

## AMERICAN EMPIRE

Andrew J. Bacevich, *AMERICAN EMPIRE* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002),  
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### INTRODUCITON ABOUT THE READER OF THIS BOOK (JEAN KIM)

I had resided in Korea for the first 35 years of my life while Korea remained one of the  
third world countries. I also lived nearly another 35 years of the second half of my life in  
the United States.

I had lived a life of wealth and life of poverty. I had lived through peaceful times and  
war times.

I had lived in a whole home and a broken home. Ethnically I am Korean. Culturally I am  
Korean-American. Legally I am an American.

I chose to come to the United States seeking better opportunities. I am a beneficiary of  
American empire. I like getting my advanced education in the empire. I liked my jobs in  
the empire. I enjoy my little place to live. I benefit from my computer, television and cell  
phone. I enjoy driving a car that takes me anywhere I want to go. I love to park my car by  
the Edmonds beach and read all the books

I want to. I enjoy fishing there. I enjoy flying around the whole country meeting  
wonderful citizens of the empire. I love the decent treatment I have been getting as an  
Asian-American woman in the empire's culture of diversity. I laugh and weep in this  
empire. I love the freedom of empire. I can wear anything I want to. I can go anywhere  
and any time I want to. I have all the food I want to eat.

I am living on social security and pension. Medicare helps me when I am sick. I enjoy the  
status of the empire's citizenship. I love my Empire friends. They love me. This empire  
loves me. I love to make a home in this empire. I love to sleep in the complacency of the  
empire. I am in it. I am the empire. I am a prisoner in this empire.

I love Korea as my first native home and also love this empire as my second permanent  
home. However, above all, I am a Christian who love Jesus. For him, I will do anything.  
Without him

I can't exist nor can I do anything. He is the cause of my living and work. Such a rich,  
blessed, and grief-stricken life wraps my perspectives in a rainbow blanket: I can cry with  
the suffering in the two-third world and with the homeless in the third world within this  
empire. I share perspectives with the empire citizens who benefit from the empire like  
me. I can also see the world from the perspective of my Lord, Jesus. I love Jesus' love  
for the poor and downtrodden in this empire and in all the world.

This empire is my world and the contexts of my ministry God placed me. However, I  
learned to see this empire from the critical eyes of others. I can't help but hearing the  
voice of Jesus who keeps waking me up and calling me. Jesus won't let me sleep long  
hours in my empire prison.

He always wakes me up to resist the injustice in the empire. And therefore, I will always,  
always, love and resist the empire! I will love the empire! I will resist the empire just as

my Lord, Jesus would!

**CHAPTER I. THE MYTH OF THE RELUCTANT SUPERPOWER**

is the belief that **America achieved great power but America's rise to power was not sought; it just happened.** In this view, **American policy is a response to external factors. The United States does not act in accordance with some predetermined logic; it reacts to circumstances** (American Empire, p.7).

**Charles A. Beard** (1874-1948) is represented as the most influential dissenters throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on the “superpower/globalization” ideology. Beard acknowledged in 1930 that **nations are no long isolated entities.**

**The whole fabric of modern civilization is a network of physical, economic, social and cultural connections** (American Empire, p.16). **He charged** industrialists, bankers, and farmers in Washington to conclude that **the domestic market alone would not satisfy their own or the nation's requirements. American industry is producing more commodities than the American people can consume, and the 'surplus' must be exported** (American Empire, p. 17). **He charged** such a dream of endless economic expansion as **illusory.** He also believed that **the more the United States pressed to open the world, the greater the opposition was likely to come.** With the open door for American trade and investment, **Beard feared militarism at home** (American Empire, p. 19). **He suggested the United States can fulfill its obligations to the rest of the humankind rather by setting an example than by imposing its values on others. He proposed that United States “substitute an intensive cultivation of his own garden** (American Empire, p. 20). He was so right.

**Another dissenter of the time was William Appleman Williams (1921-1990).**

He endorsed Beard's critique that **expansionism was integral to the American story (p.24)** : **Williams claimed** that **Americans faced a choice; either give themselves over to the pursuit of ultimately dehumanizing individualism, or accept the demands and self-discipline of living with other human beings in a truly responsible, humane fashion** (American Empire, p. 25).

**However, to secure that access, American leaders devised “Open Door imperialism**(American Empire, p. 25) in the name of freedom and democracy stability and security.

**Reading this chapter makes me feel that in order to achieve expansion of our power, the leaders have been deceiving the public using attractive names such as democracy, freedom and scurity.**

## **CHAPTER 2, GLOBALIZATION AND ITS CONCEITS**

**Herman Melville wrote in 1850:** “We Americans are the peculiar chosen people – the Israel in our time (American Empire, p. 43).

**Bill Clinton:** Globalization is “the central reality of our time. “The globalization is tearing down barriers, and building new networks among nations (American Empire, p. 38). Globalization is empowering people with information, everywhere (American Empire, 39).”

**Madeline Albright** – “We have our own duty to be authors of history.”  
Our way of life depends on a global economy.

**Thomas L. Friedman**, foreign affairs columnist of the New York Times wrote “globalization is the international system that has replaced the cold-war system.” it was the Age of Globalization. Globalization was homogenization which meant Americanization –with food, music, life style, language, technology.

All these political leaders and others were acknowledging **globalization** as the name of our day and America owns it.

**The author** states that the American responses to this phenomenon (globalization) were the “three NOs (American Empire, p. 43):” NO to Power politics, to war, and to limits – sustained the myth of American **exceptionalism** into the post-Cold War era.

The author conclude this chapter by stating that the transition from the Cold War to the age of globalization had created an environment receptive as never before to America’s universal message of liberty, democracy, and market economics. Now is the time, therefore, to make good on America’s obligation to secure the adoption of those values everywhere as the model for the rest of the world to adopt (American Empire, p. 53).

**Reinhold Niebuhr** stated that Americans view themselves as “tutors of mankind” in its pilgrimage to perfection. In that sense, the advent of the age of globalization permitted the United States to return to its true vocation. Yet Niebuhr fretted, that vocation of U.S. is fraught with hazards, political, strategic, and above all, moral.

### **CHAPTER 3. POLICY BY DEFAULT**

#### **Theme of this chapter seems to be:**

New Statecraft of U.S. Foreign Policy after Cold War era.

After testing out U.S. response with or without military action to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait (Gulf War), to Tiananmen Square massacre, Bosnia's ethnic cleansing, and Panama's drug trafficking, it came very clear to **Bush** that this is an age of interdependence in which domestic prosperity, global economy, global peace, security, and global trade are all intertwined. Therefore, the scope of U.S. interest was limitless. He emphasized to reach out the rest of the world and keep the string of control in our hands including coercion (American Empire p.74). As a result of this ideology, in 1992 Bush's administration successfully negotiated North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico and played a key role in founding Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). This is some of the same ideology that has been snowballing all along.

However, author states that after the Cold War military's role became larger than being reduced as some expected. "It was moving to center stage" (American Empire p. 71).

**However, American public judged Bush** for his poor handling of domestic issues, "slack economy," by rejecting him in November 1992 election. Author adds that another reason for his failure to be reelected was caused by his handling of foreign policy, especially U.S. China policy (American Empire p. 77-78).

**No president seemed to do right** with China; they made big noise about China's human rights abuse but then every one of them, Republican or Democrat, backed down to keep our trade relationship intact. China knows this and would laugh about the U.S.A.'s screaming.

**It is encouraging to know that we, the American people can judge. I hope we always see things right and judge right although many of sleep in prison.**

## **CHAPTER 4. STRATEGY OF OPENNESS**

Some more of “openness” policy is repeated in every phase of history and different government like a apostle’s creed is repeated at every service in 2000 years:

**“America’s Strategy of Openness** means the removal of barriers to the movement of goods, capital, people, and ideas, thereby fostering an integrated international order conducive to American interest, governed by American norms, regulated by American power, and above all, satisfying the expectations of the American people for ever-greater abundance (American Empire p.88).

**Clinton and Albright’s openness:**

**The driving force behind economic growth is openness – open markets, open investments, open communications and open trade. Indeed without openness, growth would cease... the health of the global economy will depend on maintaining and expanding the commitment to open trade, open markets, and open books (American Empire p101).”**

But then the consequence of such policy affected on American people themselves is pointed out by David Brooks as follows: the core values of bourgeois were individualism and freedom. Their mission was consumption and self-actualization.

In a society in which citizens were joined to one another by little except a fetish for shopping, professional sports, appetite for pop culture, prosperity became a precondition for preserving domestic harmony. The prospect of unlimited accumulation had long since become the lubricant that kept the system functioning.

(American Empire p. 80). I remember right after 9/11, President Bush encouraged people to go out shopping and spend money.

This section elaborates in length about **Clinton’s policy**, more of the same and but he is presented to be actually tactical and clever than Bush in terms of globalization; he created WTO and 200-300 trade agreement signed with other countries (American Empire p.96-97). We often heard that during his presidency we had better economy, surplus and peace, etc. Authors expressed “thundering success” for Clinton (American Empire p. 97). He did a such good in expanding trade and applying globalization tactic so vigorously whether it is bad or good. The public didn’t seem to know about this at all.

## **CHAPTER 5. FULL SPECTURUM DOMINANCE**

**Theme seems to be: Globalization, Terrorism and U.S. Militarism:**

**Globalization:** “When people see us, they see our power, they see our professionalism, they see our patriotism, and they say that’s a country that we want to be with, said the Secretary of Defense Cohen (American Empire p. 129).” It sounds as though American leaders have had manic grandiosity about themselves.

**Military power employed:**

Not to respond in time of crisis but to maintain international order, thereby enabling the processes of globalization to continue, protect our profit/ interest, and to reassure, anticipate, intimidate, preempt, influence, guide, and control.

**Consequence of American globalization and use of force**

Author points out that no one in the public arena – no president or secretary of state, no aspirant for national leadership, none of the journalists in their self-assigned role as the nations’ truth tellers – ventured to explain why such an epic victory should have advanced the cause of peace minimally, if at all (American Empire p.117)..

**Anti-Americanism and terrorism:**

The U.S. globalization meant susceptibility to attack. Not only the threats may be more numerous but also more dire (American Empire p.118). Therefore, **Globalization** became a full-fledged national security issue. All the attacks we experienced in the past such as bomb at the World Trade Center (1993), Oklahoma city (1995), Khobar Towers (1996), U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania (1998), the USS *Cole* (2000) may be an evidence that terrorism was on the rise and becoming ever more deadly (American Empire p.119).

The more we become vulnerable with globalization breeding new threats, we add more security dimensions with changing military role. Therefore, the bedrock of America’s global leadership becomes military might and increase of military expense (p. 122).

**Where do we go with this? TO a war?**

## **CHAPTER 6. GUN BOATS and GURKHAS**

**Theme seems to be militarized U.S. foreign policy:**

**A reliance on gunboats and Gurkhas.**

According to the author, during two terms of presidency, President Bill Clinton produced an unprecedented level of military activism (American Empire p.142). Since the Cold War, the United States has embarked upon nearly four dozen military interventions --- as opposed to only 16 during the entire period of the Cold War (American Empire p. 143). The Clinton administration found a modern equivalent of old-fashioned “**gunboats**” in cruise missiles and aircraft armed with precision-guided munitions. **gunboat diplomacy**. It employed these weapons routinely whenever it wished to coerce, cajole, or punish adversaries who violated the norms. (American Empire p. 148). In all during 1999 and 2000, U.S. forces expended some two thousand bombs and missiles against Iraqi targets (American Empire p.152).

When terrorist bombs in August 1998 devastated American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, causing horrific casualties, early indications pointed to Osama bin Laden as the likely mastermind. U.S. Navy loosed missiles targeting reputed terrorist training camps in Afghanistan and pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum (American Empire p.153).

The attack on bin Laden’s camps signaled a major shift in policy: fighting terror was now the Pentagon’s responsibility as well. Now U.S. intended to take a proactive approach, to preempt; fight the terror offensively (American Empire p.153);

**Privatization of war through contract :**

Now we end up training others to fight against their own people for us or in our place. Leaders even talk about privatization of war. We will train others to fight and give them tools to fight. Make contract with them so that others will be contracted to fight for us.

## **CHAPTER 7. RISE TO THE PROCONSULS**

Theme of this section seems to be **civil-military proconsuls system**. Tendency of serving officers to displace civilians in implementing foreign policy. At the top, civilians and just beneath them uniformed proconsuls= suspicion, mistrust, tension were created among them (American Empire p.167). **Tension within Military was expressed in sexual behavior. Sexual scandal within the army** was described in length.

## **CHAPTER 8. DIFFERENT DRUMMERS, SAME DRUM**

**Same foreign policy** by different leaders of different political parties in different times:

Eisenhower confirmed Truman’s policy: George W. Bush affirmed Bill Clinton’s policy. Like Clinton, Bush accepted as a fact the correlation between free trade and political liberalization.

They have been saying the same litanies for over 100 years. How long will we say the same litanies? Can we revise them into different litanies???

## **CHAPTER 9. WAR FOR THE IMPERIUM**

**War with terror:" and root cause of the terror:** The author wrote, 9/11 proved that globalization was making war permanent. After 9/11, Bush started put the world in to two camps saying "you are with us or against us." By threat we don't make friends. We want to make others obedient children for us. This will only increase hostility toward U.S. The Coalition forces attacked Afghanistan in an attempt to catch Osama bin Laden. They destroyed many parts of Al Qaeda but we didn't get bin Laden. After that we went to war with Iraq unilaterally claiming that Hussein will be threat to our security with his weapons of mass destruction. We didn't find weapons. Although U.S. government perceived 9/11 as a green light to decisive dominance of the world, we may pay larger price for it. We let our and other's children die in the war. How long God would allow this to happen? How long U.S. citizens sleep in the prison? Thank God, many are already awaken!

**WHAT BROUGHT 9/11?** by those who reject universalism and want to keep their identity as sacred: Those who refuse to have foreign military to trample on their land: those. who hate to be influenced by American values, freedom and culture because not all of them are healthy: **But the author didn't get into economic disparity, poverty, hunger, sickness that take many human lives. Many nations are angry toward U.S. for exploiting bigger portion of the profits. They are angry because they are enslaved by the American dominance. Hunger and poverty generate pain and violence. Because they are the most unbearable pain for humans. After all, it is a matte of meeting daily necessities for survival, which is God-given privilege and rights.**

**IS GLOBALIZATION WORTH FOR US?** When some day the globalization kills enough of our sons and daughters, Americans wouldn't go along with the policy. There has always been anti-war movement and movement for simple life style so that we free ourselves from ever expanding greed and consumption. We don't want to do this at the cost of our children. Is there any other alternative of living together with others by not dominating but sharing. This might be the calling for the church!!!!