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AMERICA AS EMPIRE

GLOBAL LEADER *OR* ROGUE POWER ?

An Excerpt From

America As Empire: Global Leader of Rogue Power?

by Jim Garrison

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FOREWORD

SINCE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, the perception—and the reality—is that the United States is no longer a nation among nations. It is an empire among nations. The short, stark, naked geopolitical history of the last hundred years is World War I, World War II, the Cold War, the American empire. This last is unlikely to be less important than the other three.

Although the United States has been an unrecognized empire for a long time, two years ago it was struck a mighty blow. The world saw that the American empire was not invulnerable. The shocking vulnerability of America shaped the recognition that it was both a mighty empire and that it had been severely wounded.

America's response was entirely predictable. Throughout history, all empires—including the great Roman Empire—had to give the unassailable impression that they were invincible. Whenever they were made to appear vulnerable, their invincibility had to be reasserted.

By hitting Afghanistan and Iraq, America was reestablishing its invincibility. As an empire—consciously or unconsciously—America had to do this, no matter what. Of course, it was done ostensibly to make the world safe from terrorists and from weapons of mass destruction. That is another practice of empires.

They justify their use of power by invoking lofty goals that are said to benefit everybody.

When Winston Churchill was a young officer in Africa at the end of the nineteenth century, he believed that the British Empire, under whose flag he served, had a historic, civilizing mission. The empire's purpose, he wrote, was to "give peace to warring tribes, to administer justice where all was violence, to strike the chains off the slave, to plant the seeds of commerce and learning." He asked himself, "What more beautiful idea can inspire human effort?" History has not been so generous.

What makes Jim Garrison's *America As Empire* so useful is that he places the global events beginning with September 11 into a much larger historical and philosophical context that helps immensely in understanding what is taking place in the world. This book is by no means anti-American. Indeed, it is because Garrison is so devoted to America's possible future, and to the possibilities of great leadership, that he makes the appeal for America to make the most of its leadership. And he makes it very clear that only the United States can lead.

After World War I, President Woodrow Wilson established the League of Nations. After World War II, President Roosevelt and President Truman established the United Nations and a host of international institutions that have provided the framework for global governance for the past sixty years. But these institutions were all developed before the advent of globalization, which now mandates a new examination of the kinds of institutions needed in an integrating world. Leadership reminiscent of Wilson and Roosevelt is now needed again.

If it attains this level of greatness, says Garrison, America could be the *final empire,* for what the next generation of global institutions could bequeath to the world is a democratic and integrated global system in which empire will no longer have a place. Garrison thus wants America to see itself as a *transitional empire,* one that uses its power to build mechanisms that will institutionalize America as partner rather than as empire. This is the theme that unites the entire book.

Garrison believes that the United States will dominate the twenty-first century as Rome dominated the first century. He asks not whether the United States will do this but rather whether it will *acknowledge* that this is what it is doing. Only if it takes up the mantle of leadership consciously will it be able to determine what kind of empire it will be.

Garrison asks this provocative question, "America at its moment of power, the world at its moment of integration: How will they come together? Will the world experience *pax Americana*, the American peace? Or *pox Americana*, the American plague?" How Americans and the world decide this will determine both America's legacy in history and the fate of the twenty-first century.

John Naisbitt
Vienna, September 11, 2003

INTRODUCTION

From Republic to Empire

I WRITE THIS BOOK AS A TENTH-GENERATION AMERICAN. My people on my father's side were Huguenots from southern France, an entrepreneurial Protestant group persecuted under King Louis XIV. In 1686 they fled to the New World, landing on the shores of North Carolina. They were among the earliest settlers of America, helping to shape colonial life through trading, farming, preaching, and writing. My forebears fought in the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. They joined the westward expansion as pioneers, and my immediate family arrived in California during the Great Depression of the 1930s. There, my father married my mother, a second-generation immigrant from Sicily.

My family's history has been America's history, for which I am grateful and proud. I deeply value the freedom to be uniquely myself without constraints imposed by government or class. America represents this freedom. It is this light that America shines on the world. I have lived this freedom, and in this sense, I am American to the very marrow of my bones.

I also write this book as a citizen of the world. My parents were Baptist missionaries in China, where I was born in 1951. They then moved to Taiwan, where I grew up attending a missionary school, speaking Chinese as fluently as English. As a child, I trav-

eled throughout Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, coming to realize at an early age that the earth was indeed round and humanity rich with exotic diversity. I came back to the United States when I was fifteen and attended high school in San Jose, California, but then went abroad again for most of my university education, traveling through Africa, Latin America, Europe, and Russia. I have subsequently spent most of my professional life working and traveling internationally.

It is out of the interaction between my American roots and my international activities that this book arose, especially as I became aware of the dynamic power of the United States in the world and the growing alienation of the world from the United States. When I was a child in Taiwan in the 1950s, being American elicited respect and emulation, even envy. Now, fifty years later, being American elicits resentment and suspicion, even hatred. People used to think of America as a global leader. Now a majority of the world thinks of America as a rogue power. Why?

The answer to this question has to a large degree to do with what America has become: America has made the transition from republic to empire. It is no longer what it was. It was founded to be a beacon of light unto the nations, a democratic and egalitarian haven to which those seeking freedom could come. It has become an unrivaled empire among the nations, exercising dominion over them. How it behaves and what it represents have fundamentally changed. It used to represent freedom; now it represents power.

It was when I began to realize that my country had crossed the threshold from republic to empire that I began to study the history of empire—the only concept large and dynamic enough to explain what was going on. In many ways, this is the intent of the book, simply to provide a larger framework, a more complex metaphor with which to understand America and the world. *Republic* implies a single nation democratically governed, which is what America was founded to be. In contrast, the very essence of *empire* is one nation's control over other nations. Although America remains a republic inside its own borders, it has become an empire in relationship with the rest of the world. In this sense, America is an *imperial republic.*

The inordinate power of the United States disturbs people on the American left and excites people on the American right. Liberals are uncomfortable with the notion of an American empire because they are uneasy with the fact that the United States has so much power, especially military power. They would prefer that the United States simply be part of the community of nations—perhaps a first among equals but an equal nevertheless, using its power to further human welfare. Conservatives, on the other hand, are jubilant that America is finally breaking out of multilateral strictures and asserting its imperial prerogatives unilaterally around the world. For them, national self-interest, enforced by military supremacy, should be the guiding principle of U.S. policy. The liberal notion that the United States should confine its power within multilateral frameworks and the conservative desire to apply American power unilaterally for narrow self-interest are both inadequate. There is a deeper and more complex reality that needs to be noted.

Whatever qualms people may have about it, America *has* become an empire, and there is no turning back. As Heraclitus taught, one can never enter the same river twice. The transition from republic to empire is irreversible, like the metamorphosis from caterpillar to butterfly. Once power is attained, it is not surrendered. It is only exercised. The central question before America, therefore, is what it should do with all the power it has. How should it assert its authority and to what ends?

America should acknowledge—even celebrate—its transition to empire and the acquisition of global mastery. What began as a motley band of colonies 225 years ago is now not only the strongest nation in the world but the strongest nation in the history of the world. Americans should be justly proud of this achievement. It has been attained with enormous effort and at great cost.

The world, too, should modulate its antipathy toward America, realizing that America has become so powerful in part because it has been so benign. This might be a little hard to acknowledge for those who have felt the boot of American strength, but consider the three other major attempts at empire in the last century: the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, and Imperial Japan. What would

have happened if any of these empires had defeated the United States and established global hegemony? What would the world be like today if Nazi Germany and Japan had won the Second World War, or if the Soviets had won the Cold War? We should all breathe a sigh of relief that these eventualities never occurred and that a democratic nation committed to democratic values triumphed and established global dominion.

But having prevailed in the competition against these other empires and having achieved what they were denied, Americans should be aware that there are now enormous responsibilities to shoulder, both in relation to the United States itself and in relation to the world. An empire's reign can be long or short, its fate noble or tragic, depending on how astutely its leadership is exercised and its decisions are made. The exercise of power is highly unstable—especially the near-absolute power that empires represent. It provides opportunity, but it also corrupts. It demands wise action, but it also seduces to the dark side.

There are thus all sorts of dangers inherent in the exercise of power. Internally, the transition from republic to empire is almost always made at the cost of freedom. Power and freedom are contradictory and do not coexist comfortably. Freedom requires the limitation of power; power demands the surrender of freedom. This is something the ancient Athenians and Romans learned at great cost: democracy was the casualty of their empires. Americans must heed this ancient experience and painful truth. American freedoms are not eternally bestowed, but must with each generation and circumstance be reevaluated and preserved. Freedom is lost far more easily than it is gained, especially when it is surrendered for the sake of greater power.

Externally, empires incite insurrection. No nation wants to be ruled, especially those that have just been liberated, such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Maintaining dominion is therefore a very tricky challenge, particularly in a world of instantaneous communication and porous borders, in which information and people can move about virtually unimpeded and small actions can have large and unexpected effects. This was the lesson of September 11. Empires have many enemies and few friends. Americans must

know this as they rule, especially in obscure places far from American shores.

To achieve greatness, an empire needs a transcendental vision that can unite all its disparate elements within an overarching purpose. It must aspire to a mission that the entire empire can join together to achieve. It must be fundamentally constructive, not destructive.

This is the deeper purpose of this book: to challenge Americans at their point of empire to articulate a vision for the world that is worthy of the power they now wield over the world. This vision must transcend self-interest and embrace the whole. In order to achieve this, Americans must remember that even though their country now represents power, it has historically symbolized freedom. Can the vision that built the American republic now guide America the empire?

History teaches that great empires are constructed not simply through military might but by building institutions that are perceived by the governed as just and fair. The common interest of the empire as a whole must supercede the national interest of the dominant state in order for the empire to endure. The great paradox of empire is that stewardship is far more powerful than force in maintaining control.

Sixty years ago, President Roosevelt and President Truman achieved this level of greatness, as did President Woodrow Wilson the generation before them. They defeated world fascism and contained communism by ensuring that the United States had the strongest military in the world. But at the same time, they founded the United Nations, established the Bretton Woods institutions, implemented the Marshall Plan, and created NATO. Taken together, these institutions ushered in a new postcolonial international system. They blended American interests with the interests of the common good to create a new world order. American strength thus served political aspirations that were welcomed by the international community as beneficial.

Six decades later, the forces of globalization have made the institutions built then anachronistic. Today, the world is in a new state of crisis. The greatest difference between today and sixty

years ago, however, is that then there was an undeniable crisis: a world at war. Now, although the crisis is of similar magnitude, it is evolving more like an accident in slow motion. The world's problems range from global warming, loss of biodiversity, overfishing, deforestation, and water scarcity to persistent poverty, organized crime, drugs, terrorism, overpopulation, failed states, and HIV AIDS. As all of these problems press down on us, the prevailing system of international institutions and the system of nation-states are simply incapable of effective response. The planet is thus quite literally on a collision course with itself. Yet strangely, the totality of the danger is not yet apparent. World leaders do little more than talk about it. Most are simply in denial.

The opportunity for America in this situation is to ask itself anew what it can do about the needs of the global commons. How can it proactively lead the world out of the present crisis? How can it revitalize the international order and lead in the development of innovative solutions to global problems? What global institutions need to be established to ensure that democracy and prosperity, along with American primacy, prevail in the twenty-first century?

What both Americans and the world must internalize is that no one but the United States is even remotely capable of leading this effort. The United Nations is weak and bureaucratically paralyzed. Other powers that may one day serve as regional sources of stability and order—such as the European Union, Russia, China, India, or Brazil—are themselves either unformed, unstable, or not yet sufficiently coherent. The myriad number of new international initiatives and institutions coming from the nongovernmental sector have high aspirations but remain fragile, underfunded, and only marginally effective.

In just a few decades, this situation may be completely different. But right now, only the United States has the capacity, the traditions, the reach, and the will to lead at the global level. There is literally no one else to do it. This means that the highest vision for the American empire must be to serve the need for effective management of the global system in which all of humanity now participates.

The greatest temptation at the moment of power is to be seduced by the dark side, or in arrogance to dispense with "the vision thing," as President George Bush, Sr., once put it, and then simply use power for the sake of gaining even more power. The question before the United States is whether it will allow the magnitude of its power to eclipse the light by which it was founded or whether it will use its power to shine an even greater light. Will it seek mastery to dominate or mastery to serve? This is a crucially important distinction. If it uses its power to build democracy at the global level with the same genius with which it built democracy at the national level, then the United States could leave a legacy so powerful that the world will become knitted into a singularity of democracy and freedom. The possibility for a successor empire could then be superceded by the demands of a single global system.

To do this, America must consciously view itself as a *transitional empire*, one whose destiny at this moment is to act as midwife to a democratically governed global system. Its great challenge is not to dominate but to catalyze. It must use its great strength and democratic heritage to establish integrating institutions and mechanisms to manage the emerging global system so that its own power is subsumed by the very edifice it helps to build.

President Wilson established the League of Nations out of the ashes of World War I. Presidents Roosevelt and Truman established a new international order after World War II. America must now build the third iteration of global governance. If it attains this level of greatness, it could become the *final empire,* for it will have bequeathed to the world a democratic and integrated global system in which empire will no longer have a place or perform a role.

This is the challenge before America: to manifest a destiny of both light and power at the level of global affairs. It is ultimately a challenge about how high it will cast its sights, about what kind of vision it will manifest as it leads a world fraught with crises. The deepest question is whether Americans will have the political and moral strength to rise to this occasion, and whether the world will then accept the leadership that the United States will provide.

1

America and the World

The United States has become what it was founded not to be. Established as a haven for those fleeing the abuse of power, it has attained and now wields nearly absolute power. It has become an empire. This is meant as a statement of fact, not a judgment of national character. It is a way of understanding America, not an indictment against American policy. Indeed, by opening up the possibility of viewing the United States as an empire, one opens up a far larger frame of reference to understand America's history, role in the world, and future responsibilities.

What Is an Empire? According to the *Oxford Dictionary,* an empire is "a group of countries ruled by a single supreme authority." The word itself comes from the old French word *empire,* meaning imperial rule. It is derived from the Latin term *imperium*, meaning to rule, to command. The historian Alexander Motyl defines empire as "a hierarchically organized political system with a hublike structure—a rimless wheel—within which a core elite and state dominate peripheral elites and societies by serving as intermediaries for their significant interactions and by channeling resource flows from the periphery to the core and back to the periphery."[1] The historian Michael Doyle provides a

more behavioristic definition: "Effective control, whether formal or informal, of a subordinated society by an imperial society."[2]

Empires are thus relationships of influence and control by one state over a group of lesser states. This can take a variety of forms, ranging from territorial annexation and direct political rule to economic domination and diplomatic oversight. Empires are as old as history itself and characterize the earliest stages of human development. For reasons deeply buried in the human psyche and soul, human beings have always competed against one another, and the victors have invariably established dominion over the vanquished and exploited that relationship to their own benefit. Almost all peoples on earth have at some point expanded and conquered or contracted and been conquered—often many times over and in a variety of combinations.

Of all governing institutions, empires are the most complex and extensive. Empire stands at the apex of the social, economic, and political pyramid, integrating all the peoples, nations, and institutions within it into a unified order. An empire well run is the greatest accolade a nation can receive. An empire squandered is the most damning legacy it can leave behind.

From the Fall of the Berlin Wall to the Fall of the Twin Towers Policy analyst Michael Ignatieff states in his article "American Empire" in the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* that the United States "is the only nation that polices the world through five global military commands; maintains more than a million men and women at arms on four continents; deploys carrier battle groups on watch in every ocean; guarantees the survival of countries from Israel to South Korea; drives the wheels of global trade and commerce; and fills the hearts and minds of an entire planet with its dreams and desires."[3]

Surprisingly, the inordinate and unique power of the United States was not immediately recognized when the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 and the Soviet Union disintegrated. While a few observers recognized that America had entered what columnist Charles Krauthammer called a *unipolar moment*, most commentators predicted that the demise of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War would lead to a return to the age-old balance of powers.

Such a view was completely understandable. The last fifteen hundred years of European history have been essentially multipolar. The major European powers incessantly competed against one another without any single power ever gaining undue advantage, whether during the medieval era of city-states or the modern era of nation-states. Even Britain at its prime during the nineteenth century was constrained by France, Russia, Spain, and Germany. During the reign of Queen Victoria, from 1837 to 1901, which marked the apex of British imperial power, Britain had to fight seventy-two separate military campaigns to keep its rivals at bay and its colonial holdings intact. The very notion of *realpolitik* is predicated upon the assumption of a balance of power between major states.

That the United States broke out of this multipolar framework to attain unipolar global dominance is an extraordinary achievement in the annals of history, not attained by any power since Rome two thousand years ago. Because the world had gotten so used to thinking in multilateral and multipolar terms, it took some time for the novelty of the historical situation to sink in.

In his book *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers,* published in 1988, Yale historian Paul Kennedy went so far as to predict the relative decline of the United States due to "imperial overstretch." Talk of American weakness dominated the 1992 U.S. presidential elections, with the ultimate victor, Bill Clinton, focusing on fixing the ailing American economy while his rival for the Democratic nomination, Paul Tsongas, repeatedly declared, "The Cold War is over and Japan won."

Margaret Thatcher expressed the commonly held view that the world would evolve into three regional groups: one based on the dollar, one on the mark, one on the yen. Henry Kissinger solemnly predicted the emergence of a multipolar world. Asians, along with some American Asian enthusiasts such as James Fallows, spoke exuberantly of the rise of a "Pacific century."

The Clinton administration (1993 to 2001) was essentially a transitional period when the United States was emerging as what French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine called a "hyperpower," but was still essentially multilateralist and collaborative in its mentality and behavior. The title of Richard Haass's book, *The Reluc-*

tant Sheriff, published in 1998, summarized in advance the legacy Clinton was to leave behind. Clinton's main focus was the integration of the global economy under American hegemony, but he seldom used the power America had at its disposal, seeking rather to work collegially with American allies on issues of common concern.

While believing that the United States was the "indispensable power," as then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was fond of putting it, Clinton exercised this indispensability with discretion. He initiated limited military actions against Iraq and the Sudan and led the European coalition in Kosovo, but by and large he remained committed to multilateralism and to upholding the international treaties negotiated by his predecessors. These included the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the Antiballistic Missile Treaty, signed by Presidents Kennedy and Nixon, to limit America's nuclear capabilities. Clinton also negotiated and signed the Kyoto Protocol on Global Warming that would constrain the emission of hydrofluorocarbons into the atmosphere. All these treaties framed U.S. strategic interests in the context of collective security considerations.

In general, the 1990s were marked by a strong commitment to international law, working within the context of the U.N. system, and upholding preexistent treaty obligations. America was certainly the senior partner in all deliberations but the emphasis by Americans and the larger world community was on the importance of partnership as much as on American seniority.

Then came the events of September 11, 2001. The response by the new Bush administration dramatically altered the former equilibrium by heightening asymmetries already there but unobserved because unexercised. Right at the point it was emerging as the undisputed superpower, the United States was attacked unexpectedly and with devastating impact by nonstate actors virtually invisible to the American intelligence apparatus. In one of the strangest incidents of modern history, a nation that thought itself invulnerable was made, without warning, completely vulnerable. Its response was to strike back with an overwhelming application of military power in Afghanistan and Iraq, making it clear to friend

and foe alike that there is one undisputed military power in the world: the United States of America.

Since September 11, the United States has emphasized national security concerns and preemptive military responses in a war on terrorism that President Bush declared the highest priority for American domestic and foreign policy. Multilateralism, where the coalition defines the mission, has been replaced by unilateralism, where the mission defines the coalition. Deterrence, where there is an assumed balance of power, has been superceded by preemptive strikes, where the United States hits first against potential adversaries.

THE INVASION OF IRAQ The events of 9/11 reframed global affairs within the context of national security and the war on terrorism. The invasion of Iraq reframed global affairs yet again within the reality of overwhelming American military might. What is extraordinary is that the United States exercised its strength and global reach by seizing the most strategic area in the Middle East.

U.S. military forces now occupy the area along the Tigris-Euphrates river basin. This is where the Neolithic revolution and the domestication of plants and animals began ten thousand years ago. This is where the first human civilization at Sumer, in the environs of present-day Baghdad, developed six thousand years ago, and where the first empire under Sargon the Great, also around Baghdad, held sway five thousand years ago. This is where Abraham was born. It is where, closely to the west, Judaism and Christianity had their origins, with Islam originating just to the south. Zoroastrianism and Baha'i arose to the east. The Tigris-Euphrates river basin is the cradle of Arab civilization and the site of the early Muslim Abbassid dynasty. The armies of Alexander the Great marched here, as did the Roman legions and the hordes of Genghis Khan.

There is no place in the entire world more steeped in history, more complex in its politics, more charged in its religious fervor than the Tigris-Euphrates river basin. For the United States to take control of this region at America's moment of vulnerability and power is utterly profound. America reacted to a blow and

demonstrated world dominion by seizing the most sacred and fought over soil in the history of the world.

What disturbed the world most about the U.S. invasion of Iraq was the manner in which it was done. There was none of the finesse with which President Bush, Sr., had mobilized an international coalition and utilized the resources and legitimacy of the United Nations during the earlier Iraqi operation, Desert Storm, in 1991. Instead, George W. Bush went into Iraq belligerently, threatening and then marginalizing the United Nations, invading essentially alone with the British, despite widespread international public opposition.

The vindictive and highly militarized response by President Bush to 9/11 provided the world with an experience of America that was aggressive, ruthless, cynical, and dogmatic. In his book *Special Providence*, policy analyst Walter Russell Mead calls this the "Jacksonian" tradition of American history, named after President Andrew Jackson, whose administration was characterized by fighting the Indians and taming the West during the 1830s. It was a time when the world was cast in black and white and the aim was to defeat the enemy without mercy, giving no quarter. The Jacksonian tradition is one of "us against them," and is infused by patriotic fervor, a culture of honor, and military pride.

Mead also notes other traditions: the "Hamiltonian," named after Alexander Hamilton, the first U.S. secretary of the treasury, representing the American interest in developing commerce and trade; the "Jeffersonian," named after President Thomas Jefferson, deeply concerned with protecting democracy and human rights; and the "Wilsonian," named after President Woodrow Wilson, heralding world-changing political ideals. All of these traditions conjoin to produce the totality of the American political expression, in terms of both its domestic and its foreign policy.

Prior to 9/11, the United States was in a classic Hamiltonian phase. President Clinton focused his entire administration on the economy: balancing the budget, eliminating the deficit, forging free trade agreements, and presiding over robust economic growth. The U.S. economy was better tended during his watch than perhaps at any time in modern American history, even con-

sidering the collapse of the high-technology economy and the stock market at the end of his administration in 2000. Americans were generally positive about the world, optimistic about the future and content with the multilateral framework of international relations in which America operated.

In the aftermath of 9/11, America experienced a fundamental reversal of emotions and perceptions. Almost overnight, the Jacksoninan impulse gripped the president, and under his leadership, the American public. What had been a world-centric orientation was radically replaced by nation-centric tribalism. Multilateralism was replaced by unilateralism, global diplomacy by military force, and congeniality with confrontation.

While the starkness of this transformation startled the world, it was actually a very natural response. Under the impact of a trauma, psychologists have long observed that people and groups can experience a radical reversal of values. After major disasters such as earthquakes, floods, civil unrest, or wars, for instance, there is generally a heightened commitment to the community as well as excesses of looting. Normally law-abiding citizens are capable of extraordinary acts of sacrifice and heroism as well as egregious acts of lawlessness. There is something about experiencing trauma, especially among large numbers of people, which activates our altruistic as well as our aggressive impulses.

Both heroism and widespread looting took place in the aftermath of the fall of Baghdad during the U.S. invasion of Iraq. It also occurred in the aftermath of the Loma Prieta earthquake south of San Francisco in 1989, and in the aftermath of the Northridge earthquake in Los Angeles in 1994. It is also a pattern found in antiquity, and was chronicled by the historian Thucydides in Athens after a major outbreak of plague during the fourth century B.C.

If one considers the magnitude of the trauma inflicted on the American psyche by the attack of 9/11, coupled with the fact that it was in its essence a military attack against the United States, it is both normal and predictable that the initial response was to come together with a heightened sense of community as well as to respond with belligerence. There were acts of heroism by the

police and firefighters at the World Trade Center. There was also some looting. Patriotic fervor soared across America and the nation came together in mutual support and solidarity not seen since the Second World War. This communal feeling coalesced around healing the nation, rebuilding New York, and getting back at the perpetrators. An overwhelming number of Americans felt the need to come together as a nation and to strike back. President Bush molded this emotion with his declaration of a war against terrorism.

The United States then proceeded to break out of the norms of international law and procedures and conduct its own retribution. President Bush often referred to himself as a sheriff heading up a posse. At some level, it felt good for Americans to brush the United Nations aside and go into the Arab world and "kick ass."

In this sense, Saddam Hussein was the occasion, not the reason for the invasion of Iraq. This point was noted by Thomas Friedman in his column in the *New York Times*. He observed that the attack of September 11 was the "real reason" the United States invaded. As Friedman put it, removing the Taliban from Afghanistan was not enough. America needed to go out into the Arab world and clobber somebody else, and Saddam was it. "Smashing Saudi Arabia or Syria would have been fine. But we hit Saddam for one simple reason: because we could, and because he deserved it, and because he was right in the heart of that world."[4] All other reasons were of secondary importance, including the issue of weapons of mass destruction and the alleged link between Iraq and al-Qaeda.

What came together in the aftermath of 9/11 was the psychoemotional need for vengeance with the geostrategic opportunity to demonstrate to the world the overwhelming military might of the United States. Understanding and responding to this, the Bush administration hit the Arab world with power, precision, and decisiveness, seizing control of a region that had been a thorn in the side of the United States for decades.

The effects of this attitude and this action reverberated around the world. At one level, there was mimicry. The Russians renewed their efforts to crush Chechnya, the Indonesians invaded Acheh,

Israel increased military pressure on the Palestinians, and India mobilized against Pakistan, all of them citing the U.S. war on terrorism as a legitimating model for their own behavior.

At another level, world public opinion reacted sharply to the aggressiveness of the Bush administration and dramatically questioned the integrity of America's leadership. The invasion of Iraq in defiance of overwhelming opposition indicated to many that America, the global leader, had become America, the rogue imperium. Since the war, anti-American sentiment continues to rise virtually all over the world, including in Europe, traditionally America's strongest ally.

Questions of Empire At the core of the current dialectic between America and the world is the issue of where the center of gravity for international affairs should be: the United States or the United Nations. This presents America and the world with a fundamental choice: Should the world be ruled by an empire or by the community of nations?

At the end of World War II, the United States established the United Nations out of self-interest. Today, the United States disregards the United Nations out of a very different notion of self-interest. The United States founded the United Nations to help prevent war among the nations. The United States now considers the United Nations to be weak, corrupt, inefficient, and bureaucratic, unable to exert leadership in critical issues pertaining to international security and rogue states. The United States has thus marginalized the United Nations and has assumed the role of arbiter and enforcer in the international security domain.

At the same time, the United Nations represents to most people—including most Americans—the desire for a community of nations, governed by the sanctity of international law and cooperating through dialogue and consensus. Whatever its flaws, it is the carrier of the deep human aspiration for peace. U.S. disparagement of the United Nations and its willingness to act alone in spite of it are thus of deep concern to the international public.

But what the United Nations and the larger world community must come to grips with is the reality that the United States is no

longer a nation among nations. It is an empire among nations, an absolutely key concept in understanding why America is acting the way it is and why the international community is so concerned. America has emerged as an unchallenged superpower, controlling countries and institutions all around the world. As such, it can and will assume certain imperial prerogatives, particularly in the immediate aftermath of September 11 and because there is now no countervailing power to challenge it.

Empires invariably reserve the right to act in their own interests, precisely because, from an imperial point of view, might makes right. In assessing American actions, the world must remember that military power is the beginning and the end of empire and that empires seek to weaken international law and multilateral institutions in order to maximize maneuverability and maintain dominion. The master strategy of empire is to divide and conquer.

The confusion and resentment toward the United States are due in part to the fact that many in the secular world were lulled into believing, with philosopher Francis Fukuyama, that when the Cold War ended we had somehow reached the "end of history," and empires and other nasty things would no longer occur. But with the highly militarized foreign policy formation of the Bush administration, to say nothing about the general crisis of the world situation, we have been shocked to discover that here history is again, and it has been its lack of preparedness for this that constitutes a major part of the world's predicament.

This is another reason for asserting that the United States is an empire: it is a continuation of history as we have known it. Through its own sheer force and through mediating institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, along with numerous other bilateral and multilateral institutions, the United States now controls more nations in more ways than any nation in history.

Paradoxically, while the American empire is a continuation of history, history itself is moving beyond empire. It is actually in the penultimate stage of development before full global integration.

This is the critical concept in understanding why the United States needs to consider itself as a *transitional empire.* It will be the *final empire* by choice or as victim. What history demands, even empires must address, or they are consumed.

Why will it be the final empire? Because the world is rapidly becoming an integrated system under the impact of economic globalization and the technology of instantaneous communication. In an integrated system, it is the system itself, not a particular part of it, that is of crucial importance. The United States is strong now because the global system has not yet been fully built. Once it has been, U.S. power will be absorbed within the larger whole. It is America's historic challenge to lead in building the very system that will replace it.

In an integrating world, leadership must change from domination to stewardship. Cultural nuances and social disparities matter far more than military might, and issues of ethnicity and religion go far deeper than the power of the state. Governance cannot be exercised successfully simply by the application of precision warfare. Brute force does not make friends and cannot change a person's mind.

There is increasingly a *civilizational* context for governance that needs to be taken into account. The international community requires leadership that is sensitive to societal and cultural differences as well as to political and economic conditions. It needs leadership that will foster the integrating institutions necessary to bring these complex factors together for the equitable management of the global system. Diversity can only be integrated with patience and compromise. All voices must be honored and consensus built in the context of mutual respect and international norms and procedures. Leadership in this context is successful more through influence than by coercion, more through empowerment of others than by exerting power over others.

The interplay between America's power—unsurpassed, militarily oriented, and unilaterally directed—and the needs of an integrating world—highly diverse, culturally conditioned, and requiring a spirit of stewardship in order to be governed effec-

tively—is the framework in which the American empire will live out its unique destiny. Both America and the world, for better or for worse, will be shaped by how this destiny unfolds.

In all probability, the United States will dominate the twenty-first century as Rome dominated the first. The critical question is not *whether* it will do this but whether it will *acknowledge* that this is what it is doing. Only if it consciously takes up the mantle of leadership will it be able to determine the kind of empire it will be. This decision will determine its own fate as well as the fate of the earth for decades to come. To the degree to which it remains faithful to its founding vision and is informed by the lessons that can be gleaned from the experiences of earlier imperial powers, it will endure.

America at its moment of power, the world at its moment of integration. How will they come together? Will the world experience *pax Americana*, the American peace? Or *pox Americana*, the American plague? Will imperial America be remembered as the architect of the world's first global order or as a tragedy of epic proportions? These are the great questions of our time and the exploration of this book.

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