

Causes and Consequences of an American Empire

David J. Seay

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Committee Co-Chair: Joyce Rothschild, Ph.D

Committee Co-Chair: Ioannis Stivachtis, Ph.D

Committee Member: Laura Sjoberg, Ph.D

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ABSTRACT

Empire is an emotionally and historically charged term. However, its usage throughout time to describe states' and peoples' behavior towards others is a display of the vitality in the term's etymological construction. Today, the United States must reexamine itself through a historically grounded imperial lens in order to create more beneficial set of policies; by refining its strengths and reforming its weaknesses; both at home and abroad. Presidential leaders and foreign policies, defined by military and ideological power in recent times have both enhanced and bucked a possible imperial American existence. Nonetheless, an imperial assessment of past and future decisions may show Americans their proximity to empire, and may provoke new elements of thought in the American psyche and practices in American politics.

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INTRODUCTION

Walking into a hospital, one finds doctors, nurses, and countless others performing their skills to treat those that are suffering from illness, disease, and injury. This noble calling, dictated by the Hippocratic Oath and taught in universities and colleges throughout the world is perhaps one of the simpler transmissions of knowledge taught in a classroom transcending into actuality. Indeed, it is easily visible and evident to the common person that their research and applications of theories and studies are affecting a larger body of people than their respective academic community or their fellow colleagues.

Social science has historically been criticized in comparison to “hard” sciences such as medicine for its failure to create concrete, problem solving solutions for the real world. Because it rarely constructs buildings or cures disease, it often is hard to see the effects of study, thought, and work in the avenues of social sciences. As a student of political science, these criticisms are a usual challenge, and deciding on how to confront them is a difficult measure. However, to simply ignore them is also an unwise maneuver, for the uncomplicated appearance of knowledge for knowledge’s sake is a somewhat

selfish concept when living in a society that depends upon the interaction of its people and their varying skills for some essence of progress.

In his book, *Making Social Science Matter Again*, Bent Flyvbjerg discusses ways for social sciences to strengthen their power of inquiry and thus strengthen results and impacts of social scientific knowledge. (Flyvbjerg 2001) At the core of this analysis is phronesis, which is the Greek word for practical wisdom. (Flyvbjerg 2001) The ultimate goal of phronetic research is to provide society a way to develop thought on how we view where we are, where we want to go, as well as what is desirable. (Flyvbjerg 2001) Using the process of phronetic analysis, Flyvbjerg, in many ways, simplifies the process of discussing and researching social inquiry through practical, pragmatic deliberation of a social topic. (Flyvbjerg 2001) Basing much of research on context-dependent real life case studies, Flyvbjerg reasserts the capacity of the intense studies to give high quality theoretical models as well as insight into things that are actually happening in the world. (Flyvbjerg 2001) Flyvbjerg also stresses the importance of narration, explaining the story to the observer behind the case study, as well as its direct implications of its outcome. By spending more time studying reality instead of abstraction, Flyvbjerg's model may be helpful in bringing our social sciences down to earth to help more effectively communicate and contribute the findings, thoughts, and theories of our sciences to society at large. (Flyvbjerg 2001)

When I first began to think about this topic, I immediately saw how its simplicity in comparison to other social theories may be its greatest strength from a phronetic perspective. I believe and I hope that it could be read by someone outside of the social sciences and find that it is not only thought-provoking but also as a helpful tool in

creating their own personalized analysis of the topic. We may not all be architects and therefore interested or vested in the latest construction design (as I'm sure there is a thesis being written about this spring), but most of us are Americans. And for those that are not, this topic is still important because of the position of the United States in relation to their home country, wherever it may be.

The purpose of this essay is to exemplify why the word "empire" is most able and best fit for the position and activity of the United States in global politics. The first section of the paper will delve into historical analysis and theoretical meaning of empire, as well as previous case studies on prior imperial states. After understanding the essence of the term, in a case study format, the essay will follow in a narrative form the United States from its inception to its dramatic rise in world power, explaining just what makes the role of the United States imperial. The arrival at understanding an American empire is only the first part of tackling the root analysis of this study, as the second part turns to the consequences of the realization of empire in the United States. The essay will examine the benefits and the costs, challengers, and future of empire, as well as what that acknowledgment entails. Ultimately, the concept this paper attempts to outline and explain is the idea that the clearer Americans see themselves in their own reflection than the more understanding of their responsibilities and history they become. By comprehending or shedding light on a possible role they fulfill in the world, Americans can adjust policy or behavior with the realization and the subsequent understanding of the reflection they commonly display abroad. In other words, it is an opportunity to pause, self reflect, and then move forward in a better-informed direction. Like the doctor in the hospital mentioned before, it may be prudent to diagnose our position in the world before

we can make it healthier. An understanding of the existence of empire is therefore essential.

All Americans have a vested interest in our global position, for good or for bad. Ignoring this reality is simply not an option, and this essay hopes to give a tangible expression of thought during these difficult years at home and abroad.

PART I

WHAT EMPIRE MEANS – HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

If you ask someone outside of the academics of history, political science, and perhaps philosophy, what the first thing they think of when they hear the word “empire” they are most likely to say something malevolent or corrupt – but nonetheless very powerful and large. Hollywood is bedridden with the word, for example George Lucas’s Star Wars’ Galactic Empire and its use of the Dark Side of the Force and countless clone soldiers and merciless techniques of suppression. Very seldom is empire used in a positive tone, usually it is negative and represents near-omnipotent forces of wrongdoing, from the corrupt Roman emperor in Ridley Scot’s film *Gladiator* to the ruthless British army and its murderous officers in Roland Emmerich’s film *The Patriot*. Additionally, empire is used in the business world quite often, describing such things as Rupert Murdoch’s Newscorp media empire¹ or Major League Baseball’s New York Yankees’ empire² by critics or by rivals.

While this may seem trivial, it represents the deepness of the animosity towards the term. Americans have a long standing tradition of fighting against obvious empires, from the spawning of the republic and its rebellion against the British Empire, to the World Wars fighting the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, Italian, Germany (both Kaiser and Nazi), and Japanese empires. Indeed in the Cold War the United States faced off against what President Reagan once called the “evil empire³” of the communist Soviet Union.

Americans obviously, and to some degree understandably, are very suspicious of the term and its connotations. However, empires have been around as long as civilizations have existed. The rise and fall of various empires throughout time have been the stories and histories of our collective pasts. Pinnacles of state power, development, and zeniths of culture are commonly associated within the dates of their existences. In many cases, past empires have represented the grandest accomplishments of humanity, and are the defining aspects of the records of civilization. Without the Roman Coliseum, Aristotelian metaphysics, the Great Wall, or the lost city of Machu Picchu among countless others, there would be an insatiable void of thought, culture, and lifestyle.

The terminology and perhaps more powerfully the connotation, however, of empire today has changed; commonly representing a defunct centralized style of government by force and coercion with a dominion over others. Indeed, the word empire comes from the Latin word imperium,⁴ or military command. In the United States the term “empire” or “imperial” harkens the Declaration of Independence and its defining reasoning as a foundational rebuttal of imperial rule. Students in American classrooms are taught of the evils of empire, and how its principles of governing are powerfully in opposition to American conceptions of freedom, liberty, and democracy. Essentially,

imperial actions or rule of empire is understood as un-American. In contrast to historical trends, Americans do not call themselves an empire, and its leadership does not characterize actions or interests abroad as imperial.

It does not take a historian or social scientist, however to see and understand that the United States of America possesses a specifically unique position in the world. Experts in the field have called this position a variety of names including superpower, hegemonic power, and hyperpower to name a few. After World War II, experts have explained how the world had become bi-polar, and with the fall of the Soviet Union it became uni-polar. Despite the nomenclature and the new theoretical terms, nations, states, and countries with this type of disproportionate power historically have been referred to as empire since the dawn of civilization, from Persians to the Chinese and from Great Britain to Japan.

Why Empire Makes Sense

The point of this part of the essay is not to find a fashionable term to describe the United States and its actions, but a realistic one, grounded in history and behavior. In order to reach that point, however, we must look at ways and examples the term empire has been used in the past. These case studies will show specifications and reasoning to the application of the terminology history has generally given them. These classical examples will help provide analytical tools of comparison and a background of knowledge when the essay turns to tracing the American narrative and its imperial implications.

Amy Chua, Professor of Law at Yale University, highlights in her book *Day of Empire* key historical world hegemonic powers. Not surprisingly, Chua discovers that all of these examples were referred to historically and presently as imperial powers, indeed they were characterized by the terminology of empire. Among the historical examples Chua discovered several commonalities that provided an analysis at the conclusion of her imperial studies. (Chua 2007)

Chua begins with a discussion of the Persian Empire (559-330 BC) that reigned over much of the Middle East and north central Asia. (Chua 2007) While smaller civilizations in the past may have acted imperially, Chua states that the Persian Empire was the first hegemon, making use of direct and indirect power to other nations and states outside its domain. (Chua 2007) In other words, Persia not only influenced the peoples under its rule, but was in a position in the world that could buy support or use coercion to create self-beneficial relationships. (Chua 2007)

Perhaps the most famous of Western empires, Chua explores the Roman Empire with its integration, infrastructure, societal development, and perhaps most poignantly its self-aggrandizement. (Chua 2007) Much like later empires that celebrated its civilization (which will be discussed later in this essay), Romans often thought of themselves as the hope of the world, exemplified by these words by Claudian, a Fourth Century poet:

“Rome alone received the conquered to her bosom and cherished the human race with a common name, in the fashion of a mother, not of an empress; and she called “citizens” those whom she subdued and bound with her far-reaching and pious embrace. To her pacifying customs we owe everything...that we are all one race.⁵”

Chua continues by discussing empires of the Middle-Ages, including the Mongolian Empire (1206-1368) which was the largest land-based empire in world history and the Tang Dynasty of the Chinese Empire (618-907), with its detailed civil service exams, banks, and paper money. (Chua 2007) Continually, Chua examines the rise of the Western European colonial empires including the Spanish Empire (1500-1898) with its “Gold, God, and Glory” charge, and interestingly the Dutch Empire (1652-1795), which was the first empire predominately based on trade, and more historically important, capitalism. (Chua 2007) At last, Chua looks into the possible forerunner of today’s global paradigm; the British Empire. (Chua 2007) From 1650-1997, the British controlled a quarter of the entire world, imperially imposed the capitalistic mindset, dominated trade and commerce, fought two world wars victoriously, and aided in the institutionalization of liberal economics, opposes communism, and lead in security alliances. (Chua 2007) The British were also the only self described empire to also become a nuclear power. (Chua 2007)

These historical examples of empire allow us to not only see the flexibility of the term (indeed, no two empires acted the same or were structurally mirror images of one another), but importantly, to also see its commonalities. Chua explains these similarities in her book. (Chua 2007) According to Chua, each empire used its clout to coerce lesser states or people economically and/or politically. (Chua 2007) Additionally, at the height of their power their empire was a global (in their respective world spheres) hegemon; unchallenged and unrivaled. Continuing, during their respective times in history, the empires were pluralistic and tolerant *during* their rise to preeminence and those

characteristics were indispensable to the achievement of its hegemony. (Chua 2007) Imperial decline coincided with “xenophobia, and calls for racial, religious, or ethnic purity” through war and crisis. (Chua 2007) Interestingly, the diversity of tolerance also sowed the “seeds of decline...in every case tolerance, or the illusion of, eventually hit a tipping point, triggering conflict, hatred, jealousy, and violence.” (Chua 2007) Perhaps most powerfully within this discussion, Chua explains that above all, each empire believed their role as a mode of destiny; feeling their imperial behavior was ultimately beneficial to humanity at large. (Chua 2007)

The flexibility of the term is one of its most striking characteristics. For example, classical definitions, as described before, usually entail a monarchical system of government. However, there are several examples of outright empire that did not possess an emperor. In the United Kingdom, for example, the Queen is the head of state but has very little, other than ceremonial, political power. During the height of *pax Britannica* during the turn of the previous century, the British Parliament was the unquestioned ruler of the British Empire. In addition, in antiquity, democratic Athens was an imperial power in the Mediterranean world, conquering territory while simultaneously spreading its influential culture and social attributes. As the paper will go on to discuss, these nations were still empires, despite lacking what may be commonly (mis)understood as a pivotal imperial institution – a monarch.

Before we continue, it is important to identify if these commonalities would also exist when examining the United States. If the United States is in reality an empire, it should also share most of these characteristics. Looking into this, surely the United States is a global hegemon (as the next portion of the essay will detail), and it touts its tolerance

and diversity as among its strengths. Recent terrorist attacks also surely seem to highlight the unfortunate repercussions of an open and diverse society, and wars in the Middle East may underscore Chua's seeds of decline through hatred and violence. Finally the United States is often proclaiming itself, as Ronald Reagan explained⁷, "the last best hope of man on earth," or the "shining city upon a hill." Indeed the previous Claudian quote reminds the reader of Lazarus's "New Colossus" at the base of the Statue of Liberty in New York:

"...Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to
breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these,
the homeless, the tempest-toss to me, I lift my lamp beside the
golden-door!"

From Manifest Destiny to the Axis of Evil, the United States has created and attempted to maintain that the world is a benefactor of American society. This element of classical empires seems to be the most powerful exemplar of an American empire, as it even has a contemporary term; "American exceptionalism." This paper will demonstrate how American exceptionalism has routinely and unrightfully dismissed imperial actions. Indeed, if there is one strong dissimilarity between classical conceptions of empire and the form of empire America today possesses, it is the intensity of the exceptionalism that denies empire exists.

However, it is important to also critically analyze the possible weaknesses in this analysis of Chua's argument as well as its relation to present-day America that was just

articulated. As mentioned above, Chua in a somewhat circular (albeit understandable) logic explains that diversity and tolerance simultaneously allows the expansion of an empire but also creates the instability that has led to all of their demises, stripping away political or social “glue” that could keep the imperial state together. (Chua 2007) With this notion, an American empire may be better off than others due to its strategic point in history. With technological advancements Americans have the capacity to integrate seamlessly through space in time with advances in telecommunications, the internet, and television. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, critics of Chua and indeed this essay perhaps, may argue that the term empire is an old term; outdated and ill-fitted to suit the theoretical understandings of modern day geopolitics. To counter this type of criticism, one may look to other terminology that has stood the test of time. One word that may come to mind is war – a word that is as understandable in its meaning today as it was two thousand years ago. Its flexibility is used for revolutions, civil strife, invasions, and state engagements. Like empire, it has a powerfully negative connotation, and is often avoided in public discourse for less emotionally charged words such as “intervention” or “incursion.” While theoretical discussions may bog down the word with other usages such as “insurgency” or “conflict,” people living within those areas affected by war or those terms do not see or feel much of a difference. Indeed, like Justice Potter Stuart famously said about obscenity⁸, war can be described as something “I know [it] when I see it.”

Theory: Conceptualizations of Empire

Turning more theoretical, in his 1992 book, Francis Fukuyama boldly proclaimed that liberal democracy was the final evolution of human government and it was, theoretically the “End of History.” (Fukuyama 1989) While many have debated such a claim for the last few decades, it is important to understand the moment in which Fukuyama had constructed his argument. By 1992 and the collapse of the Soviet Union the United States was able to promote its “triad of liberal democracy, economic liberalization, and human rights” and the “forces of freedom over totalitarianism [which] could provide the foundations for a new, more harmonious international order.” (Saul 2007) This moment was pivotal for the theoretical world as well. For nearly a century, communism remained the major tenant against prevailing winds of capitalism. Unlike Fukuyama, many theorists, scholars, and citizenry alike were historically enthused about communism’s promise of an egalitarian future; one that was supposed to be more holistic, meaningful, and peaceful. Instead the vibrant hustle of capitalism, its greed, manipulation, and cunningness won. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, no country, ideology, or culture has challenged the supremacy of the liberal democratic free market; dominated and spearheaded by the United States throughout the world. The most powerful aspect of this domination is its element of totality and simultaneous finality; liberalism and the markets permeate every level of society; sociologically, economically, and politically. Meanwhile communism has been the only true ideological challenger to the mercantilist state since its evolution began during the dawn of civilization.

This logic is very similar to another major piece of literature on empire that is due to be recognized; *Empire* written by Marxist thinkers Antonio Negri Michael and Hardt. In this book, the notion of Empire (capitalized intentionally) is a totalizing entity

concretized through capitalism and liberal, free-market institutions and organizations. (Hardt & Negri 2000) The essence of this idea of “Empire” is not nation-states, but of a finalized dimension of logic where the world is locked into a state of mind as well as a state of commerce and thought. (Hardt & Negri 2000)

Another theoretical perspective near to this thought can be found in *One Dimensional Man* published in 1964 by Herbert Marcuse. Marcuse describes totalitarianism, much in the same manner as “Empire” is described above. “Totalitarianism precludes the emergence of an effective opposition to the whole...not only a specific form of government or party rule makes for totalitarianism, but also a specific system of production and distribution which may well be compatible with a ‘pluralism’ of parties, newspapers, ‘countervailing parties,’ etc.” (Marcuse 1964) The term pluralism seemingly is effective in describing the imperial nature of United States and its global allies. (Marcuse 1964) As mentioned above, this system of totality is not held holistically, but instead totality is spread among different attributes of society; from the leaders to the participatory public, from the corporations to the international organizations. It is simultaneously social, political, cultural, and economic. This integration will be further explained in Part II of the essay.

Continuing, as described above and in previous portions of the essay, empires possess important cultural heritage and/or effect neighboring civilizations’ cultures. Indeed an enduring and imposing cultural heritage is key to an empire’s evolution. Continuing on the theme described by Marcuse, Negri, and Hardt above, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno boldly claim in their book the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, that the “whole world passes through the culture industry.” (Horkheimer

& Adorno 1986) Like economic, political and social aspects of life, the United States and its contemporary partners in liberalism and free market policies are the major producers of art, films, and music. (Horkheimer & Adorno 1986) Not only do the United States and its allies produce the cultural outputs, but they also have the infrastructure and technology to industrially transmit and transport them anywhere in the world. Many decry the loss of a local restaurant to an American fast-food chain or oppose what is often described as American cultural imperialism, created by Horkheimer and Adorno's "culture industry."

Through both the pragmatic classical examples of empire as well as some deeper theoretical understandings of empire enveloped in an essence of totality, it seems reasonable to assert that the United States plays a historical imperial role in the world. The gradual climb of the United States, its policies and foundational beliefs, along with its global allies, has been incremental and gradual but yet unquestioned. By the end of the 20th Century, the United States had grown from a country with colonial roots and pious intentions to a power unrivaled. The conclusions of the World Wars left the United States and its system of allies in belief and practice atop the global hierarchy. The conclusion of the Cold War however eliminated the remaining oppositional forces, leaving the United States and much of the West the sole possessor of both power and ideology. Part II of the essay will trace this narrative of growing power and outline its imperial implications.

PART II

CAUSES AND RISE OF AN AMERICAN EMPIRE

The Rise of Imperial America

The purpose of this portion of the essay is to examine the rise of the United States. Continuing, I will explore the rapid rise of American ideological power and the “synergizing” of ideology with realpolitik power and influence. The part of the essay will then address the creation of “synergized” mechanisms for imperial purposes at home in the United States and abroad. Finally, the research will discuss the point of arrival at today’s empire while exemplifying current imperial wars.

According to John Nichols, editor of the book *Against the Beast, A Documentary History of American Opposition to Empire* the United States was not a world power upon its inception and it strongly tried to avoid European affairs. Similarly, the framers of the United States government explicitly were opposed to categorical empire. George Washington, America’s first president famously stated that: “over grown military establishments are under any form of government inauspicious to liberty, and are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty.” (Nichols 2004) Thomas Jefferson,

the author of the Declaration of Independence, proclaimed in 1791 that “we should have nothing to do with conquest.” The framers were instead focused on internal concerns, including civil unrest and economic woes of poor integration and planning among the states. (Nichols 2004) During the War of 1812, Americans were strongly disenchanted with European and thus international affairs, after they were punished severely by both Britain and France militarily and economically. (Nichols 2004)

However, this sentiment did not last long. The United States, in contrast to words and ideas, acted imperially. Wars against Native Americans pushed America westward, justified by need for ever greater size, resources, and power. Like their African or South American counterparts, Indians were considered barbaric and were killed or coerced as the United States, like other colonial powers, expanded. Thomas Jefferson, who had proclaimed thirty years prior that the United States was not interested in conquest, doubled the size of the country with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Imperial doctrines of United States exclusiveness in the Americas became formalized with the Monroe Doctrine of using force against powers interfering within its enlarged domain outside of its geographic borders. As this essay will explain in more detail, from 1846-1848 the United States conquered portions of Mexico during the Mexican War under the auspice of Manifest Destiny and its self-proclaimed righteousness. Rivers, strategic ports of harbors, and shipping routes were seized from neighboring powers for economic purposes, mirroring similar practices by other traditional empires. In lieu of declaring them colonies, the United States simply forced new territories into the federation of states (or empire).

As an observer could detail in Figure 2.1, the expansion westward during the early years of the republic was both swift and sweeping. By the late nineteenth century, the United States spawned a new territorial size that was rivaled by only a few other states, with lands and territories not only contiguous from the Atlantic to the Pacific, but also foreign territories including Alaska.

Figure 2.1: United States Territorial Acquisitions in North America



“United States Territorial Acquisitions. Online Image. 2008. United States Public Domain. Accessed: <http://www.nationalatlas.gov/>

Two of the main philosophical policies of the era as described above, the Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny deserve further attention as they simultaneously reflect

American exceptionalism and American imperialism. Furthermore they continue to be heralded and used today, and their endurance shows their importance to the foundation of an American empire.

As S. Gonionsky explained in *The Monroe Doctrine*, very few of Washington's various "doctrines" or approaches to international relations are relevant throughout time, instead many either fade away or are theoretically deconstructed as America finds them increasingly difficult to use or inconvenient with immediate problems or concerns. (Gonionsky 1976) However, the United States still actively implements and justifies policies within the Americas with the Monroe Doctrine despite the dramatic changes in the global landscape, primarily the demise of colonial powers. According to President Monroe himself, this was the main concern of the Doctrine, as he declared the Americas "henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European Power" and that the United States considers any attempt on the part of European Powers "to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety." (Gonionsky 1976) Gonionsky further explains that during the 1960's and the height of the Cold War, the United States Department of State proclaimed that the "principles of the Monroe Doctrine are as valid today as they were in 1823 when the Doctrine was proclaimed...these principles are not professed by itself alone [i.e. by Washington], but represent through solemn agreements the views of the American community as a whole." (Gonionsky 1976) At the very minimum Americans must realize the realist paradigm of American power that the Monroe Doctrine creates and enforces. While direct state or colonial control over the Americas is not necessarily exercised by the United States, there is a doctrine of imperial influence. While the word imperial is

absent in the Doctrine itself, it is simply a rational conclusion to use the term, especially since the Doctrine was created to thwart outside imperial interests. In other words, empires are sovereign entities which upon their lands and territories are exclusive. This same sense of American hemispherical exclusivity is the cornerstone of Monroe's logic in the Monroe Doctrine.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the Monroe Doctrine is that its continual use shows that an American empire is still intact. The main focus of the Monroe Doctrine, external European powers, has become increasingly irrelevant. Like the papal Line of Demarcation that divided the world between Spain and Portugal in the fifteenth century, the Monroe Doctrine divided the New World away from Europe towards the United States in the nineteenth century. While Europe has decentralized its portion of the world, the continual assertion of the Monroe Doctrine shows the United States has not.

In the 1800s it became quite common for Americans to mix democracy, expansion, continental empire, and God. The terminology often contributed to this blended approach is Manifest Destiny, a term that described a holy expansion of American civilization first from the east to west coasts, and then often used to support American expansion abroad. In his book *Providence and the Invention of America*, Nicholas Guyatt describes a speech and its rationale given by Joseph Warren, an American patriot during the Revolutionary War. (Guyatt 2007) In his speech, Warren explains how British and American history diverged when Americans began to prosper on their own in the New World by the 1600s, a feat that could have only been done with God's favor. He continued by stating Americans should

“[h]ave the strongest confidence that the same almighty God who protected your pious and venerable fore fathers, who enabled them to turn a barren wilderness into a fruitful field, who so often made bare his arm for their salvation, will still be mindful of you, their offspring and your westward conquests.” (Guyatt 2007)

John Hancock, the possessor of the famous signature at the bottom of the Declaration of Independence followed the Warren speech during the same year and occasion by affirming a similar logic, given God’s extraordinary treatment of the colonists in the past (indeed they went on to defeat one of the most powerful nations in a war) Americans could have a

“most animating confidence that the present noble struggle for liberty will terminate gloriously for America’s future.” (Guyatt 2007)

As with the Monroe Doctrine, Manifest Destiny is arguable alive and well today. Later in Part II of this essay, I will examine modern calls for the imperial spread of liberty and democracy and its close similarity to historical understandings of Manifest Destiny. The concept that is to be stressed most about these two subjects is their undying ability to stay relevant and alive in American thought and policy. These two important historical traditions of an American empire are not as clear as written historical laws, Supreme Court rulings, or official treaties. Instead they seem to fit more of the British common law model of a political institution, a set of various policies, wars, actions, and

treaties that derive a longstanding custom or behavior. In the absence of a constitution, British law is still enforceable however and there is an understanding of rights and governmental limitations. Similarly, in the absence of formalized recognition of an America empire, there are still enforceable political traditions, spheres of influences, and imperial modes of thought. An analysis of Manifest Destiny and the Monroe Doctrine allow us to see prime examples of institutionalized (culturally and politically) belief and drive for empire.

Moving into the second half of the nineteenth century, the United States continued its progression towards being a major world player. The American Civil War fueled the burgeoning industrialism of the North, driving millions of immigrants to the United States, creating massive global cultural centers in places like New York and Chicago. The Civil War and subsequent industrialization also fostered a production oriented society with a voracious appetite for resources and labor. According to Charles Roland, in his book *An American Iliad*, the Civil War exemplified to the world the power of the American industrial might; as nearly 3 million people were directly involved within the massive military-industrial complex. (Roland 2002) Meanwhile, continual usages of the logics of political institutional thought that Manifest Destiny and the Monroe Doctrine exemplify, continued. By the turn of the twentieth century, the United States seized territory outside of their traditional Americas sphere; taking the Philippines, along with Cuba and Puerto Rico from another empire; Spain. History continued to repeat itself as President McKinley in 1900 proudly boasted in the quintessential American exceptionalist tone shown in Figure 2 that “the American Flag had not been planted in foreign soil to acquire more territory but for humanity’s sake.” (Roland 2002)

The Spanish-American War, which may seem the most obvious case-study of an American empire, did not have a grand theme that later wars the United States engaged in had, such as fighting fascism or defeating communism. With future President Theodore Roosevelt embodying a more powerful American nationalism as he charged San Juan Hill, symbolized America's newfound might. In his book *the Spanish – American War*, Kenneth E. Hendrickson Jr. explains that while the war between the United States and Spain received relatively little attention in history texts, it was an event of great importance. (Hendrickson Jr. 2003) The United States emerged as the greatest potential power in the twentieth century “with all the responsibilities and problems emanating with that status – and the war with Spain was in many ways like a stepping stone from one era of American history to the next. (Hendrickson Jr. 2003) The Spanish – American War, among other things, firmed the need for America to possess a large an powerful navy, satisfied the needs for expansionists who believe that economic growth required overseas sources and markets; it confirmed the importance of industrialization as a source of international power, and it brought Americans face to face, more forcefully than ever before, with the fact that aggressive nationalism could be both patriotic and fraught with responsibilities. (Hendrickson Jr. 2003) Soon after the War's conclusion in 1901, President William McKinley proudly commented on the increasing opportunity of expansion and international trade:

“How near one to the other is every part of the world. Modern Inventions have brought into close relation widely separated peoples and made them better acquainted...distances

have been effaced...the world's products are being exchanged like never before...Isolation is no longer possible or desirable.” (Bacevich 2002)

Note in Figure 2.2 the aura of imperialism, even applying the notion of “American rule” replacing Spanish rule. One must ask, if Spanish rule was imperial, what made American external rule different?

Figure 2.2: Banner supporting President McKinley’s Administration and its policies



“The Administration’s Promises Have Been Kept.” Online Image. 1900. United States Public Domain
Accessed: <http://viz.cwrl.utexas.edu/node/313>

While America had grown in power and size imperially, it hardly had become a true global power. With longstanding isolationist fervor (in comparison to European colonial ties and empires), the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

avoided international dispute and entanglement. By the twentieth century, the prospect of global power became more of a reality for the United States and the opportunities of industrialization fostered a newfound integration that the United States found not only unavoidable, but desired. Perhaps no individual played a larger role in fostering a new position for the United States in the world during this part of the twentieth century than Woodrow Wilson. His forceful, imperial thoughts of economy and industrialization can be summed up with his own words:

“Since trade ignores national boundaries and the manufacturer insists on having the world as a market, the flag of his nation must follow him, and the doors of the nations which are closed must be battered down...Concessions obtained by financiers must be safeguarded by ministers of state, even if the sovereignty of unwilling nations be outraged in the process. Colonies must be obtained or planted, in order that no useful corner of the world may be overlooked or left unused.” (Williams 1988)

President Wilson’s ambitious agenda signaled a new path for American interests abroad. A more delicate empire; fostered in common thought and belief in economics and politics spearheaded by the United States forcefully or peacefully, would be the direction of the future. In his book *American Empire* Andrew J. Bacevich describes a comment that was made about the former president: “if we judge events by their consequences, the great world revolutionary was Wilson rather than Lenin.” (Bacevich 2003) The ability to decry empire while acting as one, one of the great juxtapositions of American history,

was prevalent in Wilsonian ideals, as it was before and after their origin. For example, Bacevich explains that President Wilson and his determination towards peace enthusiastically proclaimed to the United States Senate in January 1917 that “American principles and policies were those of mankind” and that all the nations of the world should “with one accord adopt the Monroe Doctrine as the doctrine of the world.” (Bacevich 2003) Wilson argued that it meant henceforth “no nation should seek to extend its polity over other nations or people” so that “every people should be left free to determine its own polity, its own way of development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid of the little along with great and powerful.” (Bacevich 2003)

However, Wilson’s hypocrisy represents a larger trend of American imperial activity veiled in some sense of righteousness. As Bacevich explains, Wilson utilized the logic of the Monroe Doctrine for U.S. military intervention and the expansion of American power. (Bacevich 2003) Wilson, according to Bacevich was eager to see democracy prevail in the Caribbean, sending troops into Haiti in 1915. (Bacevich 2003) Continuing, just weeks before giving the speech previously mentioned to the Senate, U.S. troops occupied the Dominican Republic. In 1914 and 1916, Wilson sent military incursions into Mexico, in order to teach the Mexicans to “elect good men.” (Bacevich 2003) None of the imperial incursion created democracy. (Bacevich 2003)

As we continue along the American imperial narrative, the importance of Wilsonian thought becomes clearer, as his free market, liberal economics, and the urgent need to spread democracy becomes the most important items on the United States’ foreign policy agenda.

From 1900 to 1945 the United States grew nearly exponentially from a regional power to one of the two worldwide hegemony, with its economy, global influence, and military capacity corresponding. The United States entered its first truly global military commitment in World War I and played a decisive role in defeating the Central Powers. More importantly, it cemented an American position among the world's great powers, and President Wilson's post-war Fourteen Points laid the foundation of American foreign policy ideology into the future, critically establishing the importance of free trade and a general association of member states. (Bacevich 2003) At the conclusion of the Second World War, the United States was victorious and left with the largest army, biggest economy, a nuclear arsenal, and moral high ground from defeating extremist regimes. Meanwhile, the decline of colonial Europe from the two wars left a vacuum of power throughout the world that the United States and its similar imperial interests were eager to fill throughout the world. By 1945, America's military and international profile rise was complete, made through conquest and economic industrialization, and the United States was the most powerful country in the world.

The next part of the paper will explore the mechanisms of imperial American power abroad after its ascension to its global position at the conclusion of World War II.

Synergizing Ideological and Military Power

After World War II, the United States was in a position to push its interests globally through the twin ideological pillars of democratic form of government and capitalism. By forcing countries to accept principles of both, the United States was

ensured simultaneous worldwide influence through the free market itself and regimes that politically supported free market systems by ideological coherence with the American model that requires both.

In his book, *American Empire*, Andrew Bacevich also discusses the rise of American hegemony in this post World War II world. (Bacevich 2002) Bacevich explains that much of the world has a more positive view of the United States than previous hegemon because no historical hegemon has been democratic. (Bacevich 2002) During the course of World War II, democracy defeated fascism, and during the ensuing Cold War, confronted the totalitarian nature of communism. (Bacevich 2002) The United States, especially in Eastern Bloc countries and in Southeast Asia, promised suffrage and freedom in former and current authoritarian regimes. (Bacevich 2002) With a hand extended, the United States began to reach out to the world destroyed by war, and much of the world reached back towards the United States and its promises for a better future.

However, the relationship was quickly muddled. Continuing the tradition of Wilsonian forced free markets established earlier in the century, the United States as an imperial economic interest, brought capitalism to places where it also brought democracy. Friendly regimes coincided with free markets and in return, exploitation by American businesses. Historically, over a third of the world's multinational corporations have been based in the United States, and their growth has been strongest in emerging markets. (Bacevich 2002) American companies and capitalists saw opportunities in emerging markets for cheap labor, and called on the government to reform to freer trade and to push capitalism and free market principles abroad, sometimes forcefully against less cooperative countries.

However, not all theorists and political scientists agreed with President Wilson. Earlier in the century, leading political scientist Charles A. Beard theorized the growing importance of free markets to what he called the “commercial empire” that was the United States. Beard concluded that democratic interests had always been subordinate to economic interests and also that pushing for free markets abroad would prevent democratic growth. (Bacevich 2002) Opposing Wilsonian thoughts of the blended ideology of the two principles (capitalism/free markets and democracy), Beard argued that engaging in opening free markets would essentially require the United States to become an outright empire, stating that Americans would have to be “pushing and holding open doors in all parts of the world with all the engines of government ranging from polite coercion to the use of arms.” (Bacevich 2002) Beard also addresses the backlash that may occur, explaining that the harder Americans push their interests, the harder the opposition would become in other countries. Opposition to the free markets abroad, Beard argued, would breed militarism at home and intolerance of other nationalities. Most importantly, pushing for free markets abroad, Beard feared, would require American interests to be placed economy “within the framework of national security.” (Bacevich 2002) In other words, imperial economic vitality would require the power of the military to win, enforce, and uphold economic interests. According to Beard, foreign and domestic policy’s merger was “governed by their interests as their statesmen conceived those interests.” (Bacevich 2002) With this logic, the United States would rank economic considerations foremost among the factors determining how policy makers defined interests. (Bacevich 2003) Beard’s theories and conclusions contrasted other well – known historians of his time which were much more supportive of imperial-

like measures to spread the American way of life. For example, historian Albert Beverage in April 1898 on the cusp of America's rise said in a much more bluntly imperial manner:

“Fate has written our policy for us; the trade of the world must and shall be ours...And American law, American order, American civilization, and the American flag will play themselves on shores hitherto bloody and benighted, but by those agencies of God henceforth to be made beautiful and bright.”

(Beard 1939)

Beard made a major strategic error in the 1930s and 1940s by proclaiming that Roosevelt was secretly putting the United States on track to war with Germany, Italy, and Japan. (Bacevich 2003) In 1941, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and isolationism's summoned conclusion, Beard and his rhetoric fell on deaf ears, as many thought him mean-spirited and unpatriotic. (Bacevich 2003) However, as we continue to unravel the American narrative, it becomes increasingly evident that many of Charles A. Beard's theories about an American empire, commercialism and the blending of domestic and foreign affairs are seemingly true. (Bacevich 2003)

Beard was soon cast out of the academic community. According to Anne Norton's *Leo Strauss and the Politics of the American Empire*, Leo Strauss, a professor at the University of Chicago became a major conservative thinker and an academic engine for a new generation of conservatives in the post-war world that would push for expanding America's imperial interests. (Norton 2004) Norton explains that Strauss viewed empires as a natural “out growth” of the logic of international as conditioned by

our “natures.” (Norton 2004) Most importantly, in his work, Strauss surveys history from a phenomenological perspective – the “Athenian thesis,” explaining states seek power and power is how war and empire are created. (Norton 2004) Norton explains that critics of Strauss argue that his perspective legitimizes American’s will to seek power economically and politically. (Norton 2004) Most profoundly, critics argue that Straussian thought naturalizes and moralizes American power, reinforcing Chua’s imperial commonality of self-aggrandizement and its direct relation to American exceptionalism. Straussian principles would find their ways in the high levels of American government in the years to come.

As Norton explains in her book there is a distinct difference between Leo Strauss and his students that learned about his Old World philosophy applied in many ways to a New World setting within the United States, and “the story of a set of students taking that name, regarded by others – and regarding themselves – as a chosen set of initiates into a hidden teaching.” (Norton 2004) Norton continues to explain that these “lesser Straussians” were “bound not simply by descent from a common teacher or a love of learning...but bound by politics as well: a distinctly and distinctively conservative politics.” (Norton 2004) These Straussians have come to political power over the past twenty five years within the United States, and in many ways the modern conservative movement is a product of them. (Norton 2004) Indeed, in many ways they were the second standard bearer of Wilsonian logic after the free market liberals of World War II, but abide by a more extreme imperialistic methodology. Later in this essay we will discuss the ramifications of Straussian political actors in recent American history.

Casting criticism aside by those such as Beard and possessing a stronghold of political thought subjected to Wilsonian free market principles and newfound theoretical beliefs of dominance led the United States and its allies to seize the economic moment just prior to their military victories in World War II. Held in New Hampshire, the Bretton Woods Conference, a United Nations meeting, established an agreement between the world's major industrialized countries that established rules for commercial and financial relations. Created to help rebuild war-torn countries in the aftermath of World War II, the agreement allows for substantial reconstruction money but simultaneously pushed for free trade and monetary agreements, cementing capitalism and free trade in much of the Western and developed world. (Literaturverz 1988) Signed by 44 countries, Secretary of State Cordell Hall explained the purpose of Bretton Woods as:

“...that one country would not be deadly jealous of another and the living standards of all countries might rise, thereby eliminating the economic dissatisfaction that breeds war, we might have a reasonable chance of lasting peace.” (Literaturverz 1988)

Economic policy, with this logic, had effectively become part of a national security strategy, as Beard had predicted earlier. Free trade agreements (specifically Bretton Woods) brought on by military victory allowed the United States to lay the groundwork for institutionalizing internationally the priorities of American imperial economic and political interests.

With the twin pillars of capitalistic free trade and military supremacy, the United States set out on a course of thought and theory that was able to blend the two separate concepts into one broad foreign and simultaneously domestic policy, as Dr. Beard had feared. This synergized political environment laid the groundwork for an increasingly centralized state, as well as an American-centered post war atmosphere dominated by capitalism, military supremacy, or both. Glimmers of the beginnings of Marcuse's concept of finality or the reining of a single idea over all others began to materialize.

Institutionalizing Synergized Economic and Military Power

With America's position and its ideals solidified after World War II, a number of domestic and foreign political institutions reflecting the growing imperialistic movement towards a centralized state trumping both its military and economic agenda simultaneously have risen. Some institutions are new (in the relative sense, circa post-war) while other institutions are new versions of their former self. Regardless, the nexus of economic and military philosophy has created new seats of power, while shrinking the relevance of some others. The first institution this portion of the essay will examine is the presidency.

In 1817, Thomas Jefferson wrote in a letter to James Madison, his long time companion, "the election of a President of America some years hence will be much more interesting to certain nations of Europe than ever the election of a king of Poland was." President Jefferson's foresight is interestingly accurate.

Some historians and social scientists may require states that are classified as imperial to be intensely centralized around an individual or small group. In his article “The Presidential Office and the President as Party Leader” Lester G. Seligman in 1959, explains the growing centralization of the presidency through powers of the bureaucracy, international relations, and the military: “the steady climb of the Presidency in the matter of public policy leadership is one of the patent political truths of the century.” (Seligman 1959) Seligman explains that the presidency has many roles; and the president has the capacity to intertwine such roles to achieve goals, either personal or for the country, such as using international foreign policy power to drive international economic initiatives in order to affect the domestic economy. (Seligman 1959) The president also, according to Seligman, has the power to communicate on a national scale through the media the direction of his office and the direction of his party (Seligman: “When the President speaks as a legislative leader his voice is heard more fully because he has the weapons to exert influence...”) Skeptic citizens of questionable policies may be able to be won over by smooth talking, effective communicators. The presidency, and its direct control and great leeway of the massive military, is able to direct foreign policy with little intervention by other venues of government. Perhaps not as large of a concern to the framers of the Constitution, the powers of foreign policy, because of the interconnectedness of the world today, are immensely strong and important.

Continuing, the president is the Chief Executive of the Federal government and Commander in Chief of the armed forces, and in many ways, required to be as economically efficient as a corporate executive. As Max Weber feared, bureaucracy’s efficiency is not confined by businesses, but also used by governments. As technology

has improved and the pace of life since World War II has sped ever faster, Americans, and much of the world, demand faster responses to disaster, war, and economic problems. Few institutions can act as swiftly as the presidency, with its power to communicate through the bully pulpit and technological broadcasts, and also through its ability to make immediate policy adjustments, by means as the president's position as either the Chief Executive or as Commander in Chief. The presidency, as opposed to the courts or Congress, is one individual, and decisions can be made in brevity with or without much deliberation or compromise.

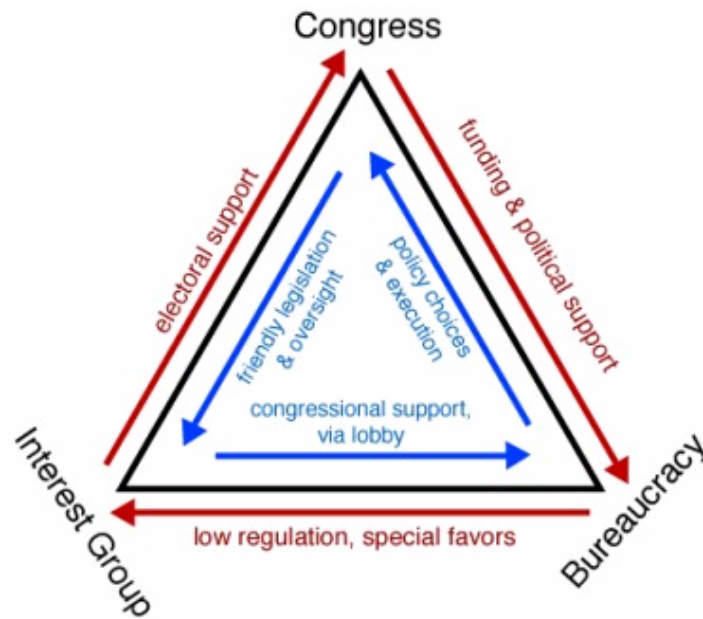
The president is also often held accountable (rightfully or unrightfully so) for the nation's economic and fiscal health. Presidents are often cast out of office if their term endures a poor economic performance, and are awarded with support during strong economic times. The power of an American president is an acknowledgement consciously or subconsciously by its people that the president is the most visible and powerful political actor, controlling (or even appearing to control, in which case appearance has power in itself) or reacting to the most important aspects of political responsibility.

The president's clear control of the military and its indirect control of the economy is a clear example of a synergized institution of power. Much of the presidency's economic influence derives from its ability to wage war, spend money, develop trade policies, or secure resources for the American economy. As said before, president also has outright economic power, pushing economic agendas and policies into law, such as the submission of a Federal budget proposal to Congress or the urging to cut taxes, among many others. The fact that the American people vest such a large proportion

of both responsibilities into one institution, or one individual for that matter is a testament to the extent of centralization of these two concepts into one imperial – like institution. A country that declares itself to be a democracy perhaps would question that type of power being placed in the hands of a single individual.

Moving on from the presidency, empires have long been associated with continual war and expansion, which is clearly also the case of America. Commonly known as the Military Industrial Complex and displayed in Figure 2.3 below, first warned of by President Eisenhower, the United States military exists within a procurement process situated among three actors, defense contractors, the military, and Congress, with each side in a sense profiting from war. In this paradigm, Congress perpetually gives military contracts to large defense companies that operate within specific jurisdictions to employ their constituents. These companies in turn provide the research and development of much of the military's technology. Because of their role in national security the military cannot let these companies fail, or it could sacrifice future research and development. These companies and their livelihood therefore become a national security interest, and again, a country that is supposedly democratic and peaceful suddenly finds war not only profitable, but also addictive. In order to maintain its position, it has to continually use expansion, procurement, and combat to ensure the health and vitality of these companies. With no threat, the United States cannot justify spending financial resources on procurement, and without the defense contractors, the United States' military is left insufficiently maintained, and Congressional districts lose jobs. War or constant preparation for war, as in much the same way in other empires, is a vital component of an imperial American economy.

**Figure 2.3: Military Industrial Complex, Department of Defense as “Bureaucracy,”
and defense contractors as “Interest Group”**



“Military Industrial Complex.” Online Image. 2007. TDAXP. Accessed: <http://www.tdaxp.com/archive/2007/07/07/>

Turning to less ambiguous institutions of synergized mechanisms of imperial power, the United States is a founding member of the United Nations, created in the aftermath of World War II and the failure of the League of Nations. The United Nations is headquartered in New York (symbolic of America’s interest and role in the organization) and the United States possess veto power and a permanent seat on the prominent Security Council. The United States contributes 22% of the 180 member institution budget⁹, and usually plays an active and decisive role in United Nation interventions and aide programs. While many of the projects, initiatives, and interventions are perhaps necessary and good-willed, the United Nations is nevertheless

the most prominent (and significantly key) international organization and the United States is arguably its most powerful member; giving it yet another avenue to shape policy around possible imperial interests centered on economic or military concerns or activity.

The United States also is a member and powerful leader in many of the world's most important security pacts. Used as leverage as well as influence, the largest and most influential of them, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)(as shown in Figure 4 below), is an ever growing network of European states and North American countries led by the United States. Originally designed to deter Soviet aggression, NATO remains a vital American overseas tool to influence defense policies around the world. According to the Government Accountability Office, over the past 50 years, the United States has maintained as many as 300,000 military personnel in Europe and has consistently devoted more of its gross domestic product (GDP) to defense than have most of its allies¹⁰. In addition to the military camaraderie, much of NATO is deemed a part of the West, and shares a common economic, culture, and military set of beliefs, spearheaded by the United States in opposition to the former Soviet Union. Despite the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States still bears the largest financial burden among the NATO allies and remains the foremost military power of Europe. Other institutionalized mechanisms of America's power can be represented by additional security pacts such as the Australia, New Zealand, and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS), as well as the Organization of American States. Additionally the United States remains particularly close with several key allies in the world, including the United Kingdom and Israel.

Figure 2.4: NATO member countries

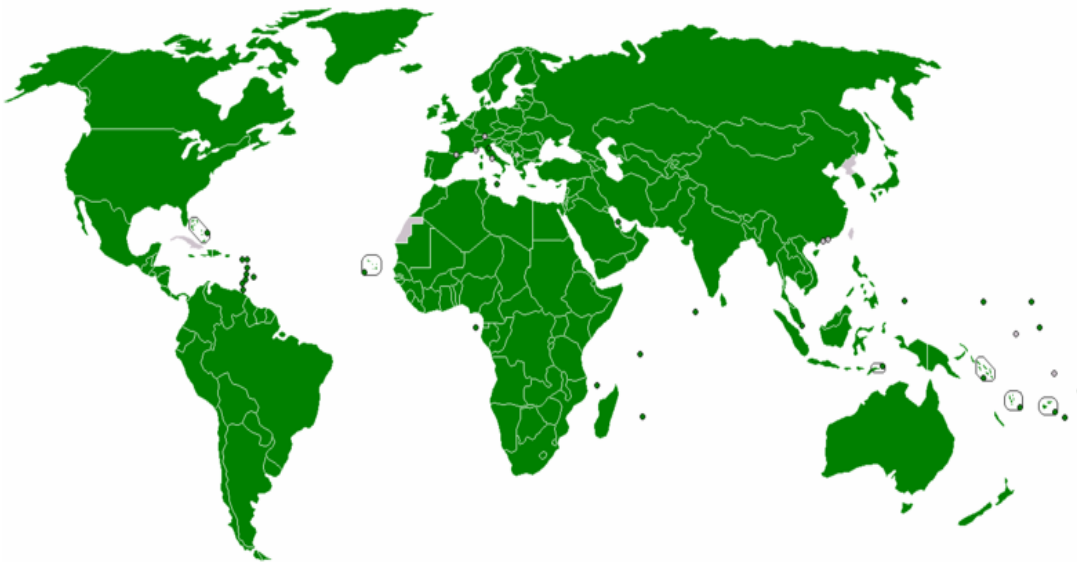


“NATO Member Countries.” 2009. Maps of the Net. Accessed: mapsof.net/.../png/location-nato-2009

Institutionalized mechanisms of power set up and strongly influenced by the United States are not limited to political or military entities. Key economic forums and institutions allow the United States to push forward an economic agenda. The World Trade Organization (WTO), designed by the Bretton Woods Conference described earlier, is a place where member governments go to try to sort out trade problems they face with each other and was a successor to the GATT (Global Agreements on Trade and Tariffs). The WTO agreements are negotiated and signed by the bulk of the world’s trading nations, providing the legal ground-rules for international commerce. Continuing, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, both established again by the meetings at Bretton Woods, are in a sense “owned” and directed by the governments of member nations¹¹. Both institutions concern themselves with economic issues and concentrate their efforts on broadening and strengthening the economies of their member nations for the benefit of free trade on the larger scale. Ultimately, these institutions were established to ease the ebb and flow of capitalism and free market trade to further the ideological

thought that the tide of free trade raises all boats (and therefore benefit a set of imperial American ideals). Figure 2.5 shows the drastic expanse of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Both major institutions of international trade and finance are headquartered in Washington, D.C.

Figure 2.5: Global map of participating countries of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – member states are shaded green, non-member states are shaded grey (note: there are very few)



“World Bank Member Countries.” 2009. World Bank. Accessed: www.worldbank.org/.../global/chapter4.html

One may see these examples as exemplars of American power, but not necessarily of an American empire. Returning to an earlier rationale expressed, this type of control, voluntarily or involuntarily over others as an external influencer, is a key component of imperial methodology and a commonality among classical imperial examples.

Additionally, no other state or supranational actor possesses a similar international unilateral capacity to intervene, force, or coerce other states as comparable to American power. These institutions, with their origins grounded in American-led thought, are examples of just how woven in to the global system an American empire may be.

These institutions and their bedrock of common philosophies laid the foundation for an unchecked United States of America. From its centralized presidency, its enormous military and the complex behind it, to formal international institutions of commerce and security, the United States completed the 20th century after the fall of the Soviet Union unchecked and asserted its newfound power during the beginnings of the 21st century through imperial wars.

Imperial Wars

After the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, the United States and President George H. W. Bush spoke of a “new world coming into view...a new world order.” (Bacevich 2003) With the collapse of the Soviet Union and its political and institutional rivals to the United States and its western allies (such as the Warsaw Pact) American influence could no longer be matched anywhere in the world. In 1991, President Bush and his advisers understood that “we are starting self –consciously to view our actions as setting a precedent for the post-Cold War world.” (Bacevich 2003)

One of the first major foreign policy decisions taken on by the United States in this newfound atmosphere of dominance was the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. (Bacevich 2003) According to Andrew Bacevich, the United States and a rising tide of

neoconservative thought was poised to display to the world several important dimensional aspects of this “new world order.” (Bacevich 2003) First, expeditious handling of the crisis would show that the United States had learned from its lesson in the Vietnam War, and its willingness to still intervene far from its shores. (Bacevich 2003) Secondly, the ousting of Saddam’s military forces from Kuwait would display to the world the competence and advancement of the American military. (Bacevich 2003) This concept is two pronged, one avenue displays to the world the utility of American military forces in crises, while also showcasing its power. (Bacevich 2003) Additionally the display of military might would reconfirm the massive arms buildup in the 1980s and also would diminish calls for renewed cuts or a drawdown in spending. (Bacevich 2003) Most importantly, the ousting of Iraqi forces from Kuwait would validate America’s continual position as the most prominent global leader, a position often garnished through force.

During the actual Gulf War, an entire American empire came upon Saddam Hussein. Approved by the United Nations, backed by the institutionalized American-led world, and joined by scores of its allies in battle, the United States crushed the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The military industrial complex fitted the world’s most powerful military with technology that was unsurpassed, and the Pentagon war machine led by a centralized presidency allowed for an effective and smooth command of the war.

During the first war in the Persian Gulf one of the immediate concerns was the possible Iraqi invasion of omnipotent oil producing Saudi Arabia – an undemocratic and oppressive country, but yet an ally of the United States. An identifier of the war as being an imperial act is to determine if Saudi Arabia was an ally of the people of the United

States or a strategic partner of an American empire. If the former is true, how does the United States, with its supposed liberal and free values tolerate such an ally? The latter simply follows clearer logic, and is evidence of imperial interests at the heart of foreign policy; trumping other aspects of society, governance, and human rights. Indeed, the United States committed hundreds of thousands of troops and aid to the oil-laden kingdoms of the Middle-East but nearly ignored (later acknowledging their lack of action) genocide in Rwanda. With no Soviet Union to battle in satellite states, the United States indeed ignored much of the third world, unless it was an integral partner in some avenue of American economic interest (Persian Gulf) or within a hotbed of political commitment (Kosovo).

Continuing throughout the rest of the 1990s America, without a grand enemy, was relatively low-key, maintaining a world wide military complex while fighting a few regional wars, notably the Serbian atrocities in Kosovo as mentioned before.

By the turn of the 21st century, however, that position grew drastically different.

On September 11th, 2001, an extremist Muslim terrorist organization struck symbolic and practical displays of an American empire, its military headquarters and its foremost World Trade Center in New York. Like this essay described in prior sections, the twin pillars of American imperial doctrine has historically since the conclusion of World War II been capitalism (free-market ideologies coinciding with democracy) and military power. Looking at the attacks of September 11th, it is easy to see that the participating terrorists also viewed and felt the simultaneous importance of both institutions as the most powerful derivatives of imperial America. By spring of 2003, the United States had invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, toppling their former regimes. However,

the previous regimes, with their ill-equipped militaries where proven to be an easier target for the sophisticated American war machine than the violent uprisings that followed in the vacuum of the former governments' power.

The individuals responsible for conceiving the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were grounded in ideological thought that gave rise to a school of intellectuals during the Cold War. Returning to earlier thoughts in this essay about the rise of ideological power in the aftermath of World War II, Leo Strauss's philosophy indeed had a profound effect on this burgeoning class of American politicians eager to utilize forms of his teachings. These "lesser" Straussians, as Norton described them before, included such thinkers as Irving Kristol, whose son William Kristol was a major contributor to the Project for a New American Century, a think tank designed to "promote America's global leadership"¹². These self-referred to neoconservatives also had close connections to the White House, as Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz studied under Strauss and National Security Advisor and later Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was a political scientist well aware and often endorsing, of those opinions. In his article, "*The Intellectual Antecedents of the Bush Regime*," Ben O'Laughlin describes how neoconservatives such as William Kristol nor Paul Wolfowitz "were neither content with the outcome of the 1991 Gulf War, and had been recommending regime change throughout the 1990s." (O'Laughlin 2006) Many neoconservatives including Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Vice-President Dick Cheney were products of the earlier Bush administration and felt similarly discontent about Hussein staying in power. While they viewed the war in Afghanistan as an immediate tactical strike, the neoconservatives viewed the invasion of Iraq as a long term strategic positioning of American power. O'Laughlin explains that on September

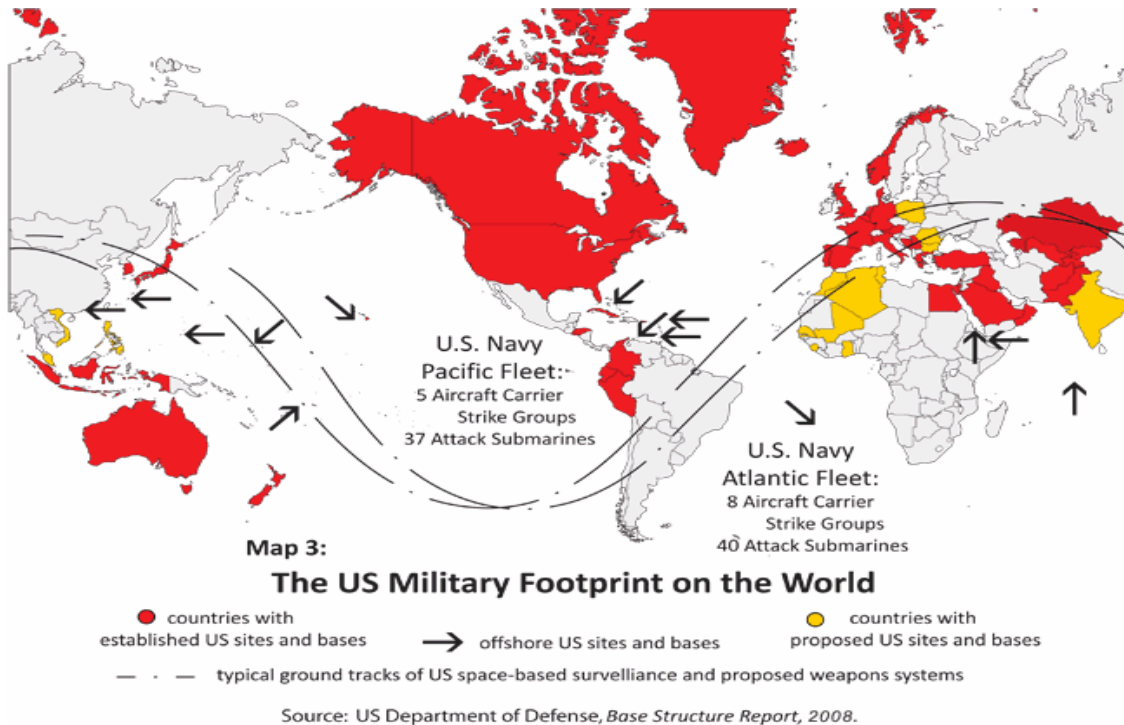
20th 2001, just days after the September 11th terrorist attacks, sixty prominent neoconservatives wrote an ultimatum to the White House demanding action on Iraq. (O’Laughlin 2006) Military action was not the only avenue neoconservative thought permeated into, as John Bolton was the Chief United States Ambassador to the United Nations and Paul Wolfowitz was later named President of the World Bank. (O’Laughlin 2006) Much like capitalism, democracy, and the military had been interwoven into international institutions and policy after World War II, neoconservative thought, much of it stemming appropriately or inappropriately from Leo Struass and his students, became interwoven into international institutions and policy after the September 11th attacks.

As Alejandro Colas and Richard Saull describe in their edited volume of various academic articles entitled *The War on Terrorism and the American ‘Empire’ after the Cold War*, the American-led ‘war on terror’ and its defining neoconservative thought has brought about the most abrupt and paradigm sweeping changes since the end of the Cold War. The two scholars explain that a new “imperial moment” is discernible in US foreign policy in the wake of the neoconservative rise in power. This imperial behavior is markedly displayed in a development since September 11th of a fresh strategic doctrine based on the legitimacy of preventive military strikes on hostile forces in anywhere in the world. No longer bound by a grand strategy of deterrence or containment, the United States and President George W. Bush explained to the world “[y]ou are either with us or against us.” (Colas & Saull 2006)

In Figure 2.6 below, one can see the vast extension of American forces throughout the world, despite the end of the Cold War. Note the high level of countries

with bases in the Middle-East, and the lack thereof in Sub-Saharan Africa (where many recent humanitarian and security crises have occurred).

Figure 2.6: World map of United States military bases and naval groups



“The U.S. Military Footprint on the World.” 2009. United States Department of Defense. Accessed: <http://www.defenselink.mil/>

As this study has discussed, American imperialistic activity has played an integral role in the history of the United States. Wars for land and territory, the spread of capitalism and democracy through institutional mechanisms and the military, and longstanding theoretical approaches such as the Monroe Doctrine and the concept of Manifest Destiny are all evidence of American imperialism. What then, one may ask, that make these wars, in comparison more exclusively imperial than those in the nation’s

pasts? Returning to Colas and Saull and their edited volume of differing authors and their academic perspectives on the subject, they explain that there is a common academic belief that while admitting United States' foreign policy has long been imperial, there is a rejection of the more simplistic Marxist conceptualization of imperialism as a form of militarized capitalistic rivalry. (Colas & Saull 2006) Instead, the authors argue that America's global power projection is a form of "super-imperialism" where a single power or empire imposes its primacy upon subordinate states through a multilateral but ultimately coercive and subordinate system centered in Washington, D.C. (Colas & Saull 2006) With this logic, an American empire has grown beyond its original shell, and while still an empire because of its origins and pasts, its empire is one that fills uniquely greater imperial role. In other words, the institutionalization of its ideological and military power has allowed it to rise to an imperial position that has not been achieved by previous empires, but is nonetheless, by characteristic, been imperially attained.

America, as this portion of the paper has explored, has a long and complex imperial history. From its inception over two centuries ago, the United States of America has gradually expanded, conquered, influenced, and stressed its role as a position of a moral leader. Since the turn of the twentieth century, the America's expansion has become more convoluted, beginning with Woodrow Wilson's conceptual framework of simultaneous expansion of markets and democracy. After the conclusions of both World Wars, the United States found itself relatively unscathed while other great powers were reeling. Understanding the moment in time, America pushed its newfound strength in every direction, using every weapon, both real and theoretical to open doors to free markets, cement its position as the most powerful military in the world, and create

institutional mechanisms for their enforcements. Massive economic and security organizations favoring an American empire sprung to life. At the conclusion of the Cold War and the end of major international competition, America at the end of one century and the beginning of another exercised an unchecked position of newfound imperial might through unilateralism and preemptive war. As O’Laughlin states, the new National Security Strategy authored by the Bush Administration intended to “make the world not just safer, but *better*.” (O’Laughlin 2006)

PART III

CONSEQUENCES AND CONTENDERS OF AN AMERICAN EMPIRE –

WHAT LIES AHEAD

Returning to the healthcare metaphor that was used in the beginning of this discussion, this essay has attempted a diagnosis of the present American state as empire, one that has been gradually built and shaped through times and ideals. With that diagnosis, this portion of the paper will turn to an analysis that may alleviate some of the pains of an imperialized America. The reality of empire commands that we analyze its strengths and weaknesses in order to have a better informed policy decision-making process, by seeing the benefits and expenses of participating as an imperial player in global politics and relations. I will begin the next section critically examining two sides, one supporting empire and one against an imperial America. Afterwards, the essay will move to an analysis of “winners” and “losers” of imperial America in hope to shed truer lights on the global and domestic intentions of the United States. Additionally, the essay will examine the prospects of America’s future in our contemporary political and international setting by deeply examining potential candidates that may vie for America’s

imperial position in the world. Lastly, the essay will briefly touch on a more recent change in American international relations after the inauguration of President Barack Obama in January 2009.

An Affirmation of Empire

Bradley Thayer, in his article “The Case for American Empire,” supports the idea of an American empire. Perhaps one of the more interesting concepts of Thayer’s perspective is that he embraces the term empire to describe the United States. (Thayer 2007) As this essay pointed out in an earlier section, the terminology of empire is smothered in negative connotation and is often used as a slanderous or pessimistic term to describe American actions. However, Thayer states:

“Is America an empire? Yes. An empire is a state that surpasses all others in capabilities and in a sense of mission. Empires usually exceed others in capabilities such as the size of their territories and material resources. Its capabilities are much greater than the average or norm prevailing in the international system.” (Thayer 2007)

Thayer uses these characteristics to describe not only empire but also the United States. (Thayer 2007) However, Thayer also explains that it is “unique” in the sense that it does not rule through traditional forces of domination but instead indirectly, through alliances, organizations, and agreements. While both concepts of empire aim towards control over

weaker states as their main prerogative, their methods of control are different. (Thayer 2007)

Continuing, Thayer argues that an American empire is indeed in step with longstanding American ideals and its beneficial relationship with the world. (Thayer 2007) Thayer argues that empire spirit is in step with founding fathers “dreams” for America and that it should be valued by America for its honorable and goodhearted actions it undertakes for the world. (Thayer 2007) Thayer explains that America is not appreciated because its actions always have an exaggerated effect on smaller countries: “When the United States sneezes, Latin America gets influenza.” (Thayer 2007) This fact alone will create resentment, according to Thayer, and its moderate global stances allow it to be attacked by both sides of the political spectrum. (Thayer 2007) For example, people will attack its secularism (Islamic extremists) while others will attack its hedonism (Europeans).

Thayer continues by explaining American empire is vital to maintain international security, not only for itself, but for the world; “peace, like good health, is not often noticed but is quickly missed when absent.” He points out that empires have been stalwarts of peace, and that Latin word *pax*, as in *pax Romana*, means peace. Thayer argues that democracy and capitalism are the current best models of societal development, and that American humanitarian missions show genuine commitment to a better world.

Thayer explains that American Empire can be proud because it has fostered freedom and economic vitality in many corners of the globe, concluding with the idea

that “[w]hen the sun sets on the American Empire we will acknowledge that the world was the better for having it.” (Thayer 2007)

While one may agree with Thayer’s recognition of an American empire, one may also disagree with him on several occasions, in particular, the concept of “uniqueness.” To begin an effective critique it is prudent to revisit one of Amy Chua’s commonalities of empire. Among them, classical and modern empires have all viewed themselves as a beacon of humanity, a cultural and civic hub for the world. Thayer’s characterizations of the United States cast a similar glow on an American empire, which would make it difficult to be “unique.” Likewise, Thayer acknowledges the goal of empire as control, and recognizes that the United States has also set that goal. However, he states that the way in which an American empire conceives its control, through indirect mechanisms institutions of soft and hard power, differentiates it from previously harsh direct control. This seems contradictory to one of his later claims that democracy and its freedoms and liberties are one of the prime examples of positive American imperial work. How can one be allegedly exporting democracy, freedom, and liberty while seeking control over others? As noticed before this string of hypocrisy is a classical imperial tradition, and one the United States, as evident by Thayer’s analysis, participates in.

A Rebuttal of Empire

In his stark refute of an American Empire, *The Case Against American Empire*, Christopher Layne discusses the problems and the realities of world empire. Touching immediately on the post world environment after the September 11th terrorist attacks as a

focal point of imperial activity, Layne shows the weaknesses of the theory behind some neoconservative thought. In an enormously complicated world, Layne explains President George W. Bush responded to questions about why terrorist attacked the United States by a monumental oversimplification; “because they hate our freedom.” (Layne 2007) Layne then points out that academic research in the Middle East showed a rising tide of anti-American sentiment due to policies in the region. This type of clumsy imperial doctrine, Layne explains, sets the tone for backlash. American intervention in Iraq has shown, according to Layne, that an American empire can not force democratization as a grand strategy. In his own words about Iraq and the neoconservative international strategies:

“American efforts to export democracy may backfire...one huge disaster is enough – more than enough - for any grand strategy. American empire is a failed strategy...the time has come for the United States to adopt a new grand strategy that will avoid the errors of Empire that will enhance, rather than weaken, American security.” (Layne 2007)

Continuing, Layne states that American Empire rests on illusions of primacy and Wilsonian ideology, which is a strategy that leads to insecurity because of its forceful nature and instable history in developing countries. (Layne 2007) At different points, Layne argues, primacy has put the United States on a path to confront most of the international community on different levels, endangering its position, leading to asymmetric warfare (terrorism) as a byproduct. (Layne 2007) Additionally, Layne fears American efforts to export democracy may backfire (for example, Hamas in 2006

Palestinian elections). According to Layne, the recent and ongoing War in Iraq is the newest and clearest evidence that an American empire cannot work and that the United States must find other mechanisms for American security than imperial ones. (Layne 2007)

In the spirit of critique, Layne outlines reasons why an American empire does not work, however, he does not seem to represent or outline an alternative route in international affairs or domestic policy to change the course of action away from imperial strategy. One of the most pivotal aspects of international relations and affairs is security, on a personal, state, and transnational level. Layne details the instabilities of the system which upon an American empire rests (i.e. terrorism, backlash etc...) but does not explain or analyze the possible stabilizing mechanisms the United States and its global allies and partners have created and oversee. Many organizations, including the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organizations among many others, have surely avoided war or aided and abetted states or peoples in crises. Likewise these organizations have also helped avoid war scenarios through deliberation and the oversight of nuclear proliferation. International economic organizations give struggling economies loans and funds to develop, and Americans donate money and contribute resources to less developed nations throughout the world. Without an American empire, there would be a vacuum of power that could create more instability than an original empire had.

As one can see from these drastically different perspectives, an American empire, even when realized it exists, is a thickly contentious topic. Those supporting empire may find themselves accused of xenophobic international relations, returning to an outdated time and a new version of Rudyard Kipling's *White Man's Burden*. However, those

ardent supporters firmly believe that their representation of America is the truest, and that the United States plays an imperial role in the world that ultimately is a utilitarian positive light, with its ends justifying its means. Likewise, those that are against empire fear the international backlash that all empires have felt. Foreign imperial commercial or military activity masqueraded as development or democratization ultimately destabilizes local populations and diminishes the United States' global standing. Imperialists, those in opposition argue, are foolish to believe their imperial primacy can last forever and that new grand strategy is necessary for improving America's international standing.

Winners and Losers in an American Empire

Moving to the benefits of an American Empire, there are a wide variety of people and organizations that possibly benefit from its existence. Imperial activity has guaranteed fairly cheap goods, low inflation, and the ability to travel freely. American growth abroad has allowed for historic moderate national growth. Multinational corporations use the breadth and depth of American capitalistic integration as mechanisms for growth, and defense contractors and workers provide billions of dollars worth of jobs. Americans benefit from a world that remains politically American-centered and the nation is secured, unmatched, and unrivaled militarily. Also, on a more personal note, there is a great deal of individual and state centered security (no civil wars, rebellions, or serious renegades within the country) that provides a safe place to live. However, the possible biggest winners are those with the power to affect democratic and

capitalistic institutions, the titans of industry and politics, exemplifying previously mentioned Beard's clash of democracy and capitalism.

There are possible losers as well. Small businessman cannot compete with global tools of economic power that multinational corporations can rely on. An increasing polarization of wealth created by emerging markets and the shrinkage of the middle class cuts financial abilities of those who are not wealthy. Professional soldiers may become pushed financially into service, and taxpayers must provide the financial costs for an empire. Casualties of war; intentional and unintentional are endured to maintain global positions. States and organizations that challenge American military or economic power such as Cuba, or North Korea lose because they are isolated from the international, American-centric community and can be impoverished.

These pros and cons name just a few of the possibilities, as the full repercussions of imperial America, especially on the international scale, will only be able to be judged as other empires have, through the lens of history.

The Future of an American Empire

Among the several commonalities of empire explained throughout this essay is the concept of imperial decline. All empires have experienced decline, and are incapable of sustaining imperial might. However, some proponents of an American empire, such as Bradley Thayer, argue that America's uniquely imperial setting may allow a different conclusion, or an alternative to decline. This portion of the paper will exam the likelihood

of contenders to American imperial dominance and examines the future of America's global position.

As this essay has visited before, by 1992 and the collapse of the Soviet Union the United States was able to promote its institutionalized mechanisms of imperial power through a "triad of liberal democracy, economic liberalization, and human rights" and the "forces of freedom over totalitarianism [which] could provide the foundations for a new, more harmonious international order." (Saul 2007) Some of these hopes did come to realization, especially in some former communist states, and what some have argued in the gradual liberalization of China. (Saul 2007)

Today, the United States still remains in its imperial status. The credentials outlined in the previous sections are intact. However, if examined closely there are potential problems that the United States could face on all fronts; economically, militarily, politically, and socially that may jeopardize the country's imperial threshold. This paper will now explore a few of them.

Citizenry of the United States used to enjoy low comparative costs in healthcare and education while also enjoying some of the world's finest services in those fields. Today, there are signs that the United States is losing ground in these important aspects of civilian life. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, the United States spent \$2.1 trillion in healthcare costs and services, or roughly 16% of the Gross Domestic Product. (USDHHS 2007) The Department of Health and Human Services predicts that this rate will continue to rapidly increase over the coming years without great reform. Comparatively to other countries, the United States, according to the World Health Organization, is one of the most expensive healthcare

systems in the world, where the United States spends nearly 6% more of their respective GDP than either France or Germany who possess nationalized healthcare systems. (WHO 2007) In the field of education, there are also calls for concern. According to former Secretary of Education William Bennett, “American 12th graders rank 19th out of 21 industrialized countries in mathematics achievement and 16th out of 21 nations in science and advanced physics students rank dead last.” (Bennett 1999) Continuing, higher education is often out of the reach for many because of the high costs of college tuition. According to the College Board, state funding has dwindled while enrollment and tuition have gone up nearly 14% annually (College Board 2003). Accordingly, these issues are powerful enough to not only jeopardize the American citizenry individually, but to jeopardize the American economy (and imperial status) with a lack of educated and financially feasible participants.

Economically, an American empire has further challenges at home and abroad. Among them includes the weakening of the American Dollar, the increasing national debt, and advantages of outsourcing labor to other countries where workers provide services for less money than American workers. Additionally, according to the Energy Information Administration, the United States nearly uses twice as much imported oil as domestic oil, leaving the country vulnerable to whimsical global leaders in control of oil or energy shortages. (EIA 2008) Continuing, while the United States has not made a significant push toward alternate energy; much of the world is frustrated with America’s lack of involvement with environmental policy and the reduction of greenhouse gasses; specifically as the US refused to sign the Kyoto Protocol as the world’s largest polluter. (EIA 2005) While these few challenges among many may pose as a threat to an

American imperial status, they do not seem as powerful or pertinent as the stature of America on the global stage. In other words, they are well within American power to reform or change.

As Layne stated before, perhaps America's greatest obstacle is overcoming an increasingly negative persona in world affairs (which may be a culmination of smaller obstacles) contrived by war, imperial influence, and exceptionalism. According to the Pew Research Center where a poll on American positivity was gauged, the most critical international relationships the United States is a part of have seen huge declinations in favorable opinion percentages. (PRC 2006) For example, traditional American allies such as Great Britain, France and Germany, have all seen dramatic, nearly 30% drop-offs. While in 2000 the American nation enjoyed 83% favorable opinion rating in Great Britain, the number had dropped to 53% by 2006. (PRC 2006) Even more drastically, Germany in 2000 had a 78% favorable opinion of the United States, but by 2006 the number had tumbled to 37%. (PRC 2006) In the Middle East, the United States has fared even worse. The majority (52%) in Turkey in 2000 had a favorable opinion of the United States, however after several American foreign policy decisions including wars, that number fell harshly down to a dismal 12%. (PRC 2006)

It seems that years of imperial meddling and the intensification of pro-capitalism and democratic governance through previously mentioned synergized institutions of power have in many ways, as John Redwood describes, "ruffled many international feathers." (Redwood 2005) As he explains, the United States in recent years "has set out a model of a freedom loving world full of vibrant democracies, making progress through free enterprise...the United States is seeking to remodel the world in her own image, to

extend the undoubted benefits of capitalism and political freedom to many more people.” (Redwood 2005) Many of the former allies of the United States that were emboldened by American interests have become the greatest harbors of Anti-Americanism. (Saul 2007) These groups represented “highly illiberal, reactionary social and political forces which participated in the American – sponsored bloody and violent smashing of the revolutionary right.” (Saul 2007) Because of their reactionary and radical perspectives these groups were not prone to liberal causes, but instead became “anti-thetical and openly hostile to liberal modernization and incorporation into the liberal zone of peace...the defeat of the communist left in these locales had been rested upon the strengthening of political forces committed to transforming their societies in a direction at odds not only with existing leftist regimes but also with the United States and its commitment to promoting the secular universalisms of human rights, liberal democracy, and capitalist markets.” (Saul 2007) With no Soviet enemy, these reactionary forces have stricken back at the United States, mainly evident on September 11th, 2001. These actions have thus brought more American influence and power into their respective regions (i.e. Iraq and Afghanistan), at whatever the cost, including international opinion as described earlier.

What contenders may the United States face in the coming years for imperial power? This next portion takes a look at several potential challengers to American dominance. As shown in Figure 3.1 below, the following countries make up the world’s largest populations, largest sizes, vastest economies, and biggest military expenditures (CIA World Factbook Statistics) and will be helpful in beginning this analysis:

Figure 3.1: Global Leaders in “Statistical” Power

<i>Size (in millions of sq. km.)</i>	<i>Population (in millions)</i>
1. Russia (17)	1. China (1,323)
2. Canada (9.9)	2. India (1,131.1)
3. United States (9.6)	3. European Union (497.1)
4. China (9.5)	4. United States (304)
5. Brazil (8.5)	5. Brazil (186.5)
<i>Military Expenditures (in US \$billions)</i>	<i>Gross Domestic Product (In US \$trillions)</i>
1. United States (548.9)	1. European Union (16.37)
2. European Union (304)	2. United States (13.790)
3. France (74.6)	3. Japan (4.436)
4. United Kingdom (68.9)	4. Germany (3.259)
5. China (59)	5. China (3.249)

While helpful, these numbers clearly can no longer by themselves fully establish a great power, much less a global imperial role. Obviously, there are a few countries that naturally fall out of discussion on these lists. Indonesia, whose population comes in at number six when including the United States, does not make it to the other lists and lacks the infrastructure necessary to supplement a global status. Russia, while certainly nuclear capable and massive, seems to continue to suffer from similar infrastructure problems that doomed the Soviet Union and according to the Russian Federal Statistics Service, a decreasing population (similar to Japan). Germany and Japan both have constitutional stipulations preventing aggressor warfare; a major vantage of imperial capacity. Brazil, while large and heavy populated has difficulties internally with rampant inequality, and

several coups and domestic issues it must face with before it can turn its resolve into a global force. (Zibechi 2006) France and the United Kingdom spend large amounts on defense but have offered some sovereignty of their own to the European Union, which over time will further its integration and limit unilateral action. (Redwood 2005) Additionally, those countries used to possess outright empires on their own, and only recently have been able to move out of their former shadows. Their long and complex imperial history is not something either country is eager to revisit. That leaves this discussion with three candidates; the consolidated European Union, India, and China.

First, this discussion turns to the European Union. With its massive population, nuclear arsenal, large land territory, and well educated and advanced society, the Union seems like a fitting example of a global, imperial entity on the rise. Two members of the Union even possess veto powers and could have a mini-bloc on the United Nations Security Council. However, with a close examination, there is a dominating weak point in this logic. As stated before, military expenditures and willingness to commit arms and lives is an essential element in imperial studies. (Redwood 31) The Europeans have not shown that they are willing to do so on the international stage harmoniously. (Redwood 2005, 76) The United Kingdom helped the United States in its invasion of Iraq in 2003 but the rest of the Union objected to the cause, and foreign policy remains in many aspects contentious, divisive, and unilateral. Likewise, we are still far away from the wholesome integration of the Europeans defenses. Individual states still possess (and will for the foreseeable future) their own military capacities; and integration will take a significant time. (Redwood 2005, 77) Heavy social spending also does not allow many of the European countries the necessary discretionary spending that is required to fuel

foreign objectives and a world class military. Europe is still under the umbrella of military protection granted to it by the United States and its nuclear and conventional arsenals, and as in the case of Kosovo, does not seem interested in providing that level of defense themselves. (Redwood 78) While their definitions and views of enemies and adversaries may be different than that of the United States, the very important concept of militarization that this paper's definition of empire implies does not seem to fit the European model. Lastly, like in the previous analysis of the United Kingdom and France, much of Europe once possessed overseas empires, and recently decolonized them. It would require a drastic change in both domestic and foreign policy to revisit those eras of imperial doctrine.

Following the European Union, we have India. With its massive population over one billion, large size, and nuclear arsenal, India has some characteristics of a global, imperial power. However, compared to heavily developed countries, India has much social inequality and poverty it must overcome before it can achieve the next level of global importance. (Government of India Poverty Estimates 2005) Even though goods and services are much cheaper there, according to its own government study, 25% of India lives at or below the mandated poverty line of a mere \$.40 per day, certainly uncharacteristic of a hegemonic status country. (Government of India Poverty Estimates 2005) While India's population is becoming increasingly competitive with higher levels of education, India's infrastructure still needs significant upgrading.

For over 2000 years, predating Western civilization as we know it, China has been a fairly continuous state, possessing similar regions of control and a similar isolated culture for the duration of the period. By 1250AD China's population had reached 100

million, which would put it in the top ten of today's most populated countries. (CIA 2008) Aside from population, long and prosperous history, and its large size, China possesses more important statistics. "China has been the world's fastest growing economy for almost three decades, expanding at a rate of almost 10%." (Bergsten 2006) Continuing, China has been able to drastically improve its measures of well-being and achieve a dramatic reduction in poverty. (Bergsten 2006) Life expectancy has risen to 71 years, and adult illiteracy has been cut by two thirds. (Bergsten 2006) Through rapid growth and targeted government policies, China reduced the share of its rural population living in poverty by 90%, from more than 250 million in 1978 to only 26 million in 2004. (Bergsten 2006)

According to Fred Bergsten in his book *China: The Balance Sheet*, there are several underlying factors that have allowed China to experience such exciting growth. Such aspects include investments in primary schooling education, the structural transformation of the labor force, and high levels of savings and investments. (Bergsten 2006) However, the two most important aspects have been economic pillars of Chinese growth which seem to contradict their communist party heritage; the embracement of market forces, and the opening of the economy to trade and inward direct investment (Bergsten 2006). These decisions and policies have allowed the world, and especially the United States, to invest in China and to use its massive workforces to make goods at a cheaper cost.

It seems the People's Republic of China (or Mainland China or China) is beginning to fit the mold as a contender to an American empire. With the world's largest population of over 1.3 billion and its massive geographical size, as well as formidable

military spending, China was the only country (besides the United States) to make it on all four of our lists exemplified earlier. Continuing on the topic of traditional assessment tools, according to the Center of Strategic Studies, China's military enlists over 2 million active people, nearly double the manpower of the United States. (CSIS 2006) China possesses nuclear weapons, and has the ability to create more. (CSIS 2006) Continuing, China's official defense budget, according to Congressional testimony by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, is far less than its actual expenditures. Undergoing a massive defense overhaul, Secretary Gates explained that China may be spending as much as \$139 billion a year, placing it second only to the United States.

Traditionally minded China is emerging economically and militarily stronger every year. However, as explained before an American imperial status possesses more than the traditional elements of power. China, like the Soviet Union (and now Russia) and the United States, has a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council and full veto power. Because of historical reasons, including the longstanding American opposition to communism and American protection of Taiwan, China shows some resentment to the United States which in times of diminishing American popularity, is itself popular. As its thirst for energy grows more intense, China has been increasingly courting oil-rich nations and placing its interests in regions where abundant energy can be located and utilized to fuel the ever growing Chinese economy. Some estimates show that China's need for oil will match the United States by 2030. (Institute for the Analysis of Global Security 2004) While not as intense or domineering as the Warsaw Pact or as expansive as NAFTA, these Chinese efforts display a will to push forward Chinese economic interests around the world.

As described earlier, stable and secure populaces as well as a willingness to use life and money to further imperial status are both characteristics derived from the classification. It is not clear if China is willing to do such. Having longstanding isolationist policies, China is known for its lofty foreign policy slogans that seem to mean only vague principles of sovereignty and independence, often alluding to the period of time when colonial interests divided China economically; i.e. “to preserve China’s independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, and to create a favorable international environment for China’s reform and modernization.” (Bergsten 2006, 118) Also while the nation has made dramatic steps, China still has serious disparity issues regarding the poor and rich, especially comparing the wealthy coastal Chinese versus the interior and rural poverty.(Redwood 2005, 36) The average per capita income is some 40 times less than Americans, at about \$2,000 ranking 101st in the world. (IMF 2007)

Perhaps most poignantly China does not seem to have global goals or normative beliefs in social order that it feels compelled about on the global stage. While the United States pushes “open every door” fights international wars for democratization and capitalism, China has not been eager (outside of the Korean War) to push its ideology. Despite its lack of an international identity, because of its size, population, military, and economic clout, China remains the most powerful and succinct contender to an American empire.

To begin with an analysis of how a global China might act in the world arena, it is first important to examine its relationships and views of the United States. According to Bergsten, “China recognizes the unipolar world in which the United States exercises enormous political, economic, and military power and influence internationally, including

in Asia” and that the Chinese booming economy remains critically attached to good relations with the United States. (Bergsten 2006) However China, while genuinely feeling positive about Americans individually, often is suspicious of the previously mentioned hypocrisy in American foreign policy. (Bergsten 2006) Actions such as the accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade as well as the spy plane incident in 2001 continues to fuel Chinese suspicion of American motives. (Bergsten 2006) As it often does in world history, suspicion does have the capacity to develop into tensions.

The most adversarial element of Chinese-American relations is over Taiwan dependence or independence. While the United States stoutly supports the independence of the island country, China, if asserting a contender status, may finally have the capacity to push American interests out of the region. (Bergsten 2006) However, the region, with such countries as South Korea and Japan, would likely continue to support some sort of American presence to serve at least as a tacit counterbalance, or hedge, against the uncertain trajectory of growing Chinese power. (Bergsten 2006) To remain peacefully involved the United States would have to integrate China more fully into the alliance-centered regional security structure to assist the region in its future strategic calculations, of which China believes itself currently the target of. (Bergsten 2006)

Turning now to China and the world, China has made a long “concerted effort to reassure the international community that its intentions are to uphold the basic tenets of the international system and to act consonant with international law.” (Bergsten 2006) This is a vow of support to an American imperial system. China, as it has grown over the years has moved away from unilateral approaches and embraced multilateral environments to address transnational challenges such as piracy, drug trafficking, and

terrorism. (Bergsten 2006) Logically China has been hesitant to vote for economic sanctions or humanitarian intervention because of the fear of such precedent would or could be used in China. It seems obvious that, if the current communist regime continues intact into a contender status transition, these policies would probably not change. This stalemate of ideals could diminish its relative global status if China chooses to continue to be introverted, as a global contender to the United States would embody the projection of the state's will throughout the world.

Interestingly, China possesses with extreme strength some attributes that could allow it to challenge an American empire. However, its complex internal environment lacks something similar to a national normative understanding of common humanity in a goal form. While Chinese cultural identity is historically powerful and remains so today, China lacks ambition other than economic gains. It seems indisputable that China is already and will continue for the foreseeable future to be an economic superpower. For China to be successful on the path to global contender status, it must first become internally cohesive and not contradictory (communist country with market capitalism). For the United States, it is important that China does not revert back to a more totalitarian setting with its newfound resources and national power. Because of the depth of the relationships and the economic vitality of the two countries, it is possible that the two nations could join together in a great partnership; however that will only be possible if China is willing to give up some state control and authority and grant more liberties and freedoms (a concession American foreign policy continually seeks). It seems, based upon the information outlined, that conflict between the two countries would be highly unlikely and that the continual integration of markets and ideologies would not only

benefit the two countries but could also be a strong asset for global peace and stability, a triumph of American ideologies petitioned through American imperial mechanisms of international power, as argued by Thayer earlier.

According to Ronald Tammen in the book *Power Transitions and Theory* it therefore seems unlikely that China (in the foreseeable future) will challenge the United States and the international system comprised by an American empire. A lynchpin of Tammen et al's approach is that countries that are the "initiators of war" are dissatisfied with the system, and therefore are dissatisfied with the dominant player. However, that rationale does not seem to work for China, because China's global candidacy has been completely vaulted into legitimacy by the very system it does not dominate. In other words, China's recent economic and political rises are direct beneficiaries of foreign investment, trade, and economic openness encouraged by the international system administered and dominated by the United States. Therein lacks an incentive for China to change what has made it comparatively powerful and rich in the last 25 years.

As Fareed Zakaria states in a recent article, "It is true China is booming... terrorism is a threat. But if America is losing the ability to dictate to this new world, it has not lost the ability to lead." (Zakaria 2008) An American empire, while existing with flaws will seem to continue into the near future with enough time to possibly alter courses of its own history. Powerfully, Zakaria offers an optimistic future:

"The post-American world is naturally an unsettling prospect for Americans, but it should not be. This will not be a world defined by the decline of America but rather the rise of everyone else. It is the result of a series of positive trends that

have been progressing over the last 20 years, trends that have created an international climate of unprecedented peace and prosperity.” (Zakaria 2008)

“Change Has Come to America”

President Barack Obama came into office on January 20th 2009 during one of the most difficult economic times since the Great Depression in the 1930s, while simultaneously inheriting two difficult wars, skeptic allies, and a tidal wave of anti-American sentiment. Indeed, the twin pillars of an American empire, democratic, free market capitalism and military supremacy were tirelessly stressed. Massive government intervention and financial near-nationalization of America’s largest banks signal a new era of governmental responsibility of the markets. Wall Street indexes have plummeted to lows that have not been seen since the 1990s. Deficits are soaring, and the national debt is growing exponentially. While calmer trends prevail in American occupied - Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan have become ever increasing hotbeds of terrorist activity.

While campaigning for the office, President Obama promised sweepingly different approaches in Washington in foreign as well as domestic affairs. Understanding Layne’s conceptualization of backlashes against an imperial America, Obama vowed to “renew America’s security and standing in the world through a new era of American leadership.” (White House 2009) President Obama has pledged in the arena of foreign policy to “end the war in Iraq responsibly, finish the fight against the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan, secure nuclear weapons and loose nuclear materials from

terrorists, and renew American diplomacy to support strong alliances and to seek a lasting peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.” (White House 2009)

In the avenue of domestic affairs, President Obama has promised to reign in powerful capitalists on Wall Street, provide more affordable healthcare, and fight special interests. (White House 2009) As described in the previous “Winners and Losers” section, those individuals at the nexus of the two ideologies of free market capitalism and democratic government often are the ones that benefit most because they possess influence on two of the most critical aspects of American life, government and the economy. In other words, those with access to both the halls of Congress through special interests and the floors of the stock exchanges on Wall Street through corporate positions are primed for the most financial and policy success. Public officials and financial experts have blamed this relationship for the deregulation and lack of oversight as a major cause of the ongoing financial crisis, and the new President has sought to lessen the influence of these individuals. Obama has also stated that he aims to double the production of alternative energy in the next three years, and improve and reform education by equipping tens of thousands of schools, community colleges, and public universities with 21st century classrooms, labs, and libraries. (White House 2009) Continuing he has pledged to close geospatial disparity between urban, connected communities to rural, agrarian regions by expanding broadband across America, so that a small business in a rural town can connect and compete with their counterparts anywhere in the world. (White House 2009) Finally, President Obama has vowed to revamp the economy by investing in the science, research, and technology that will lead to new medical breakthroughs, new discoveries, and entire new industries.

One who listens to President Obama's speeches is often warmed by his optimistic and elegant diction. By no means does it seem likely that President Obama would support, endorse, or enforce an American empire or its conceptualization. However, the purpose of this paper is to not use a popular term, but a proper term grounded in actuality, perception, and the historic moment. The most important question is, will President Obama drastically change America's imperial course?

Historically, the chances are very little. Part II of this essay showed the gradual climb of an imperial America. While it had its pits and falls, such as fits of isolationism in the early twentieth century, or the rivalry of the Cold War, America, whether having a Democratic or a Republican president (with some degree of difference) has promoted, exploited, and enjoyed its position in global affairs. Already, it is clear that President Obama does not wish to diminish much of the imperial doctrine. While drawing down troops in Iraq is one of the Administration's goals, another is to increase troop levels in Afghanistan. One of the most contentious partnerships is the American – Israeli alliance, which upon President Obama has stated "that the United States will never distance itself from Israel." President Obama also has vowed keeping as well as increasing American military preeminence, enlarging the American Army by 65,000 and the Marine Corps by 27,000 personnel. President Obama, in his own words, has stated how important America's armed forces are in order to realize American global objectives:

"Our country's greatest military asset is the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States. When we do send our men and women into harm's way, we must also clearly define the mission, prescribe concrete political and

military objectives, seek out the advice of our military commanders, evaluate the intelligence, plan accordingly, and ensure that our troops have the resources, support, and equipment they need to protect themselves and fulfill their mission.”

(White House 2009)

Perhaps however, only the power and position of an American empire can challenge itself. In other words, because of its immense size and power, change, perhaps must smash through the United States from within. A centralized, imperial presidency may be the only avenue that can make America un-imperialistic, and time will tell if Obama’s presidency sets a drastically different course towards an anti-imperial America.

CONCLUSION

Empire is a term that has been used to describe powerful civilizations and societies that seek control and domination over others. Since their beginnings in antiquity, empires have all had commonalities, including expansion through military and economic power, an exporting culture that dominates others, and an understanding of exceptionalism, or the concept that their imperial activity is the best for humanity. Additionally, some theorists on imperial studies have noted that the term can also be used to describe an international condition, grounded in a sense of a final logic or totalitarian thought that trumps all other advocates of alternative philosophy or lifestyle.

As the essay traced the imperial elements of America's rise, it became clear that the United States possessed in many ways, these forms of imperial power. From Manifest Destiny and the Monroe Doctrine, to Wilsonian ideology and its institutionalization in the post-war American led world, it is seemingly fair to speak of an American empire.

After the realization of an empire, this essay has sought to analyze the positive and negative aspects of imperial American power as well as possible contenders to it. Additionally, the essay has explored what President Obama and his new administration has pledged to change, as well as those commitments' likelihood.

Our history is ours to write. If Americans are uncomfortable with others in outside countries referring to our actions as imperial, or academics dissecting “imperial” policies, then it is time for Americans to reexamine their commitments to democracy, freedom, liberty and the institutions assigned their protection. For real change, Americans cannot dismiss anti-imperial sentiment by simply avoiding the concept. Instead, through a clearer lens, for those Americans who oppose the concept and its malaise, must challenge the implication of empire head on. With a better diagnosis of whom and what we are, America has the opportunity to be more in tuned with ourselves, the world, and may ascend an asymptotic climb towards a truer level of historic “uniqueness.”

Footnotes:

1. BBC News reporter describes Rupert Murdoch's media conglomerate as empire. Accessed: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/2162658.stm>
2. Sports ticket distributor site describes New York Yankees as the "evil empire," itself taken from President Reagan's description of the Soviet Union. Accessed: <http://www.razorgator.com/tickets/sports/baseball/mlb/new-yorkyankees-tickets/>
3. President Ronald Reagan uses "evil empire" to describe Soviet Union. Accessed: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/evilemp.htm>
4. L, imperium; see [EMPERY](#) Accessed: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/empire>
5. Claudian, *Italy and her Invaders* Accessed: http://www.archive.org/stream/italyandherinva05unkngoog/italyandherinva05unkngoog_djvu.txt
6. President Ronald Reagan speech to First Conservative Political Action Conference, January 25, 1974. Accessed: http://reagan2020.us/speeches/City_Upon_A_Hill.asp
7. President Ronald Reagan farewell speech to the nation. Accessed: http://reagan2020.us/speeches/City_Upon_A_Hill.asp
8. *Jacobellis vs. Ohio* (1964) Justice Potter Stewart's expressed the difficulty of defining obscenity in this case: "I know it when I see it," he wrote. Accessed: http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/faclibrary/case.aspx?case=Jacobellis_v_OH
9. Assessed share of member states contribution to the United Nations. Accessed: <http://www.globalpolicy.org/finance/assessmt.htm>
10. Congressional Budget Office information on NATO. Accessed: <http://www.cbo.gov/doc.cfm?index=2976&type=0&sequence=1>
11. World Bank data and information. Accessed: <http://www.worldbank.org/>

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