

Western civilization at the crossroads: IX Culture against civilization

by James Piereson

as useless or irrelevant to their vocational interests and so lack the tools by which they might challenge their teachers. In any case, the radicals achieved their aim. No one yet knows what will happen as those students take their onesided ideas or lack of knowledge from the academy into the wider world of business, government, publishing, and teaching. Thus far, the signs are not encouraging.

At the same time, Western institutions seem

The distinguished tradition of art, literature, and philosophy that has defined the Western world for more than two millennia is collapsing almost everywhere. It has been abandoned in the colleges, reinterpreted according to contemporary conventions, attacked in the name of multiculturalism, and rejected all around as a “white man’s” enterprise. It is impossible to defend it without being dismissed in ruling circles as a reactionary or an old fogey enamored with the past. Students who a generation or two ago might have taken courses in Western civilization or studied Plato and Aristotle, or Michelangelo and Raphael, or Locke and the *Federalist* papers are now lectured by their teachers about race, gender, and sexuality. They know little of Greek philosophy, the history of Rome, the origins of the great religions, the architecture of medieval churches, or the development of Enlightenment ideas that created the modern world. They seem to know just as little about the history of the United States or how well off they are compared to earlier generations.

The interest groups and ideological factions that have taken over the contemporary university view the Western tradition as an obstacle to reform or revolution. “Hey hey, ho ho, Western Civ has got to go,” cried radical students and faculty at one campus a few decades ago. Other students, not quite so politicized, nevertheless view “Western Civ”

as strong and influential as ever, both at home and abroad. People around the world still try to emulate American and European patterns of government, business, science, and law, though mostly without success. That is why so many continue to stream across borders into Europe and the United States. Americans have not yet lost faith in the Constitution, popular government, the rule of law, and progress through free markets and scientific knowledge. Those in and around the universities who attack Western civilization do so because they resent its achievements and success or find it wanting when viewed in light of its own high ideals. They both hate and admire the West at the same time. Few seem inclined to pick up and leave in order to live under other civilizational ideals or conditions. Their goal, rather, is to take over—but to what end?

If civilization is defined in terms of stable governments and the rule of law, trusted currencies, leading universities and research institutions, productive business corporations, and widely admired ideals, then Western civilization appears to be as strong or even stronger now than it was a century or seventy-five years ago when it was recovering from catastrophic wars and had not yet spread around the globe.

Far from receding, the civilization of the West has evolved into a worldwide enterprise.

Is the West collapsing, or is it thriving? On the evidence, it can be hard to tell. The correct

answer might be some of both. In the arena of culture, the inheritance of the West is in decline; in regard to the institutions of civilization, it still advances. The meaning of this, and how it has happened, are questions that do not admit of easy answers. Will the attack on Western ideas and ideals lead to a collapse of the civilizational institutions that arose from them? Or might the continuing strength of those institutions provoke a revival of those ideas?

A tale of two half centuries The achievements of Western Civilization over the second half of the twentieth century were as impressive as was the scale of destruction inflicted upon it in the wars of the first half of the century. Between eighty and one hundred million people were killed in the world wars of 1914–18 and 1939–45, numbers that must be augmented by casualties, refugees, and the victims of murder and genocide, and mass starvation, all of which cannot account for the ruin of churches, libraries, and museums that had taken centuries to build. Not since the fall of Rome had the West encountered a time of crisis comparable to the bloody crossroads of the 1900–50 period. The catastrophe was magnified by the progress of the previous era as new technologies created to produce wealth were redirected toward purposes of war. Those wars might have destroyed civilization for centuries if liberal Europe had not been backed up by a sister civilization in the United States that aided mightily in its victory and recovery.

In contrast to Europe (and Japan), the United States emerged intact from the wars as the world's wealthiest and most powerful nation, with losses of life and treasure on a minor scale compared to those suffered elsewhere. The sense of relief and good fortune felt by Americans in the middle of the century was tempered by the reality of the Cold War and the threat posed by communism to their freedom and prosperity. But two decades of war and depression had a way of dampening expectations for the future. If there were fears for the future of civilization, then they arose

from the risks of nuclear war, communism and tyranny, or another economic collapse, certainly not from thoughts of cultural dissolution.

In the middle of the century, George Orwell set forth the grim vision of what was likely to happen in the post-war decades in his dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, published in 1949, in which he looked ahead to a world divided into totalitarian superstates: Oceania versus Eurasia versus East Asia. These powers exist in a condition of perpetual warfare even though there are no principled differences among them. It is useful to keep the masses ("proles") in a state of martial anxiety as a means of controlling them. Great Britain, known as Airstrip One, is a piece of Oceania, which is, along with the Americas, governed by "Big Brother," who prescribes and enforces morally approved views: "Peace is Strength," "War is Peace," and so on. The English language disappears into "Newspeak." The "Thought Police" root out disapproved ideas. Old people cannot be trusted: "Those whose ideas were formed before the Revolution cannot have a full understanding of English socialism." Winston and Julia, at first loyal party members, rebel in defense of their individuality but cannot succeed against the totalitarian forces arrayed against them. At length, after a round of torture and reeducation, Winston discovers again his loyalty to Big Brother.

The novel suggested that communism would eventually overwhelm the West and impose a soul-destroying dictatorship, but, in fairness, Orwell wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a cautionary tale showing what might happen rather than a prediction of what would happen. Still, it was not a farfetched possibility, because there were many who shared those fears. Whittaker Chambers, for example, wrote in *Witness* (1952) that communism would eventually prevail because it was a fighting faith while the West was losing belief in itself.

The Harvard economist Sumner H. Schlichter expressed the opposite view in a series of articles and speeches in 1949 and 1950. Looking decades into the future (like Orwell),

he wrote that the United States was about to experience an unprecedented revolution of rising living standards and with it would arise a greater appreciation of the capitalist system. By 1980, he said, the U.S. population would grow to 175 million (from 150 million in 1950), the workforce would expand to seventy-two million (from sixty-two million), labor productivity would double to 4 percent per year, the output of goods and services would double, and the economy would grow in excess of 3 percent per year. He predicted that the United States would become a country of two-car families by 1980 with seventy million automobiles on the road. The proportion of young people graduating from high school and college would increase; medical services would improve and would be widely used; air-conditioning would be universal and home swimming pools popular. He thought that the work week might be cut to thirty hours and that “the arts will flourish as never before in the history of the world.” Schlichter’s forecasts were widely dismissed as too optimistic in view of recent decades of depression and war and the new reality of the Cold War.

In the event, it was the Harvard economist’s views that eventually proved true as the United States soon enjoyed a revolution in rising living standards that few had anticipated in 1950. In fact, Schlichter’s rosy forecasts fell far short of the mark. The U.S. population grew to 225 million by 1980, doubling in three decades and far surpassing expectations, and to 281 million by the year 2000. The labor force expanded to 107 million in 1980 and to 144 million by the end of the century. Labor productivity doubled, as he predicted, while the output of goods and services tripled between 1950 and 1980 as the U.S. economy grew in excess of 4 percent per year during the 1950s and 1960s. The percentage of the population with high-school diplomas increased from 34 to 67 percent, and the number of students attending colleges increased by five or six times over those three decades. By 1980 there were 122 million automobiles on the road, just about two per household, swimming pools were common,

and air-conditioning was nearly universal. Contra Orwell, international communism collapsed during the 1980s, not long after the dread year of 1984, in part because of pressure from the West, but also because it could not be made to work. The economist Schlichter was wrong about one thing: for the most part the arts did not flourish in the post-war era, even as more money flowed into them.

It would be easy to document in further detail the achievements of Western civilization, led by the United States, in those post-war decades from 1950 to 2000. The United States underwrote the recovery of Western Europe with loans and credits, brought those countries (along with Japan) into a new trading system, and held the line against communism until that system collapsed. Life expectancy increased from sixty years in 1950 to close to eighty years in 2000, aided by advances in medicine and wealth; death rates from heart disease and cancer fell, food prices declined in relation to incomes, indoor plumbing and electricity were made universally available (television as well), and improved products and leisure were placed within the reach of millions who did not dream of them in 1950. Opportunities for advancement were extended to women and racial minorities. The taming of inflation and the explosion of the stock markets after 1980 created still more wealth and many millionaires and billionaires, while underwriting new companies and impressive technologies that similarly elevated living standards over the next several decades. Even China, insanely revolutionary as recently as the 1970s, scrapped communism as an economic policy (though not as a political doctrine). Since 1990, in great part due to Western policies, more than 1.2 billion people around the world have risen out of extreme poverty; today less than 10 percent of the world’s population lives in poverty, compared to 36 percent in 1990.

These figures scratch the surface as measures of worldwide progress that the West promoted and achieved across the post-war decades. It was a record of civilizational

progress that has no parallel in the history of the world, and which stands in extraordinary contrast to the events of 1900 to 1945.

Adversaries of culture Two years ago, near the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, agitators stormed into the streets of large cities across the country in protest against the death of a black man while in police custody in Minneapolis. They remained in the streets all summer, far longer than necessary to make their point, in New York, Portland, Seattle, Los Angeles, and (of course) Minneapolis, smashing windows, burning businesses, surrounding federal buildings, attacking the police, even burning and looting police headquarters in one city, under the guise of protest against racism, police brutality, and inequality. Leading politicians, all Democrats, joined the protests, though many of those officials continued to enforce restrictions on large gatherings due to the coronavirus pandemic. (It was said to be permissible to attend gatherings for “just” causes.) Democrats approved of the protests, along with the accompanying violence, because they understood them to be helpful for the presidential election in the fall. In short order, nearly every university in the country issued statements in support of the protests and in denunciation of the police, and so also did many corporations and every professional sports league. Even formerly sober and stuffy Brooks Brothers issued a statement of support, while protestors smashed windows near its longtime flagship store on Madison Avenue in New York City. It seemed that half the country, and leaders of every major institution, supported the mobs, even as they targeted the police, small businesses, property owners, and the middle-class rules of conduct.

The eruptions should not have come as a surprise. Similar protests, though not quite on this scale, had been staged countless times in the years leading up to the events of 2020. In addition, the movements behind the protests had been building up momentum and support across the board for decades going back to the

1960s. The wealth accumulated in the post-war era established the foundations for a formidable adversary culture in the cities and around the universities in tension with the institutions of the wider society. In time, this culture took over the universities and infiltrated government, charitable organizations, journalism, and even major corporations. That was one reason those courses in Western civilization disappeared from college curricula. It happened that the “soldiers” of this culture took to the streets in 2020, but with the express support of the leaders and shapers at the top of America’s institutional pyramid.

Several insightful thinkers, Lionel Trilling, Irving Kristol, and Roger Kimball high on that list, have written that American culture evolved during the post-war era in a manner critical of, often hostile to, the market economy and bourgeois civilization responsible for so much progress after 1950. Trilling pointed to an “adversary culture” of intellectuals, mainly college professors and writers, who could not help but adopt a critical posture toward the civilization that supported them. He thought that this critical disposition kept them from seeing the society as it actually is but doubted that they could ever become numerous or influential enough to take over. Kristol took the idea a step further in viewing the adversary culture in terms of a “new class” of educators, journalists, and bureaucrats that developed a common interest that went beyond expanding their numbers or taking over institutions within their reach, such as colleges or magazines. He wrote that the new class has a more profound interest in challenging the institutions of bourgeois society, including corporations, the free market, and the nuclear family, and in promoting ideas at odds with middle-class notions of individualism and individual responsibility, self-discipline, and marriage.

Members of the new class, he wrote, gravitated to academe and government, where they consolidated and expanded their influence. They liked to make rules for others to follow and to make up new ones at their convenience. They claimed to speak for the

poor, later for women and minorities, eventually for the downtrodden everywhere. Their moral posture was one source of influence, in contrast to the self-interested conduct of everyone else. This gave them latitude to break rules others were obliged to follow. As Kristol wrote decades ago,

The problem today is located in the culture of our society which is in the process of outflanking our relatively successful economy. While the society is bourgeois, the culture is increasingly and belligerently not.

These terms, while still applicable, require some modification. The adversary culture is no longer composed of alienated intellectuals and writers but instead consists of a large class of bureaucrats, administrators, activists, academic hangers-on and would-be theorists, and wealthy patrons. It is larger, more varied, and vastly more influential than it was in Trilling's day. The "new class," as Kristol suggests, is of post-war origin and finds its identity in opposition to middle-class institutions and ideals. It is a good question whether the "new class" should be understood principally by its interests like other classes in society, as Kristol suggested, or whether it is more a movement with broad ideological goals and an ambition to take control of government. It has features that set it apart from established interest groups. Its members disdain negotiation and compromise, much like ideological groups in other times and places. Their goals are comprehensive and not easy to satisfy: ending racism and sexism; eliminating the police; saving the planet. Every concession seems to provoke new demands. They see their adversaries as unsophisticated or untutored, more frequently racist and sexist. For these reasons, they do not coexist comfortably with other groups in society.

This "new class" or "adversary culture," whatever one wishes to call it, has turned out to be far more influential than any left-wing movement of the past, in large part because it is composed of middle- and upper-class

professionals, rather than the outsiders or proletarians of Marxist theory. They are well placed by those positions to leverage reformist or radical ideas, communicate them to others, or force them upon unwary or disorganized citizens. The radicals of the 1960s eventually rejected the revolutionary strategy in favor of the "long march" through the institutions, as Roger Kimball has described. That was made possible by the post-war boom that provided wealth for the expansion of colleges, charitable groups, public-employee unions, and the federal government, while also financing the welfare state that the new class administers and seeks to expand. While in the 1960s the same people might have been isolated on the campus or in fringe newspapers and magazines, they now seem to be everywhere: in government, sometimes directing government agencies, writing for *The New York Times*, teaching in Ivy League institutions, running corporations and Wall Street investment houses, and campaigning for national office. The "new class" has exploded in numbers and influence and is in the process of taking over the main institutions of bourgeois civilization. Though it has been called a "culture," it looks now more like an alternative civilization threatening to take control of the country—if, in fact, it has not already done so.

It comes armed with a theory, or more precisely an ideology, revolving around identity, in this case the identities of race, gender, and sexuality (further identities may be added). Having originated as a means of extending opportunity to new groups, the culture devolved, perhaps by design, into an inflexible doctrine known as "diversity." The central ideas are that these groups have been oppressed in the past by American society, that they deserve recognition and compensation as a result, and that it is now their turn to get even with those responsible for their suffering. It is, as many have pointed out, a bastardized version of Marxism in which the working class is expelled as the locus of suffering and exploitation and replaced by race and gender groups defined by "identity."

Here is a poisonous doctrine and also a formula for conflict and civilizational decline. It was cranked out in the universities decades ago and at length has spread everywhere as a bill of grievances against America. Functioning like an ideology in the Marxist sense, it is a body of ideas designed for warfare against enemies. This is one factor that gives its adherents the look of a movement or crusade instead of an interest group. Advocates do not hold their ideas on a tentative basis, for example, as a body of thought subject to revision, but rather as a total doctrine attached to the identities of its bearers. That is true much more of the leaders and activists than of its voters and followers. Any member who thinks about holding the doctrine up for analysis or evaluation is already on his or her way out of the community. Former communists have testified to this cast of mind in great detail, and, like communists, the theorists of diversity are always on the lookout for departures from correct doctrine. Because of this, even tame criticisms of the doctrine are understood by insiders as attacks on their identities—as personal attacks on them or general attacks on the identity groups. It seems impossible to criticize them or adopt different views without making them angry or hurting their feelings. Well-meaning attempts to hold debates about identity politics are thus met with cries of racism, sexism, or homophobia. The crusading mentality has allowed them to take over entire institutions on the grounds that opponents or those who do not share their views are mortal enemies. The advocates of identity are aggressive in pushing their doctrines in whatever bureaucratic or academic settings they find themselves but at the same time extremely sensitive to criticisms from those unwilling to go along or untutored about the nature of the debates taking place.

Members of this class have taken up residence in government and the universities, also in the cities, and are now mostly attached to the Democratic Party, which they are remaking by expelling traditional working-class members and replacing them with voters and cadres of their own type. In this exchange,

Democratic officials may have sacrificed many ordinary voters for more elite voters with influence and a coalition of the past for an alliance of the future. The Democrats have abandoned the old-time platform of economic growth and opportunity in favor of the diversity ideology, which is now the operating doctrine of the Democratic Party, much as “New Deal liberalism” had filled that role from the 1930s through the 1960s.

Democrats are far along in the process of building a coalition of the “top and bottom” against the middle: on the one side there are the members of the new class in combination with various client groups that can claim to be victims of middle-class society; on the other, we find those middle-class institutions and voters, along with their principles, ideals, and way of life. The list of victim groups has expanded over the years, much to the advantage of this coalition and those who orchestrate it. As these groups moved into the Democratic Party, others exited to join with Republicans, setting up a struggle between the parties that mirrors the clash of cultures—or, indeed, a clash of civilizations that by definition will be difficult to negotiate.

It is anyone’s guess how this conflict will be fought out or how it will be resolved—if, in fact, it can be resolved. There will be no secession or civil war of the kind that happened in 1860, as some think likely. This is not principally a sectional struggle, nor is it likely that factions will take up arms against one another—not yet, anyway. The competition will be fought out in other ways. Every election will be viewed as a contest over the future of the country, with everything staked on the outcome. Under those circumstances, it will be difficult to bind participants to traditional rules according to which elections are fought over limited issues and everyone comes together afterwards to move forward. Contestants will use new stratagems and tactics to suppress speech, harass opponents, bend election rules, and make sure government cannot work whenever opponents get control of it. The

different sides will use the powers of government to weaken the opposition or disqualify candidates, perhaps at some point to arrest them or throw them in jail. In this the Left is far ahead of conservatives in its willingness to suspend traditional doctrines in order to wield power. Nevertheless, those lines, once crossed, will not be heeded again and similar measures will be reciprocated by the other side. There will be no serious efforts toward bipartisan compromise; that approach cannot be squared with the totalizing nature of current conflicts.

It is hard to imagine how the United States will be able to function either internationally or domestically in a situation in which the parties are so fervently at odds and represent different civilizational ideas.

A grim picture

This may be taken as an extreme or excessively dire rendering of the current situation, but many troubling developments along these lines have already come to pass: the financial crisis of 2008, with the failure of households, the bailout of banks and accompanying public debt, and a slow recovery; the disastrous military ventures in Iraq and Afghanistan; the politicization of the IRS and FBI in the Obama years; the populist rise of Donald Trump; the contested election of 2016, with out-in-the-open proposals to nullify the election; the Russia “hoax” orchestrated by the press and the FBI, along with efforts to impeach the president; the Kavanaugh hearings; protests in the streets in 2020, inflamed further by the coronavirus pandemic; assassinations of police officers around the country; another contested election in 2020; charges and countercharges from both parties about rigging election rules; protests and riots at the Capitol on January 6, 2021; efforts by Democrats to end the filibuster in the Senate in order to “pack” the Supreme Court—the list goes on. By the looks of things, the contest is just getting started. Meanwhile, China and

Russia are watching with great interest, wondering how they might exploit the unraveling situation in the United States. Russia has already made one aggressive move with the invasion of neighboring Ukraine.

There is another way in which this description is not so dire as it might be—because it lays current and future troubles at the doorstep of political and cultural conflicts, while assuming the American economy expands, government is not overwhelmed with debt, the U.S. dollar continues to serve as the reserve currency for the world, prices remain stable, and the stock market continues along on its four-decade boom. It would be unwise to take any or all of these for granted in looking to the American future. A setback in any of these areas will aggravate mightily the tensions and conflicts described above, all of which are serious enough already. Such signs may already be on the horizon. Inflation is running at 8 percent per year, higher than at any time since 1982. That will drive up interest rates and cause trouble for the stock market, which will make it harder for government to service its debt or add new debt, while limiting the capacity of policy-makers to increase spending as a means of papering over political conflicts across society.

Nor are there good reasons to think the U.S. economy will expand in the twenty-first century as it did in those post-war decades between 1950 and 2000. Post-war economic growth peaked in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, with average real increases of more than 4 percent per year, then slowed to 3 percent per year in the three decades between 1970 and 2000, and then fell rapidly to just 2 percent per year in the two decades from 2000 to 2020. The financial crisis of 2008 inflicted more damage upon the economy than any event since 1950, leading to ever more government while upending consumer and investor confidence for many years thereafter. Americans have taken on debt to substitute for the proceeds of growth: the national debt of the United States now exceeds \$30 trillion, with the government borrowing more than \$2 trillion annually in recent years (or 10 percent

of gross domestic product) to finance its budget. This level of borrowing might have been forestalled if the economy had expanded in recent decades at 3 or 4 percent instead of 2 percent per year. If that had been the case, then U.S. gdp would this year be between \$30 and \$40 trillion, instead of \$23 trillion. But the debt is there, requiring robust economic growth to generate resources just to pay the interest.

The economist Robert Gordon, reversing the confidence of Professor Schlichter in 1950, now argues that the robust economic growth Americans enjoyed during much of the twentieth century was a singular event driven by a series of innovations unlikely to be repeated. The computer and the internet, along with their many contemporary applications, will not come close to matching the prosperity created in the last century by the development of electricity, the internal-combustion engine, indoor plumbing, and modern communications. In Gordon's view, and he marshals much information in support of it, the golden age of American prosperity ended near the close of the last century. He did not examine the extent to which the frictional effects of the adversary culture might have further slowed down economic growth by undermining the work ethic, castigating business enterprise, tolerating crime and social dissolution, and promoting government debt and regulation—as Joseph Schumpeter had forecast in *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (1942). In any case, as Gordon and others suggest, Americans, much like the Japanese in recent years, may have to accommodate themselves to the new reality of slowing growth and slowly improving living standards. That is a sobering warning for a country accustomed to rapid growth that is also deeply in debt and already dealing with profound cultural and civilizational divisions.

Where it's going

The view from the year 2000 was more confident and hopeful, and probably more

complacent, than it was in 1950. The future seemed laid out more clearly in 2000 than in 1950. The Cold War was gone and with it threats of communism, dictatorship, and nuclear war. Fears from abroad were linked to terrorism, not traditional war, while concerns about climate change replaced the economic anxieties of 1950. Economic growth and continued prosperity were more or less taken for granted after fifty years of rising living standards.

When in 1999 the editors of *Time* magazine listed the great accomplishments of the previous half century, they emphasized the expansion of democracy, the defeat of totalitarianism, the steady advance of civil rights, and breakthroughs in technology culminating in the everyday use of computers. They did not mention the post-war boom. Albert Einstein was *Time*'s "Man of the Century," with Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Gandhi following in second and third place. Winston Churchill, *Time*'s "Man of the Half Century" in 1950, was not listed, no doubt because the editors decided that his civilizational achievements were neutralized by other aspects of his career, such as his efforts to maintain the British Empire. The editors, like most everyone else, thought that the early decades of the new century would bring continued progress along the lines that Americans had enjoyed over the previous half century.

That outlook proved to be excessively optimistic, in view of events of the first two decades of the century, just as the outlook in 1950 proved to be too uncertain and pessimistic in light of later developments. Few predicted two or three decades ago that the diversity ideology would gain its current stranglehold over schools, colleges, government, and the Democratic Party—yet that is what has happened. It represents a repudiation of Western ideals and much that the United States has stood for in terms of individual liberty, limited government, strong families, robust civic institutions, and the like. There is little point any longer in pretending that this is not happening.

This raises the real possibility that the civilizational conflicts now in play in the United States will gradually turn it into something resembling a third world country, with a stagnant or declining economy, periodic debt and currency crises, schools and colleges organized around ideology rather than learning, entrenched interests arrogating power and wealth to themselves, other citizens exiting for opportunities elsewhere, and dynamic groups and regions looking for routes of escape from a crumbling system. Something resembling this process is already beginning to unfold across the United States as more and more Americans abandon blue states in favor of red ones and leave the large cities for suburbs and small towns, sometimes in search of better opportunities but often looking for refuge from diversity fanatics in charge of their towns, schools, and states. Sadly, there are already areas in the United States where residents endure conditions similar to those in third world countries. It would not take much to push the United States further in that direction. That is a grim prospect—the “third worldization” of the United States—but not one to be discounted out of hand.

Yet it is also true that events can turn quickly, in any and all directions, notwithstanding expert predictions and logical suppositions based on contemporary conditions. That is why gloomy forecasts do not often work out in America: the American people find ways to refute them. It could happen again. An economic bust might force the country to put its financial house in order after an orgy of spending and borrowing made possible by fifty years of good times. The same is true of a foreign crisis: with their backs to the wall, Americans may demonstrate the resolve of former times. In times of real stress, the cultural issues that have divided the country may turn out to be expendable. In that case, the United States might lead a revival of Western ideals and institutions, much as it did in the post-war era. But a shock of some kind may be required to provoke such a turnaround.

Someone once remarked that in the United States there has always been a race between

dynamism and decadence—with dynamism always running a few steps ahead. Yet all signs suggest that decadence—today expressed mostly in the diversity ideology—is catching up, bringing America and the West closer to a new “crossroads of civilization.”

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