

Proving America's Weakest Link

By Victor Davis Hanson

Governor Ronald Reagan, in his 1967 inaugural address, famously remarked, "Freedom is a fragile thing and it's never more than one generation away from extinction."



Reagan today might have expanded on his theme by declaring that civilization itself is both fragile and can be lost by a generation that recklessly spends its inheritance while neither appreciating nor replenishing it—if not ridiculing those who sacrificed so much to provide it.

Such is the noxious epitaph of the Baby Boomer generation that is now passing after a half-century of preeminence and whose Jacobin agendas have nearly wrecked the nation they inherited.

In contrast to them, eighty years ago this week, the Allied powers of World War II—chiefly the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada—landed on five Normandy beaches to begin what Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, supreme commander of the Allied expeditionary forces, would call the great “crusade” to liberate Western Europe from four years of brutal Nazi occupation.

The plan was to land within a few hours and in stormy weather

well over 150,000 Americans, British, and Canadians on the Atlantic Coast beaches of France, where they were to charge directly into the fire of tens of thousands of enemy troops. They were to charge uphill in the sand while being fired upon by entrenched German troops occupying the hills above. From there, the beachhead was to serve as the launching pad for two million more troops, who were to somehow drive eastward through France and into Germany to end the war and the devastation the Third Reich had inflicted on the world.

All that was accomplished in the ensuing 11 months. That can-do American generation assumed that impoverished teenagers emerging from the Great Depression, with equipment often inferior to their seasoned German enemies, would, over the ensuing months, surely prove able to route Waffen SS veterans. Many of them were hastily transferred from the murderous Eastern Front, such as the nihilist 2nd SS Panzer Division *das Reich* ("The Empire"). No matter, the Americans did the impossible in less than a year—from the Normandy beaches to well across the Rhine River.

That same generation went on to save South Korea, build an anti-totalitarian world order, defeat Soviet communism, and pass on to the Baby Boomer generation the strongest economy, military, and political system in history, or, to paraphrase the poet Horace, "monuments more lasting than bronze." Or so we, the inheritors, thought.

And what are the now septuagenarian and octogenarian children of the veterans of Omaha Beach and Iwo Jima, leaving as their own legacy?

The self-infatuated and do-your-own-thing generation that gave us the Sixties and the counterculture has left the country \$36 trillion in debt, now borrowing *\$1 trillion nearly every three months*. Worse, there is not just no plan to balance budgets, much less to reduce the debt, but also no intention to stop or even worry about *the borrowing of some \$10 billion a day*.

The U.S. military is almost unrecognizable to that of just a few decades ago. It was humiliated in Kabul. In surrealistic fashion, it abandoned some \$50 billion in lethal weaponry to the Taliban—along with our NATO allies, American contractors, and loyal Afghans. And our supreme command labeled that rout a brilliant retreat. Meanwhile, the military suffers from depleted inventory of key munitions while being short 45,000 annual recruits.

The Pentagon is torn by internal dissension over DEI, woke, anti-meritocratic promotions, and a politicized officer class—well, apart from now also being outmanned and outgunned by the Chinese. Many of the world's key maritime corridors—the Red Sea, the Straits of Hormuz, the Black Sea, and the South China sea—are apparently beyond our navy's ability to ensure the world safe transit.

For perceived cheap political advantage, the Baby Boomers destroyed the southern border, most recently allowing in nearly 10 million unaudited illegal aliens. With the disappearance of our national sovereignty, so too was lost the once-cherished idea of a melting pot of legal immigrants arriving in America longing to assimilate, to integrate in self-reliant fashion, and to show gratitude for the chance of something far better than what they left.

The country's major cities are increasingly medieval, with a million homeless camped on fetid streets. Criminals terrorize the law-abiding. They assume their violence will be contextualized away by vacuous "critical legal" or "critical race" or "critical penal" theories. This generation releases violent felons to prey on the weak and sheds hardly a tear as police officers are shot unnoticed at the rate of nearly one a day.

America's once great universities—such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, and MIT—are now into their fourth year of abolishing much of their prior standards. The youth who sought

to wreck them from the outside in the 1960s now succeed in finishing the job as elders on the inside. These bankrupt campuses now adjudicate admissions and hiring by race, tribe and gender and then wonder why their students are entitled, ignorant, and arrogant yet unable to meet the very standards that the universities once insisted were critical to ensuring their preeminence.

Worse, the more elite the campuses, the more they became hotbeds of unapologetic anti-Semitism, gratuitous violence, and hatred for the country's very institutions that guarantee their own freedom of action and speech. Who taught them and allowed them to think that as they illegally occupied buildings, defaced and defiled monuments, and shouted Jew hatred, they were absurdly entitled to free food deliveries and amnesties?

A rapacious higher education welcomed in profitable anti-American students and billions of dollars in hostile foreign cash from those who mock the laws of their host and feel a covetous America can be bought for 10 cents on the dollar. And as we learned after October 7, they were mostly correct.

Abroad, our nomenklatura opportunistically demonizes a democratic Israel trying to fight a terrorist Hamas that slaughtered 1,200 mostly unarmed citizens at a time of peace in the most grotesque fashion of the 21st century.

Yet our elite cannot distinguish killers from our democratic allies. Hamas deliberately drafted their own citizens to serve as shields to protect the terrorists safely ensconced in the tunnels below—on the sick assurance that Israel would surely try to avoid killing civilian shields whom the cynical Hamas apparat deliberately exposed to protect itself.

America hectors its most loyal ally in a way it does not its chief enemies, communist China and theocratic Iran. Not content with hiding its role in birthing the gain-in-function

COVID-19 virus, now with impunity China helps kill 100,000 Americans a year through the export of fentanyl. It sends nearly 30,000 adult males into the US illegally. It relies on the espionage abilities of its students and visitors –and apparently exempt spy balloons—to ensure the People’s Liberation Army’s technological parity with the U.S.

But the greatest baleful legacy of this fading generation is the weaponization of the government against its own perceived American citizen enemies. That bastardization of institutions extends now to the very destruction of the once-hallowed tradition of American jurisprudence.

The degeneration was not just that our government and its political ancillaries cooked up the Russian collusion hoax that warped the 2016 campaign and crippled a presidency—but that, to this day, its unapologetic architects remain smug that they pulled it off and would do it again.

Ditto the efforts of “intelligence authorities” to delude the American people about “Russian disinformation” and the Hunter Biden laptop. The Sixties generation’s new normal is to impeach a president twice, to try him as a private citizen, and to seek to remove him from state ballots.

All that was now characteristic of a generation that learned in the 1960s that if it did not get its way, it would wreck what it could not control. So, it was logical that it sought to pack the court, to end the filibuster, to destroy the Electoral College—and to corrupt the law to achieve political ends. Or as the Sixties generation taught us, “by any means necessary”—an arrogant affirmation of Machiavelli’s dictum that “the ends justify the means.”

Now we are left with a final toxic gift from this generation: the destruction of jurisprudence, a system designed not to easily protect the popular and admired but those often pilloried in the public square, the unorthodox, eccentric, and

unliked.

Even Trump's antagonists know that had Donald Trump been a man of the left, or had he not run again for president, he would never have been charged, much less convicted, of felonies or been punished with nearly a half-billion dollars in legal fees and fines.

We all accept that the charges brought against him by a vindictive and left-wing Letitia James, Alvin Bragg, Fani Willis and Jack Smith—all compromised by either past politicized prosecutorial failures or boasts of getting Trump—have never before been brought against any prior political figure or indeed any average citizen. They were instead invented to target a single political enemy. So what hallowed law, what constitutional norm, what ancient custom, or what Bill or Rights has the fading left not destroyed in order to erase Donald Trump from the political scene?

There is now no distinction between state and federal law. Once a prosecutor targets an enemy, he can flip back and forth between such statutes to find the necessary legal gimmick to destroy his target.

Statutes of limitations are no more as errant prosecutors and political operatives in the legislature can change laws to dredge up supposed crimes of years past, to destroy their political enemies, by employing veritable bills of attainder.

The very notion of an exculpatory hung jury depends on who is to be hung.

Judges can overtly contribute to the political opponents of the accused before them. Their children can profit in the tens of millions by selling to politicians their relationship to the very judge who holds the fate of their political opponents in his hands.

In sum, the First Amendment guaranteeing the right of the

defendant to free speech is now not applicable. Asymmetrical gag orders are.

The Fourth Amendment is now torn to shreds by those who boast of "saving democracy." When the FBI, on orders from a hostile administration, storms into the home of the leading presidential candidate and ex-president's home, armed to the teeth, treats a civil dispute as a violent felony, and then doctors the evidence it finds, then constitutional insurance against "unreasonable searches and seizures" becomes a bitter joke for generations.

The Fifth Amendment's protection that no person "shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law" has been destroyed when an ex-president cannot summon expert legal witnesses to testify on his behalf and when he cannot bring in evidence that contradicts his accusers. There is no due process when one ex-president is indicted for the very crimes his exempted successor has committed.

The Sixth Amendment's various assurances are now kaput. No one believes that Trump was tried "by an impartial jury of the State"—not when prosecutors deliberately indicted him in a city where 85 percent of the population voted against him and are by design of a different political party.

No longer will an American have the innate right "to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor" when Donald Trump was never informed by prosecutor Alvin Bragg of the felony for which he was charged, with little advance idea of all the hostile prosecutorial witnesses to be called, and with no right to call in experts to refute the prosecution's bizarre notion of campaign finance violations.

The Seventh Amendment is likewise now on the ash heap of history. The publicity-seeking judge Arthur Engoron, a

political antagonist of Trump, warped the law in order to serve as judge, jury, and executioner of Trump's fate, without recourse to a jury of even his biased New York peers.

The Eighth Amendment will offer assurance no longer to the American people that "excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted."

Donald Trump was fined \$83.3 million in the E. Jean Carroll case for an alleged assault of three decades past, brought by partisan manipulative waving of the statute of limitations, with the politicized accuser having no idea of the year the assault took place, with her accusations arising only decades later when Trump became a political candidate, with her own employers insisting she was fired for reasons having nothing to do with Donald Trump, and with her narrative eerily matching a TV show plot rather than any provable facts of the case.

By what logic was Trump fined \$175 million for supposedly inflated asset valuation to obtain a loan that was repaid with interest to banks that had no complaint? Since when does the state seek to inflict such "unusual" punishments for a crime that never before had existed and never will again henceforth?

In sum, our departing weak-link generation leaves us this final Parthian shot— that when a toxic ideology so alienates the people who are rising up to prevent its continuance, then the desperate architects of such disasters can dismantle the rule of law to destroy its critics.

And so, a single generation has broken apart the great chain of American civilizational continuance. But if this weak-link generation thinks the evil that they wrought is their last word, they should remember the warning of a great historian:

"Indeed men too often take upon themselves in the prosecution of their revenge to set the example of doing away with those

general laws to which all alike can look for salvation in adversity, *instead of allowing them to subsist against the day of danger when their aid may be required.*" – Thucydides 3.84.3

First published in [American Greatness](#)