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## The fall of an empire



**Sources:** The Rocket to the Moon

The United States no longer predominates in the world, no longer exercises imperial dignity. And finally, he acknowledges it: This "is a world in which the United States is no longer the only big kid in the geopolitical bloc," said CIA Director William Burns. He did it on July 1, in the same place where he began his diplomatic career, no less than in a convulsive 1989, in the cabinet of then Secretary of State James Baker where the annual conference of the Ditchley Foundation was given, in Oxfordshire, England. The theme this time was the inverse of that: "A transformed world and the role of Intelligence". That is: what to do in this new reality.

Burns compared both moments, this one and the one in 1989. He called it "one of those rare plastic moments" in history. "The Cold War was ending, the Soviet Union was on the verge of collapse, Germany would soon be reunified and Saddam Hussein's invasion of

Kuwait would soon be defeated. It was a world of undisputed American primacy. The currents of history seemed to flow in our direction, the power of our ideas propelling the rest of the world on a slow but irresistible advance toward democracy and the free market. Our sometimes authoritarian self-confidence seemed to be well-grounded in the realities of power and influence, but it also obscured other trends of gathering."

Those "other obscuring trends" today lead him to acknowledge: "Our moment of post-Cold War dominance was never going to be a permanent condition. The story was not over, nor was there ideological competition. Globalization holds great promise for human society, with hundreds of millions of people lifted out of poverty, but it is also bound to produce counter-pressures."

Burns writes his lucidity in a memo from 1992, three decades ago: "Although for the first time in fifty years we did not face a global military adversary (...) it is certainly conceivable that a return to authoritarianism in Russia or an aggressively hostile China could revive such a global threat." This, according to Burns, because "the international political system was schizophrenic inclined toward greater fragmentation."

Now that the empire no longer reigns, he is concerned with redefining the Intelligence that will accompany current foreign policy. Much suggests that he is the gray monk, or one of the few, behind the US strategy in Ukraine and China, but that is not the subject of this note: you can easily find his exposure with the help of Dr. Google.

The issue here is the essential characteristic of that empire that is ceasing to be and the framework of subjectivity in which it makes it difficult for them to recognize the situation to which they have degraded, in order to act accordingly. In that sense, Burns is again an advancer.

As is known, the fall of one empire enables the emergence of another, an issue that worries Washington every time it remembers China, which is every day. Perhaps it contributes to the subject to review how the previous empire fell, because what appears as minor can have decisive capacity.

The British Empire made good use of the New World that Europe discovered with Columbus in this developed America, and in 1497, just five years later, John Cabot, a Venetian explorer in the service of England, made a trip to the New World and set in motion the development of British power. It was, thus, establishing colonies in the northern part of America, even in Canada, but also in India and regions of Africa. The heyday came with Queen Victoria in the nineteenth century: the Victorian era. In it,

British trade, industrialization and naval superiority played a crucial role in the expansion of the empire, including much of Africa and Asia.

The serpent's egg, necessary at every end of an empire, was hatched in a colony at that time of great importance; only then would it be the United States. To British surprise, the descendants of the colonizers ended up defeating George III in 1776; The British made the attempt to regain power in these lands of little importance between 1812 and 1815 and failed.

In this way, the decline of the British Empire began, although they did not fully realize the matter. By the twentieth century, the empire reached its maximum territorial extent, but it also faced challenges and tensions, including struggles for independence in many of its colonies. After World War II, decolonization accelerated and many colonies gained their independence.

In the United States, capitalism developed in the north and east of the territory and expanded further at the cost of a civil war, between 1861 and 1865. The capitalist North appropriated without compensation the greatest capital of the farmers of the South: the slaves. They were given the freedom to work for themselves and the descendants of slaves have been demanding equality for centuries.

Racism, entrenched social inequality (poverty in the United States this year is 11%; 40 million people) and aggressive police repression as a system to maintain that situation – denying the social problem and the frank violation of human rights that they cover up – are the three dominant features of the new empire.

There is a fourth feature that consolidates the previous ones: the United States proclaims itself as the paradigmatic democracy of the world, and it is enough to resort to Norberto Bobbio's *Dictionary of Politics* to establish that every empire needs a legend to be, and the United States has that of democracy. It also needs uniqueness (they are called the United States of America), to be seen as perennial and the salvation of all who join it, who is the instrument conceived by God himself for that purpose ("*In God we trust*", is the motto of the northern country). That essential and exclusive element of spiritual salvation is by definition perennial.

The contradiction between the negative features pointed out and the legend that allows them to appear was favored in the case of the United States by its capitalist development, which they define as the cornerstone of the exemplary democracy they claim to be. The equivalence of democracy and capitalism has no conceptual basis, but that does not prevent its imposition.

The economist Richard Wolff, with high degrees from the universities of Yale, Stanford and Harvard, and currently in Massachusetts, explains that the United States managed for a whole century, from 1870 to 1970, that wages increased ten decades in a row – except among the population of African origin, but including the years of the Great Depression – and, At the same time, companies also increased their profits, more than wages, he specifies.

This was possible after the internal contradictions of the nineteenth century that hindered capitalist development were resolved. Capitalism was their weapon of expansion, although if necessary they sent their troops, spies, repressive colonization missions and more, as so often happened in our lands. The U.S. political system was naturally a system that the whole world had to adopt. And the continuity of well-being had a subjective effect on the set of ideas that Americans took and take as permanent: the exceptionality of this empire with respect to history is that it is inherent in being "American." They are "home of the *brave, land of the free*", a song of this century – in full imperial decadence – by Jody Miller, and that is what the detectives singing in the movies celebrating in the bar. And the footage shows U.S. flags in almost every house, and young people voluntarily enlist in the armed forces because they are patriots; Lately only in the movies, because recruitment is not going so well.

Having not entered a defensive war since the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, its military budget was \$877 billion last year; more than the ranking of the next ten military budgets in the world added together. The United States maintains more than 000 military bases in 600 countries. But the difficulties it has in maintaining its force of 80,500 men are already public: as in a reality bath and coming out of the bell of the manifest destiny of the United States with which the truth was covered up, the willingness to go to fight of the possible recruits comes in marked waning.

This happens while the country's power system continues to massively promote the jingoistic culture, beyond lucid contributions such as the aforementioned Burns; it doesn't matter that they lost the war in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan; that the dollar declines, unstoppable; that this year's state debt is 31.400 trillion (in 2022 it was 124% of its GDP) and that 869 billion dollars are today held by China, the fifth largest holder of US bonds in the world and sword of Damocles on the viability of the US economy. To the injustices can be added the selective health system, housing problems and more. The crisis of the many is the gain of the few and that old principle of capitalist power is fulfilled in the United States.

It is true, it is a problem that this country spends more than it has in its effort to look like the empire it is no longer: 6% annual deficit. That leads to accumulated debt and a monetary issue that degrades the value of the dollar: 100 dollars in 1970 bought in 2022 the equivalent of 754 dollars. If the situation continues, a deficit of 180% of GDP is projected for the next half century.

Covering up the self with the appearance and the cultural refusal to accept reality to act on it, is a culture that Richard Wolff calls "*denial*", the persistent, tenacious, lying refusal to acknowledge what is happening. For the leadership of the State, this was a permanent source of errors that continue to find an opportunity to express themselves and that has clear racial components and the claim of the WASP: white Anglo-Saxon Protestant.

The United States was convinced that the only option to communism was capitalism, and not just one of the possible options. That conceptual error enabled the former USSR fifteen years to recompose its system after the debacle of the Soviet implosion, and China the accumulation of military and economic strength to consider going out into the world and putting a definitive end to what they remember as "the century of humiliation" suffered in their history.

No, neither China nor the Russian Federation embraced capitalism, and they are demonstrating that this is only one of the options, even if the chorus of the West predicts failure. There is what was called the Third World, vigorously putting together its own political strategy and wanting to supplant the dollar as the single currency of international exchange. And Niger is today the fifth of the links to fall from an ambitious and timeless French colonial mentality in Africa. To the concern of the West, China and Russia approach Africa, by the old principle that power has a horror of emptiness, and begin to approach America, the poor one.

That triumphalism and denial of reality was expressed, in the field of geopolitics, in arrogance. Vietnam was a war lost by the French, in which the United States was buried in the name of a typically imperial order of things, expressed in the domino theory. When the American defeat was consolidated, the Washington hierarchy was astonished that the Vietnamese defined themselves as nationalists and there were no domino plans, thus correcting the entire script.

But the doubt about the route of pride was present earlier, when the United States concluded that Vietnam was winning a war in which the little men in black pajamas lost almost every battle. The Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, since 1961 acknowledged it in a memorable phrase, he said before the North Vietnamese Tet

offensive (which the Vietnamese lost, but won in the American political arena), in January 1968: "We should bring someone who understands the Vietnamese."

The United States paid hard in its domestic policy for the war it wanted to wage in Vietnam. Since then, the Pentagon has been avoiding putting "boot on the ground", which is what they call when landing troops. So much so that today they systematically refuse to lead the military mission that should bring order to the defense of their interests in Haiti, in little Haiti. And there the real power is exercised by BINHU, the UN special mission for Haiti. It was exercised until March (today supplanted by the Ecuadorian María Isabel Salvador) by the American Helen La Lime, whose colonial stamp included appointing a new prime minister who had no constitutional or legal endorsement for the position, Ariel Henry. He did so through a *tweet*, before the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse, in 2021.

But not landing more troops does not stop the hemorrhage. Military recruitment is falling vertically, and its leaders — such as the delegation of *progressive* Democratic congressmen who are now touring Brazil, Chile and Colombia — come in an attitude of humility to want to work "on common issues." And the head of SOUTHCOM, four-star Gen. Laura Richardson, continually travels the continent (which she sometimes names, perhaps in a slip of a *tongue*, "the backyard") in policing and promoting U.S. values and interests. It is notorious that this information area needs much greater coverage. Take this as the first note on the subject, which we will know how to fulfill.

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