

A funny thing about history

History is often like the remake of an old movie, with the original usually being the better version. The biggest problem with history is that it doesn't stop with one remake, it keeps producing the same movie over and over, and it never improves. The only differences are in the cast, crew, and title.



You can't beat a system you can't understand

By Sam Bari

For instance, when Attila the Hun started his career as king and general of the Hun Empire during the fifth century, the Romans recognized him as "The Scourge of God." Because of his savagery when conquering adversaries, history books remember him as Attila and his "barbarian hordes."

"Barbarian" seemed to have a nice ring to it, so the term stuck to Attila and his successors for at least seven centuries. The last of the barbarians was probably Kublai Khan, or maybe it was Arnold Schwarzenegger, I forget which, but I am sure it was one of the two.

The purest use of the term "barbarian" in ancient times referred to any community or tribe not belonging to one of the great civilizations, which included Greeks, Romans, and Christians. Today, it just means an uncultured or brutish person. Hmmm . . . maybe I was right, Schwarzenegger might really be the last of the barbarians. Did I say that? My meds must need an adjustment.

Although barbarian methods were not very sophisticated, they were effective. Their modus operandi consisted of arriving at the gates of small villages with 10,000 bloodthirsty bad actors from central casting. They would then threaten the locals with total annihilation unless they handed over a healthy percentage of their wealth. As meager as their victims' wealth may have been, the barbarians expected payment on a weekly or monthly basis in perpetuity, which, as I understand it, is a long time.

If the villagers did not cooperate, pillaging and other violent and distasteful nastiness allegedly ensued, but the records do not reflect many details of these incidents as actually occurring. For all we know, they are figments of scriptwriters' delusions designed to attract teenage male audiences.

A few centuries later, history resurrected the barbarians in Sicily where they practiced the same work ethic as Attila and Arnold. The modern term for the second

coming of the barbarians was "the Mafia." They were kind of "barbarians light," operating in smaller groups. They did prove their worth though, by waging successful campaigns in larger villages like New York, Providence, and Las Vegas. They were slightly less sophisticated than their predecessors, but didn't smell as bad . . . Well . . . not usually anyway, or so I've been told.

The reality is that the barbarians and the Mafia are the same, although they are products of different centuries. They are both gangsters, but the Mafia is a bad remake of the original. Today, we have remade them again on an international scale, and we call them terrorists.

Other examples we might mention of history repeating itself include the kings and queens of yesteryear. They are predecessors of today's dictators. Both have absolute rule.

We measure the difference between the royalty and nobility of old and the dictators and their henchman of today, in degrees of sophistication and the complexity of ceremony. However, whether they are elegantly dressed and well spoken, or gaudily clad and ignorant, when kings and dictators say "Off with their heads," heads come off.

History has repeatedly produced versions of these characters for centuries. Their ideology never changes. They are all power mongers who terrorize their constituents or defenseless victims into surrendering what little they have.

In modern times, we have a kind of loosely worded reward system for terrorists and other gangsters if they are successful. Whenever a group of terrorists overthrows a governing body, they declare

themselves to be in charge. If they manage to organize an economic system and show the rest of the world a reasonable sense of order, their status is elevated from "terrorist" to "the recognized government."

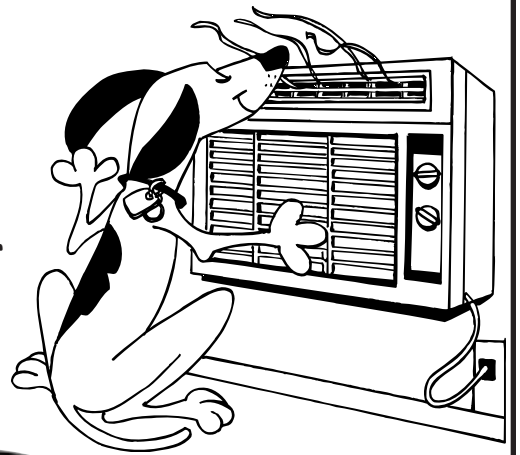
"Government" is a general term that gives legitimacy to power mongers who fleece their subjects of a large percentage of their net worth with impunity. And to think, we often elect them into office. Most are little more than passive-aggressive barbarians, gangsters, terrorists or whatever you want to call them, the only requirement to qualify as a candidate.

When I stop and seriously think about it, I am not aware of a single country whose original government didn't get into power by force, violent or otherwise. Says a lot about human nature wouldn't you say? Anyway, I believe history is a big part of that system we can't understand. I am not kidding, I really need to have my meds adjusted.

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