Musk's purchase of Twitter and conversion of it into a free-speech platform helped expose the involvement of other Silicon Valley superstars in the establishment plans to undermine our constitutional republic. It was in 2023 that another hero, Tucker Carlson, left the mainstream media to start his own series on X (formerly Twitter), on which he, too, shed light on the blatant lies and wicked schemes by which our progressive betters have sought to steal our country from us. In a time when the legacy media have been almost entirely co-opted by the powers that be, other brave independent-media heroes, such as James O'Keefe, Andy Ngo, and Douglas Murray, have been crucially important truth-tellers. Also, you don't have to want to see Vivek Ramaswamy, instead of Trump, succeed Biden as president to appreciate Ramaswamy's Trump-like readiness to speak hard truths about our tyranny-minded elites – and, in doing so, to take on not just the Democrats but also the swamp-dwelling Republicans.

In the past, many a New Year's Day has seemed like just another opportunity to decouple for a few hours, party to excess, and toast the arrival of the midnight hour. This time around, those of us who are keeping at least remotely abreast of international developments are entering the New Year with an intense awareness that there will be a great many changes in the twelve months ahead. The only question is whether they will involve our further enslavement by our elitist masters or the beginning of our liberation from their globalist, totalitarian clutches.

First published in [FrontPage magazine](#).