

Manifest Destiny 2000

by Thom Saffold

"The superior person understands what is right; the inferior person understands what will sell."—Confucius

"Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely...There is no greater heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it."—Lord John Dalton Acton

"I still believe in liberalism today as much as I ever did, but, oh, there was a happy time when I believed in liberals..."

—G. K. Chesterton

The last hundred years has often been called "the American Century". Since it began prematurely with an imperialistic war which netted us the colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii and the Philippines, it is fitting that it should end with imperialistic attacks on Yugoslavia and Iraq.

This nation was created with eloquent words about the right of every nation to determine its own destiny. Yet, from the very beginning of our own sovereignty, the United States has acted as if every other people and nation exists only to benefit our destiny and standard of living.

First, we concentrated on ruling the affairs of every other nation in our hemisphere. We called it "Manifest Destiny," the idea that God had preordained the white ruling class of the United States to determine the destinies of the people of Central and South America. We also "determined the destinies" of those we stole our nation from originally by killing most of them and putting the rest in permanent refugee camps, a/k/a, reservations.

During the last century, the US has aggressively extended Manifest Destiny—and its enforcement device, Gunboat Diplomacy—to the rest of the world. We have waged war—overtly, covertly or by proxy—in nearly every nation of the world. For forty years after World War II, when there was a nation strong enough to oppose us, we pursued a policy of "containment," in which we sought to rule the entire world not ruled by the Soviet Union. Now that the USSR has folded, the US has no conventional obstacles to world dominion.

Of course, very few Americans use such language to describe our national goals or actions. Most American citizens and politicians live under the thrall of "the American Dream," in which our high standard of living results from hard work and American know-how, and all our wars are fought for noble and selfless reasons—democracy, freedom, justice and, above all, peace.

However, as people who morally sleepwalk through life, we are blind to the nightmare we create for most of the world's people. They see clearly that the US has rigged a global economy to drain wealth from poor people to rich elites, and that our nation benefits from this international thievery more than any other does. They recognize that we have always fought wars to gain power, markets, natural resources, money and domination for ourselves. Unlike earlier empires, we have not fought our wars to add actual lands and people to our nation. Instead, in the words of Noam Chomsky, we seek to "terrorize the neighborhood" of the world into submission to our national will and purposes.

In the process, we have become a militaristic state. Again, we do not want to see ourselves in that light. We want to view only nations like Iraq or Hitler's Germany or even Cuba as militaristic, but not the good old US of A. However, given our huge expenditures on armaments and military technology, our eagerness to use weapons of mass destruction for the slightest of provocation, and our aggressive supplying of other nations with weaponry, we are arguably history's most militaristic state.

Since 1945, the US has spent trillions of dollars on ever more destructive weapons, creating a war economy. It was not a "peacenik" who warned against the "military industrial complex", but a former general, Eisenhower. Millions of people earn their living from what we euphemistically call "the defense industry," producing weapons of terror. Many go to work each morning to design or manufacture actual weapons systems—nuclear warheads, ammunition or bombs, or the missiles and submarines and planes that deliver them. Most work to produce the myriad components that others piece together into such systems of death and ruin. All of them return home at night with paychecks that feed and support their families.

Aldous Huxley wrote a 1946 forward to *Brave New World*: "There is, of course, no reason why the new totalitarianisms should resemble the old...A really efficient totalitarian state would be one in which the all-powerful executive of political bosses and their army of managers control a population of slaves who do not have to be coerced, because they love their servitude. To make them love it is the task assigned, in present-day totalitarian states, to ministries of propaganda, newspaper editors and schoolteachers."

American workers created the cruise missiles that destroyed the pharmaceutical plant in Sudan, homes and schools in Iraq and a village in Kosovo in this way. Each one costs hundreds of thousands of dollars. Soldiers at safe distances may have fired these murderous weapons, but responsibility for the blood shed and devastation caused by them belongs to everyone who profited from their manufacture.

"Shoot all you want—we'll make more!" is the official motto of Rockwell International's missile division. It sums up nicely our nation's true values. Not only do American

business interests make money every time US armaments explode, but when we sell them to other nations—allies and enemies alike—we also profit. And even after the bombs stop falling, we have found a way to profit. Our International Monetary Fund and World Bank swoop into the nations ravaged by our arms to lend money for rebuilding, usually on the condition that lots of US corporations will receive the contracts, and that their economies will be "restructured" to benefit ours.

The only other motto that comes as close to capturing American morality is the phrase from the failed War of Imperialism Against Vietnam, "We had to burn down the village to save it." Perhaps one or the other slogan should replace "In God we trust" on our currency.

Of course, "The American Way of Life" is our god, and in its worship, we are a most religious people. Our way of life means not only the freedom to plunder the rest of the world and live ostentatiously. Even more, it means the freedom to throw US military weight around anywhere in the world.

As I write this, there are American cruise missiles raining down on yet another country. Too many times this year I have walked to work, eaten dinner, or tipped a beer to my lips with the full and sickening knowledge that my country was at that very moment delivering death to a group of people for whom I hold no ill will. I voted for Clinton in 1992 and 1996 because I wanted our country to get away from the war mongering of Nixon, Reagan, and Bush, and from the status of World Policeman.

Clinton has given us a new wrinkle in American imperialism, Cruise Missile Diplomacy. Conquest by earlier empires always necessitated the "expenditure" of its young men. The last time the United States took that route was Vietnam, and Americans said, "Bring the boys back home," and that put a crimp in American expansionism. But taking advantage of the newest American whiz-bang technologies of mass destruction, President Bush made the Iraq War so "remote-controlled" that fewer than 200 Americans died in the conflict, while at least 200,000 Iraqis were slaughtered. Clinton has continued this innovation, causing hundreds of thousands of deaths in Iraq and other countries with little or no risk to American lives.

In fact, as our militaristic system "bridges over" into the new millennium, Clinton has become an avatar of the American Global Empire. When he looks into the television cameras and speaks in such dulcet tones about how righteous and humanitarian America is, his seeming sincerity masks the utter ruthlessness with which his administration pursues Manifest Destiny—2000.

Part of that ruthlessness involves increasing the military budget way past obscene levels, particularly in Research and Development. New and deadlier fuel air bombs, tiny flying spy cameras, invincible tanks, urban warfare scenarios and plans to fight several wars at once are only some of the projects on Pentagon and corporate drawing boards. According to a March 15 New York Times article, for example, US military planners are developing war-games based on "protecting Caspian Sea oil." Protecting it from whom? Its rightful owners, of course!

Perhaps life for mostly white, middle and upper class folks like Ann Arborites will be pleasant in the New World Order. Perhaps we shall enjoy the perquisites that come from being the undisputed bullies of the world and masters of all its people. Cheap gas, full supermarkets, no guilt and the military prowess to kill off any group of people we don't like—what a fantasy. It would be like George Orwell's 1984, only with a far better standard of living. We would have constant warfare, but no one we knew would die, and we would be able to sort of enjoy it because our bombing would be "for the good of the ___(fill in names of the latest victims)___."

However, if that Way of Life sounds utterly demonic to you—and certainly if you are not white or middle class—be forewarned that unless people act now, act decisively and act collectively, the next century may be called "the American Fourth Reich."



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