

Thanksgiving for a Grateful Empire

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Region: [USA](#)

Global Research, November 30, 2015

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“Rooted in a story of generosity and partnership, Thanksgiving offers an opportunity for us to express our gratitude for the gifts we have and to show our appreciation for all we hold dear....”

So begins [the official Presidential Proclamation of Thanksgiving Day](#), 2015, signed and issued by Barack Obama.

While it hearkens back to earlier Thanksgivings in St. Augustine in 1565 and Plymouth in 1621, this is an essentially imperial document that gives only vague lip service to giving “thanks for the many blessings bestowed upon us.” When his proclamation gets specific, in the third sentence, the President gives the highest place of grateful honor to the source of global American imperial dominance:

We also honor the men and women in uniform who fight to safeguard our country and our freedoms so we can share occasions like this with loved ones, and we thank our selfless military families who stand beside and support them each and every day.

This is, of course, fatuous pandering and a patent lie that is widely and unthinkingly shared by much of a preoccupied populace. Our country and our freedoms have needed no serious military defense for decades. Even amidst the popular revival of terrorism hysteria these days, our country and our freedoms need no military protection, because they face no credible military threat.

It is a nice thought to imagine Americans quietly sharing an inclusive and comforting community in which we express gratitude for our gifts and share them with others wherever in the world they meet our military. That might actually achieve the aspiration of showing “appreciation for all we hold dear.” But the sad reality seems to be that, as a nation, we no longer know what we hold dear, or even what we once believed we held dear.

Our country and our freedoms are unthreatened by others around the world despite our well-cultivated baseless fear. At home, our country and our freedoms are daily attacked by the cold dead hand of the unelected corporate state. Our country and our freedoms are daily attacked by the shrill, vicious demagoguery of divisive factions that are as dedicated to the dominance of minority views as any Taliban or ISIS or other monomaniacal evangelist. Our country and our freedoms go daily undefended by a feckless, reckless government that would rather control a cowed population than seek conciliation and general well-being for all.

As things now stand in a nation more exceptional for its fragmentation than its collective

sense of confidence and purpose, a more honest sampling of appreciation for what some Americans hold dear might include:

- Almost all American people can be thankful that their nation is not involved in any serious wars, just turkey-shoots in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, much of Africa, and other places that produce few American casualties while maintaining the constant expense of ordnance to no useful purpose, but steady profit to the international arms industry.
- President Obama and his administration can be thankful that almost none of their totalitarian surveillance and permanent-war-making powers face serious challenges, not even the President's assassination-by-drone terrorism.
- American Muslims can be thankful that they have not been rounded up and confined to internment camps (yet), for the duration of the preferred endless hostilities.
- All minority-Americans can be thankful if no one in their family was hurt or killed by police this year. Black families in that category can be super grateful. Even white families can be a bit grateful, since cop brutality isn't as completely bigoted as it sometimes seems.
- Media-American performers can be thankful that they will never be held accountable as journalists for their culturally destructive and dishonest hucksterism.
- Police-Americans can be thankful for their special above-justice status, since even the most violent among them typically goes unpunished.
- The American prison complex can be thankful for another year of high profits at the expense of decent people jailed for non-violent crimes by a judiciary that has lost its sense of justice (with the significant assistance and insistence of Congress claiming to act for an infantilized and fearful American majority).
- Women-Americans can be thankful that it is still mostly lawful to be a woman.
- American terrorists can be thankful that they can go on assassinating doctors, torching clinics, executing church congregations, or shooting up mosques without fear that anyone will call them "terrorists."
- The American public in general can be thankful that it remains generally undisturbed by these or other American realities and that it lacks a widespread feeling that it has any personal responsibility to

fix anything.

- Ben Carson and the rest of the Republican field can be thankful that they have yet to be deemed a danger to themselves or others, and have not been forcibly hospitalized.
- Any Americans still nurturing the hope of living in an advanced, civilized nation can be thankful that we have two presidential candidates, a man and a woman, who actually have credible records of espousing humane values with regard to at least some of the critical problems we face. Obviously one of them is Bernie Sanders. The other, better one is Jill Stein.
- Upper-income Americans can be thankful for the country that cares for them and neglects others, making sure, year after year after year, that people who could learn are not educated, that people who could work are not hired, that people who could eat are not fed, that people who could be free are not.
- Any Americans who feel no shame for the state of their country can be grateful for their psychic numbness and failed humanity.

As some were wont to say back in the day: “Things are going to get a whole lot worse before they start getting worse.”

So we can be thankful that things aren’t worse already.

Blessing on all, regardless of just deserts.

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