

Exceptional Americans Manifest Their Destiny: And to Hell with the Consequences...

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Region: [USA](#)

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Contrary to the “catapulted propaganda”, Enron, Haditha, and Abu Ghraib were not isolated incidents or the work of a “few bad apples”. American savagery and oppressive behavior pervades our society and predates our nation’s birth. Building its patriarchal wealth on the backs of Black slaves and cheap labor while acquiring its territory through Native American genocide, predatory exploitation of non-Anglos, the poor, women, and the working class emerged as a pillar of America’s socioeconomic “success” before we even declared our independence.

With the advent of the Industrial Age, transcontinental railroads, and the rapid proliferation of Capitalism, an increasingly empowered young nation with an insatiable lust for more land, resources, and profits began to seek prey beyond its borders. At the close of the Nineteenth Century, the American Eagle spread its wings as it began mimicking the rapacious behavior of its Western European ancestors.

With the sun finally preparing to set on the British Empire, the days of conquest and expansion dawned for the nascent American Empire. Pathologically hubristic notions like Manifest Destiny and American Exceptionalism served to dehumanize indigenous people to justify invasion, theft and murder as acts of necessity to bring civilization to “primitives”.

In his latest book, *Overthrow*, former New York Times Bureau Chief Stephen Kinzer chronicles America’s exploits as an empire and imperialist nation.

What is it that they are spreading?

The Bush Regime’s launch of the Project for the New American Century with the invasion of Iraq was not really out of character for the United States. While it was certainly executed with more blatant disregard for international law than America’s previous imperial endeavors, it typifies the American sanctimonious belief that it can do no wrong.

George Bush was simply reiterating America’s long-standing mendacious rationale for its exploitative behavior when he stated:

“What I’m trying to suggest to you that this program is a part of a strategic goal, and that is to protect this country in the short-term and protect it in the long-term by spreading freedom.”

Consider some of the freedoms the United States is spreading:

1. Freedom to work under miserable conditions for a pittance.
2. Freedom to exist in an environment permeated with depleted uranium.
3. Freedom to sell precious resources to soulless multinational corporations at garage sale prices.
4. Freedom to experience a Kafkaesque nightmare including arrest with no charges, no trial to determine guilt or innocence, the endurance of torture, and indefinite detention.
5. Freedom to realize the inherent inferiority of one's culture, religion, and language, and to cast them aside like sacks of rank-smelling garbage.
6. Freedom to be maimed or killed if one dares to reject the "gifts" of these freedoms.

America's corporate media propaganda machine has managed to maintain a fastidiously manicured façade for many years. Despite appearing to exist as a champion of democracy, equality, freedom, and human rights, the reality of the United States was, and is, that its socioeconomic and governmental systems are racist, bigoted, ruthless and plutocratic in nature.

Democracy has never existed in the United States. A de facto aristocracy has dominated our constitutional republic dating back to the Continental Congress. Capitalism is a brutal, pitiless economic system that encourages and rewards greed, selfishness, exploitation, and annihilation of the competition.

Obsessed with materialism, conspicuous consumption, convenience, physical appearance, and winning, many Americans gorge themselves on the abundant fruits of Capitalism, oblivious to the fact that billions of human beings live in abject poverty and misery to make their feast possible.

America is a nation of the wealthy, by the wealthy and for the wealthy. Its ruling elite class is buttressed by the poor and working people who have been rendered politically impotent by the allure of conspicuous consumption (which further enriches the elite), the illusion of democracy, and the extremely remote possibility that one of them could be the next Bill Gates.

Wearing its cloak of benevolence, America is an abstract embodiment of the proverbial wolf in sheep's clothing. Governed by avaricious profiteers produced and enabled by a ruthless system that brings out the worst in humanity, the United States is a predacious nation innocently posing as a bastion of human rights and democracy.

Running out of real estate (and victims)

Overthrow captures the essence of the zeitgeist in America in the late Nineteenth Century with an apt quote from American historian Frederick Jackson Turner:

For nearly three centuries the dominant fact in American life has been expansion. With the settlement of the Pacific Coast and the occupation of the free lands, this movement has come to a check. That these energies of expansion will no longer operate would be a rash prediction; and the demands for a vigorous foreign policy, for an inter-oceanic canal, for a

revival of our power upon the seas, and for the extension of American influence to outlying islands and adjoining countries, are indications that the movement will continue.

According to Kinzer's historical analysis, the United States cut its imperial fangs on Mexico in the 1840's, but Hawaii marked America's initial push beyond the North American continent. Two American missionaries, Amos Starr Cooke and Samuel Castle zealously worked to convert native Hawaiian "savages" into "civilized" Christians, but eventually abandoned their missionary work for the profits of the sugar trade. Cooke and Castle were the fathers of the White American aristocracy in Hawaii. This group eventually came to wield powerful economic and political influence on the islands by virtue of the huge sugar plantations they owned. Manipulation of a pliable Hawaiian monarch whom they had educated enabled them to engineer land reform which stripped indigenous people of their traditional communal form of land ownership.

On January 17, 1893 the Marines landed in Hawaii with a small contingency. In a bloodless coup, the 6220 Whites (on an archipelago populated by 41,000 native Hawaiians and 28,000 Asian laborers) seized control of the government and appointed none other than Sanford Dole (cousin to pineapple magnate James Dole) to lead. By 1897 the United States had formally annexed Hawaii.

Remember the Maine....And a few hundred thousand Filipinos

Fueled by the mainstream media lie that Spain had caused an explosion aboard the USS Maine, a battleship President McKinley had dispatched to Cuba in 1898, the United States declared war on Spain, won, and quickly acquired Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines in the process. Despite the Teller Amendment in which Americans had promised Cuban sovereignty, President McKinley justified American rule of Cuba through the "law of belligerent right over conquered territory." The Platt Amendment eventually became the US tool to give outward appearances of Cuban autonomy without actually ceding full self-determination.

Having defeated Spain in the Philippines, Americans encountered another enemy. It seems the indigenous people were prepared to forcefully resist their new masters. Viewing the Philippines as crucial to its business interests in Asia, the United States fought vigorously to retain its new colony. Sending an occupation force of 126,000 (eerily similar to the number of troops in Iraq), America suffered fewer than 5,000 casualties. At least 16,000 Filipino troops and 250,000 civilians were slaughtered by the United States military. Rampant and blatant atrocities committed by American soldiers were white-washed by a compliant mainstream media and farcical Senate hearings in which Henry Cabot Lodge justified American torture, cruelty and murder by characterizing Filipinos as "semi-civilized people with all the tendencies and characteristics of Asiatics."

Better dead than red? Not necessarily....

Throughout its history as an imperial power, the perpetuation of United States corporate interests abroad has been its primary motivation. However, no analysis of America's malignant impact on the world would be complete without addressing its fixation with crushing movements and governments showing even a hint of Socialist or Communist tendencies.

Champions of American Capitalism triumphantly proclaim that the totalitarian and barbaric

regimes of Stalin and Mao are “absolute proof” that any socioeconomic system based on “leftist” ideologies dooms its people to torture, despotism, and mass murder. Stalin and Mao were indeed murderous dictators, but the evolution of their regimes do not negate the possibility of a socioeconomic system placing a reasonable degree of power in the hands of the working class and affording a more equitable distribution of wealth.

In fact, critical analysis reveals that the manifestation of Capitalism in the United States has been as morally repugnant and vicious as the regimes the champions of our system love to cite as evil. Those believing otherwise are in deep denial.

Domestically, Americans enslaved millions (3.9 million according to the 1860 census) and committed genocide against the millions of indigenous inhabitants whose land they stole. Aside from the egregious crimes committed against non-Anglos at home, America’s system of Capitalism exists as the virtual antithesis of the “Communist” systems of Mao and Stalin in terms of inhumanity. Instead of pointing its malevolence inward on its “own”, the United States has committed its wholesale slaughter abroad (i.e. 3 million in Vietnam, hundreds of thousands in Central America, and at least a million Iraqis, including the victims of the Gulf War and the brutal economic sanctions). Anglo exemption from slavery, genocide, and slaughter explains why American Capitalism has outlasted the “Communism” of Russia and China.

Portrait of a truly ugly American

Kinzer devotes a chapter of *Overthrow* to former Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who could easily have been the poster-child for American Capitalism and its inherent hypocrisy and malevolence. Dulles easily warrants his own chapter. He exerted tremendous influence on US foreign policy throughout the Cold War and orchestrated a number of the interventions detailed in *Overthrow*.

Kinzer writes of Dulles (who in private life had been a highly successful attorney representing multinational corporations for the firm of Sullivan & Cromwell):

“He had been shaped by three powerful influences: a uniquely privileged upbringing, a long career advising the world’s richest corporations, and a profound religious father. His deepest values, beliefs, and instincts were those for the international elite in which he had spent his life....”

“According to the most exhaustive book about Sullivan & Cromwell, the firm thrived on its cartels and collusion with the new Nazi regime, and Dulles spent much of 1934 publicly supporting Hitler....Soon after World War II ended, Dulles found in Communism the evil he had been so slow to find in Nazism.”

Out of the frying pan....

In *Overthrow*, Kinzer does more than simply detail the horrific consequences to the victims of America’s imperial interventions. He also reminds us of the self-destructive nature of America’s foreign policy. Perhaps the most timely and poignant example is that of Iran.

In 1951, Mohammad Mossadegh became Iran’s democratically elected prime minister. To alleviate the abject poverty of many of his people, he quickly moved to nationalize the oil industry to utilize the profits to benefit Iranians. The British, who had significant oil interests

in Iran, raised serious objections to Mossadegh's actions despite the obscene oil profits they had made over the years in Iran, his offer to compensate them for the oil infrastructure they had built, and the British government's recent nationalization of its own coal and steel industries.

While the existence of the Soviet Union as a rival world power precluded the use of direct military intervention by the United States, John Foster Dulles contrived a plan to crush the Socialist "ambitions" of Mossadegh. Disseminating propaganda through America's mainstream media (including the New York Times and Time Magazine) which portrayed Mossadegh as a Communist while simultaneously utilizing the CIA to create a subversive environment in Iran, the United States succeeded in toppling Mossadegh and replacing him with the Shah of Iran. Representing US and Western business interests with great enthusiasm until he was deposed by radical Islamic elements in 1979, the Shah ruled Iran autocratically. SAVAK, his intelligence agency, tortured and murdered thousands of Iranian dissidents.

Like Hugo Chavez is in Venezuela, Mossadegh was anathema to American Capitalism. Leaders of developing countries who threaten the flow of capital to the Empire by diverting it to their own people quickly become enemies of the United States. The irony is that the replacement rulers America installs to preserve its economic interests are almost always corrupt and murderous dictators who foster deep hatred of the United States. Ultimately, Washington finds itself grappling with reactionary regimes which are overtly hostile to the United States, like the current leadership in Iran.

Like a good neighbor...

Kinzer devotes several chapters of *Overthrow* to America's numerous interventions in Central and South America over the last century. Virtually all were launched to protect American corporate interests by crushing Leftist governments and installing business friendly despots like Pinochet in Chile. Corporations like the United Fruit Company and presidents like Ronald Reagan were responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Hispanics throughout Central America.

Let them burn

Kinzer also provides an enlightening analysis of the Vietnam debacle. In contrast to the tissues of lies propagated by America's media and textbook authors, Ho Chi Minh was not a threat to US interests. He was too busy striving for independence from Japan while facing recolonization by France. Neither China nor the Soviet Union (the "Communist" powers the ruling elite of the United States professed to fear so greatly because of their "conspiracy to spread Communism"), was interested in aligning themselves with Minh because of his nationalism.

When Ho Chi Minh spoke to a large group of supporters in Hanoi in 1945, he stated these subversive "Communist principles":

"All men are created equal. They are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights. Among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Minh greatly admired the United States and even appealed to the American government for

help.

America ignored Minh's pleas for help. Instead, the United States chose to take up where France left off and go to war with him. It also chose to support Ngo Dinh Diem as the leader of South Vietnam. Diem was a rotten human being and surrounded himself with family members whose corruption and inhumanity exceeded his own.

When Buddhist leaders led popular protests against the aristocratic and authoritarian rule of Diem and his family, Thich Quang Duc, a revered bodhisattva, burned himself to death at a busy Saigon intersection on June 11, 1963.

New York Times reporter David Halberstam witnessed the event and wrote:

"I was to see that sight again, but once was enough. Flames were coming from a human being; his body was slowly withering and shriveling up, his head blackening and charring. In the air was the smell of burning human flesh; human beings burn surprisingly quickly. Behind me I could hear the sobbing of the Vietnamese who were now gathering. I was too shocked to cry, too confused to take notes or ask questions, too bewildered to even think.... As he burned he never moved a muscle, never uttered a sound, his outward composure in sharp contrast to the wailing people around him."

Madame Nhu, a member of the Diem ruling family responded to the protest by quipping:

"Let them burn. We shall clap our hands."

She was one of America's proxies in Vietnam. What does that say about the United States?

A pattern emerges....

Afghanistan and Iraq are not aberrations in United States foreign policy. Bush and his Neocons are not "a few bad apples". They may be more malevolent than their predecessors, but they are not the first to advance American corporate and plutocratic interests through lies, propaganda, invasion, and flagrant crimes against humanity. America's socioeconomic system has engendered and reinforced such pathological behavior for years.

In Cannery Row, Steinbeck's Doc concluded:

"The things we admire in men, kindness and generosity, openness, honesty, understanding, and feeling, are the concomitants of failure in our system. And those traits we detest, sharpness, greed, acquisitiveness, meanness, egotism, and self-interest, are the traits of success."

In America, the inmates truly run the asylum.

Stephen Kinzer's *Overthrow*, rife with well-researched examples of America's imperial conquests from Mexico to Iraq, further validates the assertion many other writers and I have been making for some time now. While manifestations of the dark side of human nature are inevitable aspects of human civilization, the American Way requires its dedicated adherents to commit their lives to cruelty and inhumanity. If human civilization is to survive, we need

to collectively reject this abominable mandate.

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