

# The American Malaise: Reflecting on Whether U.S. Politics Is “Beyond Repair”

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#)

*A recent BBC News article asked the quite pertinent question of whether U.S. politics is “[beyond repair](#)”. The points that the writer Nick Bryant makes regarding political “hyperpartisanship”, what he terms “the degradation of debate” and the corruption of both major political parties on the electoral front are quite valid, but fail to get to the heart of the matter. This is because it does not address deeper issues that link America’s social, political and economic malaise to the need for profound reform of America’s rigged economic system, its flawed electoral laws and its prevailing foreign policy.*

## **America’s Economic System**

The United States is a heavily indebted country. As of February 2020, the debt of the federal government stands at just over \$23 trillion. It is a state of affairs which is often discussed at great length and one in which the country’s politicians and economists direct a great deal of blame at specific targets. Yet, no American politician of prominence ever addresses the role of usury at the heart of an economic system which is geared towards the facilitation of enduring and frequently unpayable debt.

Under a capitalist system, which some have termed state-sponsored usury; an unremarked but ever present conflict persists between labour and usury. And while usury is persistently triumphant, the inescapable truth is that labour is the only source of value. America needs to reject usury as the basis of money supply.

Unfortunately, there are few eminent intellectuals who are calling for such a profound change, which would logically begin with the abolition of the Federal Reserve System. The Federal Reserve was created in 1913 to take away control of the supply of money from America’s elected officials and privatise the supply of money and credit. As a result, it functions to serve the interests of the monied classes and not the public interest.

And while its heads are appointed by Washington, the oligarchs of Wall Street possess an effective power of veto. While its official aims are to promote “price stability” and “full employment”, a closer analysis of its modus operandi and its record in these areas reveals that attaining these objectives always involves subordinating the wider public interest to the interests of the financiers. Indeed, Alan Greenspan, the one-time head of the Federal Reserve, once stated that he believed full employment to be incompatible with the ideal of price stability. The body was responsible for using American taxpayer’s money to fund a bailout of ‘too-big-to-fail’ financial organisations, many of who operated in a criminally negligent manner while many Americans had to endure the humiliation of property foreclosures, denuded pensions and unemployment. In the final analysis, it exists to promote the interests of the minuscule creditor class at the expense of the majority debtor

class.

In his book *Killing the Host*, Michael Hudson, a distinguished professor of economics, argued the case for re-regulating the whole of the financial system. This would require a revolutionary tax policy geared towards preventing the financial sector from extracting economic surplus and capitalizing on debt obligations paying interest to that sector.

The ending of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union is often hailed as the historical triumph of laissez faire economics. Yet, contentious debate about the merits of the Austrian School of Economics in relation to the Keynesian School, or of capitalist versus socialist models ignore the crucial issue of usury which saddles most of the population with debt.

Those in America who argue for neo-liberalism also ignore the fact that it has created as many ills in society as its proponents claim socialism creates. Only a small fraction of the society thrive in a system that is rigged in favour of oligarchs and corporations who often pay a lower tax rate than the average working man. It creates the conditions through which the parasitical and exploitative role of hedge-fund speculators can thrive. The neo-liberal ideology also creates the sort of casino banking culture that brought the United States to the brink of economic collapse in the late 2000s, as well as the sort of vulture capitalism which wrecks small American communities, the island of Puerto Rico and nation states such as Argentina and the Congo.

### **America's Electoral Funding Laws**

The development of the laws governing the funding of America's elections, beginning with the 1976 case of Buckley versus Valeo culminated in the Citizens United versus Federal Electoral Commission case of 2010 has effectively given unrestricted power to the oligarchs who control America's political class.

The decision in Buckley involved striking down certain provisions of the Federal Election Campaign Act (1974), which removed limits to the amount of money which could be spent on campaigns, although limits remained in regard to the contributions of individuals. The Citizens United case went further. In overturning sections of the Campaign Reform Act (2002), it removed limits to expenditures made by non-profit and for-profit corporations. And in 2014, McCutcheon versus Federal Election Commission added to this by removing the biennial aggregate limit on individual contributions to national party and federal candidate committees.

Former President Jimmy Carter once bluntly stated what the implications are:

It violates the essence of what made America a great nation in its political system. Now it's just an oligarchy with unlimited political bribery being the essence of getting the nominations for president or being elected president. And the same thing applies to governors, and U.S. Senators and congress members. So now we've just seen a subversion of our political system as a major pay-off to major contributors, who want and expect, and sometimes get, favours for themselves after the election is over. ... At the present time the incumbents, Democrats and Republicans, look upon this unlimited money as a great benefit to themselves. Somebody that is already in Congress has a great deal more to sell.

The law ensures that both Democratic and Republican parties are under the thrall of the rich

and super-powerful lobbies such as the military industry, the Israel lobby and Wall Street interests. It also means that little or no scrutiny is directed, for instance, at the activities of sponsors such as Paul Singer, the second largest donor to the Republican Party in 2016 who funded a super-PAC that supports Republican senators.

It has also had implications in regard to the calibrating of the foreign policy of the United States. For instance, the financial contribution made to the election campaign of Donald Trump by the billionaire and self-avowed 'Israel-Firster' Sheldon Adelson, was explicitly related to changes in foreign policy. Adelson demanded that Trump recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. He also expected Trump to renege on the nuclear agreement painstakingly reached between Iran and other nations. All of this has only succeeded in dangerously ratcheting up tensions in the Middle East.

For some, U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East is controlled by a triumvirate of oligarchs: Sheldon Adelson, Bernard Marcus and Paul Singer; a cynical but understandable analysis of the situation.

### **American Foreign Policy**

Few among the American populace appear to be aware of the fundamentally unchanging nature of U.S. foreign policy. American militarism expressed through a perpetual interventionist policy of regime change has added considerably to its national debt and undermined its moral authority among the global community of nations. While regime change policies have a basis in the application of 'American Exceptionalism', as well as the influence of the neoconservative ideology, the unbending trajectory of foreign policy owes a great deal to the machinations of a hidden government of the sort expounded by the 19<sup>th</sup> century English constitutionalist Walter Bagehot.

While the term 'Deep State' has entered the lexicon of everyday language, it is rarely clearly defined and specifically linked to the conduct of America's foreign policy, which Professor Michael J. Glennon of Tufts University posits has a great deal to do with an unaccountable entity that wields a great deal of power in the governance of a nation.

Glennon's argument is that what he terms the 'Trumanite' institutions composed of ex-military and security officials run national security policies at the expense of the 'Madisonian' institutions; that is, the separated organs of state which function to constitutionally check the power of each other and who are accountable to the electorate.

This assessment partly explains why no politician of note has ever addressed retired U.S. General Wesley Clark's assertion that American foreign policy was "[hijacked](#)" by "some hard-nosed people" in the wake of the terror attacks of September 11th 2001. They have failed to address the war agenda revealed in numerous position papers published by neoconservative think tanks in the 1990s and 2000s which called for the destruction of a number of states perceived as being opposed to the interests of the United States. Uncoincidentally, most were enemies of the State of Israel.

While visiting the Pentagon during the period following the September 11 attacks, Clark was shown a plan of action which proposed the destruction of seven countries over a five-year period, starting with Iraq and ending with Iran. What is remarkable about Clark's revelation is that all the countries on that list have been targeted since that time by a series of overt

and covert military actions carried out by different administrations. Glennon's allusion to the ascendancy of Trumanite institutions goes some way in explaining the unchanging national security policy of the administrations led by George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump.

The result of the implementation of the agenda has been an enduring engagement in Afghanistan, invaded in 2001 under the guise of a police action, but which has turned out to be America's longest war; the respective destructive wars against Arab secular governments of Iraq, Libya and Syria, as well as the imposition of sanctions and persistent threats of war made against Iran.

The other salient expression of the new militarism developed in the aftermath of the ending of the Cold War is the designation of Russia as an enemy state. Here, the twin doctrines expressed respectively by Paul Wolfowitz and Zbigniew Brzezinski, have been crucial. The Wolfowitz Doctrine sought to formalise American hegemony by sanctioning the overthrow of governments resistant to the dictates of American interests and accepting such course of actions even when riding roughshod over multilateral agreements. The Brzezinski Doctrine incorporated a resolve to militarily intimidate and ideally balkanise Russia for it to be used as a source of the energy needs of the West. Both doctrines endorsed the view that in the light of dissolution of the Soviet Union, no power should be allowed to rise and challenge American supremacy over the globe.

This led to the expansion of NATO in contravention of an agreement reached between the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union that a condition for the reunification of Germany would be that NATO should not expand one inch eastwards. It has also resulted in the unilateral abrogation by the United States of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty in July 2002 by George W. Bush and Donald Trump's renunciation of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty in August 2019.

A concomitant to this prevailing policy has been the orchestrated demonisation of Vladimir Putin -once compared to Adolf Hitler by Hillary Clinton- whose foreign policy decisions in relation to military engagements in Georgia, Ukraine and Syria have all been reactive to U.S. foreign policy objectives of destabilisation.

The United States, which has not won a war since World War II, constantly risks igniting a Third World War by these actions, which are stimulated by the Military Industry which thrives on the existence of conflicts. It bullies smaller nations through the threat of or imposition of sanctions and hypocritically, it has fought a succession of proxy wars through Islamist fanatics professing the ideology of the group which it holds responsible for instigating the 9/11 attacks.

## **Conclusion**

Few Americans appear to be cognisant of the relative powerlessness of the office of the presidency. It is occupied by a person who may espouse and administer policies which appeal to their 'Liberal' or 'Conservative' constituents in the typically fractious discourse that permeates America's 'Culture Wars', but who cannot address the fundamental issues affecting America's decline.

Unless these issues relating to usurious economics, the control of politicians by oligarchs and the pernicious rationales governing foreign policy begin to be seriously addressed by

America's political and intellectual classes, the malaise, characterised by unending wars, extraordinary sovereign debt and increasing social polarisation, looks certain to bring about the collapse of the American Republic.

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