

WHAT TO DO WHEN CAESAR COMES

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Is a Caesar, an authoritarian reconstructor of our institutions, soon to step onto the American stage? A betting man would say yes. The debilities of our society are manifold and will inevitably result in fracture and chaos. History tells us that such times call forth ambitious and driven men, who in the West usually aspire to reconstruction and dynasty, not mere extraction, what is usually featured in primitive societies. As Napoleon said of his accession to Emperor, “I came across the crown of France lying in the street, and I picked it up with my sword.” In human events, past performance is always a key predictor of future results. But neither you nor I is going to be Caesar, so this truth raises the crucial question for us—what to do when Caesar comes?

Michael Anton has recently popularized, in his seminal book *The Stakes*, the concepts of Blue Caesar and Red Caesar, authoritarians of Left and Right. If Blue Caesar were to take power, that would be very bad for all decent Americans, and we could put into practice many of the tips from Robert Conquest’s 1985 *What to Do When the Russians Come*, a serious book of advice about what to do had the Soviets occupied America.

But I am not afraid of Blue Caesar; his rule would be very clownish and very brief. No Left authoritarian system has ever been even slightly competent; a system based on an ideology that denies reality is doomed from inception, eating its seed corn from the beginning, and that is particularly true of today’s uniquely insane American Left. That none of today’s prominent American leftists can be imagined as Caesar without laughing proves this. Even a new, highly competent man of the Left, a modern Lenin or Stalin, could gain no traction today; he would be unable to convincingly shed his white privilege or to adequately elevate the voices of crying wine aunts, and thus nobody on the Left would follow him. If a determined or desperate man of the Left were to ignore this truth, and attempt to override the fatties and the furries by force, very soon a circular, but intersectional, firing squad would leave all dead on the ground.

Red Caesar, on the other hand, is likely. Despite his moniker, he will not be driven by an ideology (and Red Caesar will, without any doubt whatsoever, be a he). He will probably be some measure of realist and

opportunist, but realism makes him Right, because realism means he will reject out of hand the entire panoply of today's Left beliefs. He won't have any familiar ideology, because there are no ideologies remaining on the Right (Randian objectivism and Austrian-school economics do not count). Red Caesar will have focuses, hobbyhorses, opinions, favored groups, and angles, to be sure, but he is unlikely to be the slave of an ideology, any more than his namesake, Julius Caesar, was.

Or is that the correct namesake? I think only in part. Julius Caesar broke the Roman world, or rather mercifully opened the arteries of a dying Republic. Octavian, Augustus Caesar, after a variety of succession struggles, rebuilt a new thing, informed by the wisdom of the old. He was helped by luck, talent, and personality, to be sure, but he was the indispensable man in the transition from dead-end Republic to successful Empire. Which of these two men best represents Red Caesar? Hopefully both. We cannot know what Julius Caesar would have done with his power, and perhaps he would have taken a track similar to Augustus, but we can hope for some combination of our two historical precedents, resulting in an Augustan Age.

Is there a third option, Purple Caesar, who will try to split the difference? No, not for us. Our differences cannot be split; there can be only one. The insanity of today's Left, which is merely the inevitable end stage of Enlightenment thought and which will be reached again and again until that dead end in human history is destroyed and cauterized, cannot coexist with reality and a healthy society. Yet the Left will never stop pushing towards its chimerical utopia, so dividing the baby, keeping some Left principles while rejecting others, would merely delay the inevitable final confrontation and disposition of Left ideas to the trash bin. It'd be like putting a scented bandage on a gangrenous limb—you may not see or smell the trouble anymore, but you still have a big problem.

True, Caesar will not be a Right restorationist, which will make some sad. He will have no statues of William F. Buckley and Abraham Lincoln in his palace; he will not fulfil fantasies of integralists. He'll just ignore Right restorationists. They are no threat to him—the only restorationist threat to Caesar will be the American Left, which has held power for nearly a hundred years. As to today's Right, likely he will, like Francisco Franco and António Salazar, coerce and browbeat

all elements of the Right, and the few remaining centrists, into a party of national unity, where Bronze Age Pervert and Adrian Vermeule will be made to get along.

Let's not get too excited about Caesar, though. This will be a high-risk, high-reward time of history; such times inevitably are. As with his namesakes, though we tend to gloss over their sins, he will be unpleasant in many ways, and in more ways than we would like. For the Left, certainly, he will be very unpleasant indeed. He may retain the rule of law, as Franco did, but even then, both the interests of justice and of Caesar himself (cementing power most of all) will dictate punishments. But in truth the rule of law is likely to bend, if not break at some places and times; Caesarism doesn't work in the long term unless the Left is wholly gone and totally discredited, and Caesar will, at least sometimes, therefore resort to proscription and extra-legal action, as did Augustus, despite his more benevolent later reputation. Most Left leaders will be exiled, if they're lucky, and regardless, for all the Left, Caesar will be a nightmare—lustration and rustication is the best many can hope for, and the rest will have to earn an honest living. (Those who merely tend Left by fashion will quickly adopt the new fashion, and forget their former opinions.) But who cares about the Left's fate? They've earned their reward. My question is how innocent, normal Americans will be affected by Caesar.

The average unimportant person, who is not ideological and is not a parasite, won't have to worry much about Caesar. In fact, his life is likely to improve. If he works for a large corporation, true, the old owners may be expropriated, but so what? The entire odious Human Resources department will disappear, after all, replaced with a small team of payroll clerks. He will no longer be forced to attend anti-white hate sessions and made to watch while those far inferior to him are elevated above him on the basis of preferred characteristics. Nobody will watch his social media for infractions against the ever-shifting ideology of his masters. His taxes may go down. What's not to like? Yes, the switchover to the new system may have cost him dear, the more so if it was violent, and yes, other unsettling changes may come over time, but his daily existence will, on the whole, improve. True, if you make your living, as a huge number of Americans do, as a parasite, performing some non-productive activity that adds nothing to social

capital, you will likely have to find a new occupation less to your taste, but that's a feature, not a bug.

We should note, though, that during the time of Caesar's establishment, and after, the common people will have an important collective role. We should not forget how the common people, putatively without power or role, made the position of Caesar's assassins untenable, and therefore ensured a new thing for a new time. The support of public opinion is a useful, nearly indispensable, tool for transition from a man leading a change from one form of government to another. As José Ortega y Gasset said, force follows public opinion, even where popular sovereignty is not a principle of government, and Caesar will need to have, and maintain, force to achieve his goals. If well-done, this symbiosis between the common people and Caesar creates a beneficial feedback loop, without directly involving any of the common people in governance.

It's the important person who should have more concern than the average or common person. In such times, a higher profile is both opportunity and risk. Those not average, due to wealth, talent, or status, who are not Left will still find that neutrality is mostly not an option, even if they do not seek gain by getting in Caesar's good graces. They will have to bend the knee, whether they want to or not, for not doing so risks being seen as potentially dangerous to Caesar, and that is, well, dangerous. More direct dubious effects are certain as well. For example, Caesar will almost certainly face economic crises, both during the takeover and as irrationality is squeezed out of the system. He will therefore have a strong incentive to fund himself by seizing property of the wealthy. Perhaps seizing the property of dead or exiled leftists will be enough; it was in Roman times. But a rich man should fear Caesar making requests, that are not requests, for "contributions," and a talented man should ponder whether he may be "encouraged" to lend his talents to the new order. Caesar can't afford to have his system feature too much such instability for long, but for some time at least the upper orders will rest uneasy, even if they are supporters of the new order.

Complicating all his actions, and a new thing in history, is that Caesar will face a nearly irresistible urge to adopt today's surveillance state, in both its government and private manifestations, for his own ends. The totalitarian temptation is very strong, and because Caesar will

know that, for a long time at least, his life depends on maintaining his power, he is unlikely to refuse to use any tool, no matter how objectively problematic it is for keeping a decent society. For the same reason, he will likely adopt the gun seizure goals of today's Left, perhaps limiting firearm ownership to those enrolled in supportive organized militias. This would not be the future American gun rights advocates wanted, but the American habit of unbridled private weapon ownership is, despite its very apparent virtues for us today, a historical anomaly, and for obvious reasons. These actions, combined with a turn to paranoia (not uncommon for authoritarians as they age) or a defective successor (equally, if not more, common) could easily result in a society not much better than the one in which we now live, obviating any benefit we got from Caesar. That would be unfortunate.

Beyond these and other costs and risks for individual citizens, Caesar will face many management problems, the poisonous fruits of our current system, dealing with which will directly affect the populace, changing their relative positions. For example, if Caesar rules a land more or less contiguous with today's America, he will face a core problem of any large country—diversity is the very opposite of strength. Yes, the citizenry's daily life will become largely depoliticized (both because the average person would have no role whatsoever in politics and because politicization of everything is a project of the then-disappeared Left), removing that corrosive element, but many cultural, racial, regional, and economic differences would remain. The likely result, encouraged by Caesar, would be a move to some type of organization resembling the Ottoman millet system, where citizens self-organize on the basis of what they regard as core characteristics, and interact with the government on that basis, with considerable self-rule within their communities. Think the Amish or the Hasidim writ large. The problem, of course, is that this is not to the taste of many. But that's the way the cookie crumbles.

Still, such a communitarian reorganization may not be enough to allow stable rule; even with its decent historical pedigree, quasi-decentralization has no successful modern analogue, and Caesar may have a centralizing impulse, a desire to bind the new Americans together more strongly. He won't be able to sell the old myth of America as a propositional nation with popular sovereignty. So what could he replace it with? In practice, some type of corporatism embedded in a myth of

the nation, probably, and maybe he will come up with some new binding belief. He could push Space as a unifying action, the new, high frontier, or he could push some kind of refreshed national consciousness to override differences, or, less pleasantly, he could force homogeneity by pushing out elements of the society deemed, perhaps artificially, incompatible with his new vision. The risks here are high, though the rewards are, too, if the right path is found.

Whatever other actions he takes, though, Caesar's first management problem will be to reverse our current grossly inadequate birth rates. Population decline will very shortly destroy any society, not least because dynamism is purely a function of a society skewed toward the youth (so long as they are formed in virtue), and our low birth rates are a function of corrosive autonomic individualism, which a wise Caesar will see is incompatible with civilizational success, and thus with his success, and glory. If he can succeed in fixing this problem, which would require a wholesale revision of the opinions of the populace, away from dead Left doctrines to virtue, he can likely succeed in other reality-based revisions. If he can't, nothing he does will matter anyway. It's a good test for his rule.

Again, though, let's not have too rosy a vision. Even though a wise Caesar will restore virtue to the citizenry, there is no reason to assume Caesar himself will be any paragon of virtue. If he begins with virtue, he will very likely be corrupted, at least to some degree, over time. He is unlikely to be a Cincinnatus or a George Washington, a man who gave up his power by choice in his prime. He's not even likely to be Sulla, who retired from being dictator and while dictator famously, despite his many enemies, regularly appeared in public without a bodyguard. This is, perhaps, unfortunate, but it cannot be helped. Better a dubious ruler than a wholly rotten society that is heading into the pit of chaos.

Every political change is a throw of the dice; utopian visions are for fools, but some stepping into the unknown must be done, and that with optimism and hope. There is no shame in staking our future on a chance. Better that we choose action, and even odds for a greatly improved society, with little chance for a worse society, than doing nothing, and getting a ninety-nine percent odds of our debased current society hurtling downward along existing trend lines. What to do when Caesar comes? In short—celebrate, and then get down to dealing

with new reality, each doing our best, as we are situated, to advance our society and our fellow citizens. This simple vision was once assumed to be our collective goal, and with luck, we can build on the lessons of the past to create a renewed future.