

If We're Rome, Who Are the Barbarians That Will End Us?

by Geoffrey Clarfield



The founding fathers did not see themselves as constituting a new version of classical Greece. Instead, they saw themselves as biblically inspired Romans, which is to say modern Republicans.

Paul Meany has written insightfully about how the founding fathers were enamored of the Roman Republic and how, in many ways, collectively and personally, they modeled themselves on the ancient Romans.

The Founders lavished praise upon Roman heroes who defended their government from tyranny in the Republic's turbulent final days[.] ... [M]any 18th century Americans felt an affinity for ancient Rome, there are many parallels between the two societies. Akin to the Republican Romans, 18th-century Americans were mainly rural farmers[.] ... The Romans praised the virtues of independence, patriotism, and moderation, which were also cornerstones of American society[.] ... By anchoring arguments for freedom to ancient precedent, Revolutionary American authors aimed to demonstrate that their arguments were timeless and firmly embedded in history. Historians like Plutarch, Livy, and Tacitus successfully encapsulated in writing the eternal and unavoidable struggle between liberty and power[.] ... Many of the educated American Revolutionaries did more than just read about the Romans as a scholarly pursuit – they actively tried to emulate their behavior and virtues.

The Romans had a word for their moral code. They called it

“Romanitas.” It was most alive during the history of Republican Rome and then became attenuated, as Rome descended into a Western form of oriental despotism, ruled by emperors who were often put in power by military elites.

Polybius, the ancient historian, captures some of the essence of Romanitas in the following, almost humorous paragraph:

The Roman customs and principles regarding the acquisition of wealth are better than those of the Carthaginians. In the view of the latter nothing is disgraceful that makes for gain; with the former nothing is more disgraceful than to receive bribes and to make profit by improper means. For they regard wealth obtained from unlawful transactions to be as much a subject of reproach as a fair profit from reputable sources is of commendation. A proof of the fact is this: the Carthaginians obtain office by open bribery, but among the Romans the penalty is death.

Romans believed in and practiced loyalty to family and clan, respect for the household gods and the gods of the Pantheon, the value of being a citizen, and the obligations of citizens to fight and serve the state with honesty and “gravitas.” After a while, anyone could become a Roman. It was paradoxically a voluntary empire, where even conquered peoples could become fully participating citizens or even emperors, such as Spanish-born Trajan.

Scholars have written quite a lot about Romanitas, as did Romans in past times. Suffice it to say that one can argue that during most of the history of the American Republic, the values of the Constitution, adherence to the Constitution, and selfless leadership at the highest level have, as with the Romans, been the American ideal, even if not always lived up to in practice.

We could reasonably call these civic virtues “Americanitas.” Above all, these ideals are supposed to serve

the interests of the citizens, the legal residents of the Republic, whose representatives serve the people and not themselves, as became the custom of the "senators" under the emperors of the later Roman Empire.

A key American ideal has been that American citizens must fight for America as did Roman citizens during the Republic. Either voluntary soldiers or drafted soldiers are responsible for the defense of the American Republic. The ideal soldier-statesman, and the first president of the Republic, was George Washington, who, alongside his rebel patriots, did not hire German mercenaries to fight the British oppressors, as the British did to fight them. And so it was in America, until quite recently.

It is not widely known that there were more hired "soldiers" in Afghanistan during America's twenty-year sojourn there than there were actual serving soldiers. When Vice President Biden's convoy went astray during his visit to Afghanistan, it was the hired mercenaries of the private security company then called Blackwater Inc. that saved his life after a failed attempt by the American military. So said its founder Eric Prince on National TV, just a couple of weeks ago.

More importantly, it is not widely known that until the 1990s, about 90% of most senior American managers in the private sector, and many in government, had served in the military during WWII, Korea, or Vietnam. Today, only 5% of senior people in the private sector have served in the U.S. military. I suspect that the number in the various branches of the government is about the same. So who are the people leading America, and what are they doing?

They are mostly Baby-Boomers and older. They live in posh suburbs and in gated communities. They usually went to private schools and private colleges. They intermarry among their own class. Most did not serve in the military. Their children are privileged and protected. They have, both Republicans and

Democrats, managed to become rich after serving a term or two in government. Why?

Nine years ago, investigative journalist Peter Schweizer wrote a book showing how senators and congressmen enrich themselves at the public expense by a kind of legislative inside trading. The name of the book says it all:

Throw Them All Out: How Politicians and Their Friends Get Rich Off Insider Stock Tips, Land Deals, and Cronyism That Would Send the Rest of Us to Prison

That is not how men inspired by the ideals of the constitution and the Roman republic are supposed to act. This kind of predatory behavior does not echo the grandeur of the senators of the Roman Republic. It reflects the behaviour of the senators who served emperors and enriched themselves at the citizens' expense and, notably, whose sons no longer went to war for Rome. Then the Romans and the children of the elites no longer fought for themselves. They imported "Barbarians" to fight for them, first from Gaul and Spain and then from Germany.

In the beginning, most Barbarians became Romans, adopted Latin, and took on Romanitas as their personal code. But as the Republican element of ancient Rome receded, as inequality and injustice increased, it was the invading and more importantly migrating Barbarian peoples from north, west, and east of the empire who clamored for its land and wealth. The Roman ruling elite let them in. That was the death knell of the Western empire.

Today, we see an American ruling class that is well documented as such. They are tellingly described by former *New York Times* journalist Hedrick Smith in his book *Who Stole the American Dream?* They are even better evoked by Cullen Murphy's book *Are We Rome?*, where he asks, way back in 2008, whether America resembles Rome under the emperors or when it was a

Republic. Today there is no doubt what the answer is.

Today's Washington elites, and the Deep State, representing the interests of the Democrat party, are no longer interested in the American Republic and its Roman-inspired values. They have rejected both Americanitas and Romanitas. They have opened their border on their southern frontier and are allowing in masses of people from non-democratic societies and whose family traditions are also non-democratic. These "new barbarians" can be bought, and they will vote Democrat for generations to come.

There is no need to proclaim an emperor. Presidential overreach is giving us the same result, overriding state jurisdiction, whose legal basis was established by the founders. Those citizens who still believe in Romanitas and Americanitas will be illegally outvoted for years to come, and the senatorial and congressional elite will enrich themselves at everyone's expense.

These new barbarians and their patrons in South America, the Far East, and the Islamic world, who send them to our shores, will do all they can to undermine the Constitution and demoralize the remaining forty-eight percent of American patriots who still want a Republic.

It happened to Rome in the fourth century, and it seems to be happening to America today. Illegal aliens do not know what Romanitas is or was, nor do they care. Neither are they interested in the Constitution or constitutional government.

A few years back, when living and working in Manhattan, I was invited as a guest to a national day of celebration for a Caribbean country at a Brooklyn venue. There was not one American flag in the room, there was no singing of the National Anthem, no one said the pledge of allegiance, and not one speaker gave thanks to the great Republic who invited them to become its citizens. I felt as though I were in a foreign

country in the heart of New York. I was flabbergasted.

The new barbarians desperately want the bread and circuses given to them by the Washington elite. It is better than the chaos and poverty they left behind in their home countries. They will behave according to their new masters' wishes – until there comes a time when, probably by non-democratic means, they take over the Republic.

By then, it will have become a Republic in name only.

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