

Facing Reality



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[Is the United States an Empire? Critical look @ presumptions, leading, poor logic, convictions.] American History - 1900

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<http://newsmax.com/archives/articles/2003/7/22/144120.shtml>

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All societies, despite protestations to the contrary, have proscribed issues, matters that are off-limits, questions that are not asked ---- and we Americans, like everyone else, have our forbidden subjects. There are times, however, when it is necessary to violate taboos and bring one of these subjects into the open, to face reality. This is one of those times.

The United States is an empire.

[Stop!

What do you think, without reading further.

Is the United States an empire?

Does it depend upon the definition of the word, Empire?

Without reading further, is this going to be information or opinion?

- 1) A political unit having an extensive territory or comprising a number of territories or nations and ruled by a single supreme authority
- 2) Imperial or imperialistic sovereignty, domination, or control: "There is a growing sense that the course of empire is shifting toward the . . . Asians" (James Traub.)]

Empire has little to do with a crown or with a purple mantle or with ostentatious titles or even with the acquisition of territory. Those are modalities and formal trappings that change with time and circumstances. **An empire is a country that extends its domination and expands its influence beyond its borders, a nation able and willing to exert its might on other nations.**

[Alright, we are speaking of an Empire of the 2nd type. Not a supreme authority, but perhaps domination in the world of ideas and getting our way more than not getting our way.

- * Without going further, we could arrive in this situation for a host of reasons. Because the Pope or some other blessed religious leader lived within our borders.
- * Economic reasons - if they wish to prosper, they need to give us more

attention they would like.

- * Out of respect.
- * Because we threaten with a big club.
- * Because we threaten with an economic club.
 - * Is any club of any value if no one believes you will use it?
 - * How can they be convinced?
 - * What if OPEC was able to revive their oil prices as they had in the 1970s?]

Today the United States is such a country; today we are such a nation.

We don't like to view ourselves in imperial terms, but we proudly acknowledge being the most powerful and influential country on earth. We reject the term and used euphemisms as substitutes ---- leading, hegemonic, superpower ---- as we are attracted by the reality of our wide-ranging influence, and this is much in accordance with the experience of others before us.

Empires have not been prone to admit openly their expansive nature, especially at their inception, and they have explained the increase of their power as something other than self-interest or the will to conquer and dominate.

[What? Are we in denial?

Or should we first establish if are or becoming an empire?

Is there any possibility an Empire may form elsewhere for other reasons?

Is our Super Power status a given or in jeopardy?

Population - Growing or stable+

Economy - As in vibrant

Economy - As in % of World Wealth

Economy - Independent

Resources - As in not @ another's mercy.

War machine - Technology advanced, manpower, leading edge.

Culture - As in a way of life envied by others.]

Alexander marched east to take revenge on the Persians. The Romans extended their frontiers to prevent attacks. Spain and Portugal saw themselves as anointed carries of the True Faith. Napoleon viewed his mastery over other countries as the triumph of new ideas over the old order. The Japanese wanted to increase the glory of their ruling house. England, France, Germany and Italy explained their foreign conquests as civilizing enterprises.

Imperial expansion is always undertaken under the cover of a rationalization, under the guise of a principle ---- since the increase in power, the accumulation of riches and the broadening of influence seem to demand an explanation, a justification.

[True or false?

When we find ourselves doing something we would rather not admit to, do we not rationalize?

What exactly is rationalization?

(To devise self-satisfying but incorrect reasons for (one's behavior):)
If we are rationalizing because we do not like what we are becoming, how can we determine if and when we have a true picture?]

Why empires feel compelled to deny their imperial role would be an interesting topic to explore, one that would tell us a great deal about our nature and our politics, but **such an exploration is a long-term project for historians, psychologists and philosophers.**

[20 / 20 hindsight is perhaps the only way to get a true picture, perhaps?]

The contemporary fashion is to denounce empires as immoral and as relics of the past, and it would be easier to agree with the former than with the latter part of such an understanding; however, such a judgment, regardless of how satisfying to the ego of the one passing it, is of little value in examining reality beyond the presumptuousness of the moralizer.

We, as those before us, **want to mask the imperial nature of our actions by casting them under a non-imperial light.** At the beginning of World War II, Life publisher Henry Luce and Vice President Henry Wallace clashed over the form and purpose of America's international future.

[Is this a leap or a shrewd argument?

Have we determined if the US is an Empire yet?

Have we determined if we **MIGHT** be rationalizing our situation and be somewhat in the dark?

Does the statement about our using a non-imperial light presume facts have already been established and we are to guilty to see them?

Have you seen many arguments in this article to make the point?]

Luce wanted **United States capitalism**, once the war was over, to spearhead the ascendancy of American influence. Wallace saw the **internationalization of Roosevelt's New Deal** as the mechanism to save the rest of the world and went as far, in reference to our future world role, as to call America "the chosen of the Lord."

Luce and Wallace represented in their day, respectively, the **conservative and liberal visions of the future**, and while disagreeing on the means to be employed in the increase of American power and on the ideas justifying that increase, they had no disagreement on **the need to expand American might** ---- or on the righteousness of that expansion. Without employing the term, and probably without ever thinking about it explicitly, they both advocated an imperial future for the United States.

[Somehow, with these 2 paradigms presented, I have to wonder about the

Globalization move. Can an Empire be subject to the UN or other Global bodies?

If the US is subject to Global organizations, then would not the Globalist be closer to an Empire than the US?]

Whatever our view of empire, and regardless of how frequently we may denounce the concept, empire has never ceased to be with us. Its form and adornments change with
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time and fashion, but the principle sustaining it remains; empire is as much with us today as it was 100 or 1,000 years ago ---- its accessories are new, its essence is not, and thinking otherwise is turning a blind eye to the obstinacy of its persistence.

The collapse of the British, French, Italian and Japanese empires after World War II was succeeded by the imperial surge of the USSR and of the USA. Moscow and Washington became centers of influence and control that extended their grip beyond their respective borders and came to dominate the political and economic life of the globe.

We had no difficulty detecting the imperial nature of Soviet expansion and George Kennan fired the first salvo of the Cold War by calling attention to it in his famous 1947 article; but we had difficulty detecting the similarly imperial nature of our growing power and influence.

The Soviets established and held on to their areas of influence; we established and held on to ours. The Soviets used techniques and approaches consonant with their society and political system; we used techniques and approaches consonant with our society and political system.

The Soviets established control over Eastern Europe on the basis of Red Army strength and heavy-handed political manipulation. We spread and solidified our influence in Western Europe on the basis of the Marshall Plan, NATO, tilting elections in favor of our friends in Italy and France, and making alliances with Franco in Spain and Salazar in Portugal.

When North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950, we responded in kind. When anti-Soviet riots erupted in East Germany in 1953, we did nothing. Communist-leaning Jacobo Arbenz took over in Guatemala and we overthrew him in 1954. In 1956 Hungary revolted and we did nothing. When Berlin was blockaded in 1961 we challenged the blockade, and that same year the threat of a pro-Soviet regime in the former Belgian Congo was quashed with the assassination of Patrice Lumumba.

Castro slid by us and this led to the edge of atomic war in 1962, but an accommodation was reached and Castro was neutralized. In 1965, when pro-Communist forces were gaining control of the Dominican Republic, we led the invasion of that country. When Czechoslovakia revolted in 1968 we did nothing, but in 1973 when Chile began to go socialist under Salvador Allende we supported and aided his overthrow.

Notwithstanding dislocations and accepted areas of instability in Africa and Southeast Asia, a pattern had emerged: The Soviets ruled their part of the world; we ruled ours.

[Well, now we have something. An interesting listing of events.
Do you believe these facts are true?
Do you believe they are all the facts?
Do you trust this is a true picture or the picture the author is providing?
What would increase your confidence in what is written?
What would decrease your confidence in what is written?]

United States was left as the only superpower, as the indisputably mightiest nation in the world, and its influence grew accordingly, by deed and by default.

Still, we Americans remain reluctant to acknowledge the imperial character of our power, and as we impose our institutions and ideas on others, we look for ways to disguise the imposition; hence, we say to ourselves that we do not force other countries to adopt our economic principles but simply encourage them to undertake reforms; that we do not dictate our political ideas but try to enlighten other nations as to the benefits of electoral democracy; that we do not tell other peoples how to behave but attempt to educate them on the pre-eminence of our values; we even prescribe, mandate, freedom onto others, in the name of freedom.

We are **not interested in lording over other people, we honestly believe, we just want to help** ---- we want to let other people know and enjoy the advantages of our ways.

[**Why the phrase "we honestly believe" ?**

Is it true, or is the insertion of the statement make an additional statement?]

We cannot be blamed for **believing as we believe**. This has traditionally been the manner of the world and it could very well be that the negation of imperial design is one of the supports of imperial action, and that if we were to openly acknowledge our imperial role we would be undermining it.

[**Should we not have a set of standards or belief system?**

Should we not act our convictions?

If we do have a belief system and we act on our convictions, should we not promote them beyond our borders?

Are we not seeing "competition", in the world of ideas, as well as economic?]

It could be; but it could also be that with our life as a nation on the line, with our imperial future yet to be given form, with new risks and responsibilities staring at us, we need to take a good look at ourselves and acknowledge our power, since its scope is unique, like nothing the world has ever seen before ---- the first nation able to project its might over the entire globe; the first nation equipped to fulfill the ultimate dream of every empire.

There have been regional empires and empires that exerted their power far from their shores, but there has never been an empire with the might of our military, the wealth of our economy, and the impact of our communications; **no other empire has come close to the clout of our strength or the weight of our sway.**

[**Is this a bad thing? Something to apologize for?**

Has not guilt shown itself to be a motivation and mover of ideas?]

But power is an irresistible magnet that attracts the full array of human emotions ---- from **love and desire to imitate, to hatred and wish to injure**. And as we intrude into the lives of others, we become a focus of attraction for those emotions.

It matters little whether the sentiments aroused rest on factual or fictitious bases, since
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their direction and intensity are not determined by objective criteria but by whatever combination of predisposition, observation and imagination is responsible for human feelings. **Some people want to be part of us ---- and lose their lives trying; and others want to destroy us ---- and lose their lives trying.**

[**What do you think of that statement? True?**]

As empire brings pride and rewards, it also conveys dangers and tribulations ---- **hence the Sept. 11 attack.** We can hold a man, a group, a country or miscreant terrorism responsible for it, and with patience and luck we may unravel the plot and punish the perpetrators, but if we think of this act in isolation, if we see it as an aberration and not in its proper dimension, we are missing the point, ignoring its lesson: The advantages and gratification of being an empire cannot be detached from its liabilities; nor its glory from its burdens.

Like it or not, aware of it or not, we have become an empire ---- and this is its price.

[**Price? Something happened unique to us because we are an Empire?
Has no other nation had terrorist troubles?
Has no other nation had adversaries out to destroy them?
Is this logical or did we make another leap?**]

Knowing this is the price raises two questions: Is it worth it? And, do we have a choice?

[**Knowing? This was a fact? I thought we had some questions about it?
Either way, worth and choice are interesting.
If the price is NOT a fact, then are worth and choice, interesting as they are, relevant?**]

The **first question doesn't have an answer**, or it has as many answers as we are able to imagine, which is the same as having no answer. In considering the pros and cons, in untangling the complicated web of interconnections between power and peril, we soon learn that philosophy, history, religion, even common sense, offer no sure guidance.

The second question can be answered: No, **we don't have a choice.**

[**Sound true or not?**]

We have arrived at the present state of affairs neither by conspiracy nor by design, but through a long and complicated historical process that cannot be unraveled without chaotic consequences for us and for the rest of the world. **We couldn't abandon our dominant position without betraying our national interests and without jeopardizing our way of life and everything we cherish and value ---- and without sinking the world in turmoil.**

[**Sound true or false?**]

We could **not rollback our military power without weakening the bases of trade and**

commerce upon which our economy rests and without **risking chaos and instability in a large number of societies** around the world.

The widespread acceptance of elections and free trade after the Soviet debacle is not the result of the miraculous awakening of the human mind to absolute truths, but a more mundane reaction to the pre-eminence of our power. Let's not forget how ready countries were to adopt "Marxist" and "socialist" garb when the Soviet Union was still in business. **If we were to put down our arms, no benevolent international government would emerge, but a vacuum would occur**, with a country or countries struggling to fill it ---- by less-than-peaceful means.

[Some, such as Clinton, have said in 30 years the US will not be the dominant nation anymore. Europe is attempting to unite to better able to compete with us. Other alliances are forming. Other economies are growing or waning. Our resources are depleting while our environmental concerns increase. Globalization seems to be on the increase (*transfer of wealth from rich to poorer countries*.)

Why does Empire descriptions always seem to be viewed in terms of military power? If most countries could drop a number of atomic bombs on any major city in the world, how would military supremacy be judged?]

Voluntarily relinquishing our present power, therefore, is an unacceptable, almost incomprehensible, proposition since it would involve endangering our economic security, abandoning our beliefs and relinquishing all sense of national and international responsibility. The chimera of American preponderance being replaced by a peaceful global federation based on good will and human fellowship is just that, a chimera.

If we don't have a choice, then, what are we to do?

[More to the point, why go through this thought exercise if we have no choice and no options?]

We have to **acknowledge, with prudence and without arrogance, what we are: a nation whose might and actions affect all other nations, a nation with worldwide power and, therefore, with worldwide responsibilities**. We must accept these responsibilities without subordinating our interests to the interests of others, but without forgetting that we have become the overseer of peoples and the arbiter of their affairs.

[In the first statement, are we being led again? We need to admit the truth about us even though we wish to deny it. Even if we cannot see it ourselves, this author sees it, and he would not lie to us, so it must be true.

Is that how we come to know what is true?

What responsibilities?

What responsibilities does an Empire have above what a Nation might have?

What responsibilities does an Empire have above an individual?

Did anyone think of Corporate vs Individual Charity when that statement was made?]

No one can expect us to place others' priorities above ours, but other people can, and do,

expect evenhandedness in the manner in which we use our might and exercise our influence. And evenhanded we must be, above all else, because it is good politics ---- not the politics of the ideologue but the politics of the statesman which is, in our situation, our best protection.

This, however, demands a realistic assessment of the world around us and this is far more problematic now than it was during the Cold War, when it was relatively simple to separate friend from foe: Communist the latter, anti-Communist the former.

Religion and nationalities have returned with atavistic vigor to claim the zeal and militancy that political doctrines had appropriated from them. So the clear distinction between enemy and ally that could be established from the October revolution to the fall of the Soviet Union is no longer tenable. The Communists have all converted to capitalism, and **conflicts and confrontations are no longer among nations with different political creeds, but among races, tribes and religions, or internecine struggles within such groups.**

We don't allow national wars any longer but cannot prevent this other type of strife, and it is under these circumstances that we must exercise our power and direct our influence, and it is under these circumstances that we must determine who to favor and who to penalize. And **favor and penalize we do, by action and by inaction, due to the weight of our economy, the clout of our military, and the reach of our communications.**

[**Don't allow anymore?**

What Arrogance!

Perhaps so, but by our actions or by barriers up or down by the other nations?]

In order to sort things out in this new and confusing world, we must begin by admitting to ourselves the extent and effect of our power, that we have become an empire, and that this has nothing to do with pomp and circumstance because the accoutrements of old empires are gone for good and our country has been a major contributor to their disappearance.

We are not about to mint a crown or give our president a purple mantle or invent fancy titles for our politicians or use the term "empire" to refer to ourselves. What we must do, if we are to succeed and survive, is to know the world as now constituted and learn our role in it: a role of great rewards and dangers ---- and not an easy one to master.

But master it we must, because history is unforgiving and unconcerned with the cost of its course or the burden of its fluctuations. We either adjust our policies and attitudes to the realities facing us or we will be discarded; and we cannot think otherwise, because the **list of nations that once thought themselves immune, invulnerable or indispensable is indeed a long one.**

Our choice is clear ---- and simple: We either grow with the job or fail as a nation, and if we are to cope with the challenges facing us, we must review the position of our country with care and put on the table some forbidden subjects.

We have to question the puerile indulgence of some of our ways, the disconnection we have

introduced between privilege and obligation, between rights and duty; we have to realize that we have been raising platitudes about what we deserve to the status of moral principles without preserving the link between what one does and what one should expect, and that such injudicious suppositions weaken, rather than strengthen, our ability to perceive reality and to deal with it effectively.

[This seems an odd thing to get from this author, but none the less, how do you react to this?

We have deserve / moral principles

We have what one does / what one should expect]

That the world has shrunk is a cliché. That the globe would come under a temperate world government has been for a long time the pipe dream of idealists who couch their illusions in the mystical thread of human brotherhood.

World government indeed is coming; as a matter of fact, it has already begun to materialize, tentatively but materialize nevertheless, through the pre-eminent position of the United States ---- and this might be the most difficult forbidden subject to bring to light, the taboo that will offer the most obstinate resistance, and the one we must overcome if we are to see our way clear into the future

[When we spoke of Globalization before, we may have considered it as another force to contend with the US. Here, the author believes it is the US.

What do you think?]



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