

AMERICA - A RELUCTANT EMPIRE

America has fallen into the position of a world empire. No other nation today can stand on the same pedestal and claim the same status. This role was not consciously sought nor, perhaps, fully realized. How America handles itself on the world stage in coming months will have a lasting impact on world affairs.

by Darris McNeely

When Benjamin Franklin left the building in which he and other founding fathers framed the U.S. Constitution, someone asked what kind of government the country now had. "A republic, if we can keep it," was his reply. The nation has indeed kept intact a republican form of government, but without intent or desire, it has in recent years grown to become an empire rivaling the great empires of history, such as the British and Roman.

Historians, columnists and leaders from across the political spectrum have been speaking clearly about this dramatic change in geopolitics. On June 29, 2002, The Economist published a survey, which led with the statement, "America again leads the world in all dimensions of power--military, economic, cultural, scientific--by a margin out of all proportion to its population" ("Present at the Creation," p. 3).

Foreign Affairs in its July/August 2002 issue laid out the extent of American dominance in the standard measurements of power:

"In the military arena, the United States is poised to spend more on defense in 2003 than the next 15-20 biggest spenders combined. The United States has overwhelming nuclear superiority, the world's dominant air force, the only truly blue-water navy, and unique capability to project power around the globe.

"No state in the modern history of international politics has come close to the military predominance these numbers suggest. America's economic dominance--relative to either the next several richest powers or the rest of the world combined--surpasses that of any great power in modern history...The U.S. economy is currently twice as large as its closest rival, Japan" ("American Primacy in Perspective," pp. 21-23).

America also leads the world technologically. Its expenditures in research and development of all technology sectors are close to equaling the next seven richest countries combined (ibid.).

America has bases or rights at 200 places in 40 countries around the world. It maintains 12 carrier task forces and the most sophisticated missile technology in the world. No other nation comes near to matching this kind of force.

It is significant that America leads in all these areas at the same time and in such a powerful manner. It is reminiscent of another great commercial and military power, Great Britain in the 19th century. The Foreign Affairs article goes so far as to say, "The United States has no rival in any critical dimension of power. There has never been a system of sovereign states that contained one state with this degree of dominance" (p. 23).

The cover of the summer 2002 issue of The Wilson Quarterly raised the question, "An American Empire?" No less than five essays sought to answer the question. One--titled "What Kind of Empire?"--adds that America "commands a predominant share of the world's intellectual talent, through an array of outstanding graduate schools and institutes of advanced learning and research. Further, the United States has established a unique cultural predominance...through the seductive

power of its entertainments and fashions, from movies to blue jeans to gangsta rap. Never before has there been anything quite like this American domination of the world" (pp. 37-38).

Conservative columnist Charles Krauthammer succinctly summarized the length, breadth and depth of the American empire:

"The fact is no country has been dominant culturally, economically, technologically and militarily in the history of the world since the Roman Empire. We maintain the stability of international commerce, the freedom of the seas, the flow of oil, regional balances of power (in the Pacific Rim, South Asia, the Middle East) and, ultimately, we provide protection against potentially rising hostile superpowers" (ibid., p. 43).

"He shall become a people..."

In the history of nations there has not been any single state to match America's current commanding world role. This is the dramatic fulfillment of the prophecy made to Manasseh, the eldest son of the patriarch Joseph.

Genesis 48 contains the story of Joseph bringing his two sons to his father, Jacob, also known as Israel. Israel in his old age had been reunited with his favorite son and sought to pass to his grandchildren the divine blessing, which God passed to him from his grandfather, Abraham, through his father, Isaac.

"Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near him.

"Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said: 'God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day, the Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth'" (Genesis 48:14-16).

Joseph sought to intervene when he saw that Israel's right hand was upon the younger son, Ephraim. Manasseh, being the eldest, should have received the dominant blessing. But God was guiding Israel despite the appearance of error. God had distinct roles for the descendants of these sons. Notice verse 19, "But his father refused and said, 'I know, my son, I know. He [Manasseh] also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother [Ephraim] shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.'"

Manasseh was to become a great people while his brother Ephraim was to become a greater multitude of nations. Their modern descendants, America and Great Britain, have been the recipients of this promise of physical blessing given by God through the fathers. The amazing story of how these modern nations inherited this promise is told in our free booklet, *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.

Importance to the world

Today America, as the modern descendant of Joseph's son Manasseh, stands at the pinnacle of the fulfillment of this promise. What does this status mean for the rest of the world? Does America have the will to carry the burden that comes with superpower status? How long will this "empire" last? And most important, how long will God's blessing continue on this nation? These are vital questions, as we seek to understand events that are rapidly changing and shaping today's world.

America in the past century has been a blessing for so many nations in the world. Its value for human life, freedom and opportunity led to decisive involvement in the great crises of recent years. It was American entry into two global conflicts, World Wars I and II, that turned back the wave of totalitarian anarchy, which threatened the world. In the aftermath of World War II, Marshall Plan dollars were instrumental in rebuilding the prostrate nations of Europe.

In an end-time prophecy about Joseph's descendants, Genesis 49:22 states, "Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; his branches run over the wall." American aid in the form of money and food continue to go to regions of the world where poverty and starvation are endemic. It has literally fed those who hate all that the nation stands for.

Recently deceased American historian Stephen Ambrose often pointed out that the sounds of American GIs entering cities like Paris, Lyon or Berlin meant liberation instead of oppression. America's role as world superpower came not by a conscious plan for world domination. That is against the most basic American experience and values. America came into existence with anti-imperial ideas and continually resisted imperialist ambitions. Rather, it grew into the role by a combination of factors, not the least of which is God's blessing and design, over many decades.

In an increasingly dangerous and anarchic world, its role is critical for peace and stability. A world without the United States would be a far different and potentially more hostile world than the one we see now. The scramble created by nations trying to get to the top of the heap could result in a chaotic world order.

Can it endure?

Many of the same thinkers who currently analyze America's position also wonder whether she has the will to continue in the role. First there was the invasion of Afghanistan to rid the country of the Taliban and al Qaeda.

Doing so necessitated a major U.S. presence in central Asian republics. American troops entered the Philippines to remove militant forces allied with al Qaeda.

Within weeks, it seems likely that American troops will enter Iraq to effect a regime change. As in Afghanistan, America will have to maintain a long-term presence to insure that a new government will have the chance to take root and grow. All this will require a commitment that will test the limits of the American political and social fabric. A recent analysis by Stratfor raised this point. "The United States is taking control of countries throughout the world, bringing benefits and making threats. But the United States has no theory of empire. How can a democratic republic and an empire coincide? The issue is not whether this should happen. It is happening. The real issue, apart from how this plays out, is what effect it will have on the United States as a whole. A global empire whose center is unsure of its identity, its purposes and its moral justification is an empire with a center that might not hold" (www.Stratfor.com, "The American Empire," June 2002).

How long will this empire last? Will this generation be willing to pay the price and bear the burden to maintain the freedom and security it has come to expect? Already the wave of patriotism in the wake of 9/11 is waning.

Another attack on American soil--certain to occur--will undoubtedly test the moral character of the country again. The real question for America is how long God's blessing and sustaining hand will be with its efforts. How long will the presence of God remain behind the promise made to Abraham and his descendants?

The key to understanding America's position as world superpower is that its wealth and resources come directly from the hand of God. This key determines the future of the nation. America is rich

and powerful because of God's blessing. It will continue as long as God upholds the agreement made long ago to forgotten ancestors.

It is not an eagle that watches over the republic described by Benjamin Franklin. An angel of God rides in the storm that swirls over the United States. As long as it remains in place, America will continue to exist as a benevolent empire. When, because of sins against God, He removes His protection, the whirlwind of tribulation will descend, and the empire will be no more.