

"The world is run by strength, force, and power"

The words of White House policy chief, Stephen Miller.

By Mike Curtis 1-26-26

Was he right?

It is certainly true that it was the strength of the British and the American Colonists that drove the indigenous peoples out of the eastern areas of the 13 colonies. And it was the strength of the Colonists that won their independence from Britain. The Louisiana Purchase at four cents per acre in 1803 simply eliminated the French claim to 828,000 square miles of land. It doubled the size of the United States. However, it was force that displaced the peoples who had lived there for thousands of years.

A large percentage of native Americans died of European diseases before the English arrived, and more thereafter. The Indian removals from Georgia started in the 1830s sending the Cherokee and several other tribes to Oklahoma. The Indian removals and Indian wars continued throughout American history, and by the 1890s, America's Indigenous peoples had been, for all intents and purposes, exterminated.

The English speaking people who arrived in Texas in 1821 won their independence and the right to own slaves by being strong and violently forceful. The United States threatened to take what is now Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and parts of Montana and Wyoming by force if Britain didn't cede it 1846. Months later, the US began the conquest of Northern Mexico — simply because they were more powerful and they could — manifest destiny. Fifty five percent of Mexico added 529 thousand square miles to the United States, and that was in addition to Texas. The Mexican government and Americans holding Mexican government debt were paid \$18.5 million to legitimize the conquest, and foster peaceful relations after the war. It was not a sale.

Although the secession of the Southern states in 1861 was an attempt to maintain slavery, it was the superior power and force of military might that ultimately preserved the Union (Empire) at the expense of 600 thousand deaths and half a million disabled, most of whom had nothing to gain as individuals no matter which side won.

In 1867 Alaska was purchased from Russia for about two cents per acre. It was not acquired from the indigenous peoples who were then subjugated by the United States in spite of having lived there for 15 thousand years.

In 1898 The United States declared war, and defeated the Spanish in the Caribbean and the Pacific, acquiring Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippine Islands. With the help of the Philippine people who saw the United States as their liberator, the Spanish were defeated in a matter of months. Next, the United States began to subjugate the Philippine people; they fought back, and it took the next three years to subdue them.

Once again, might made right. By the end of the 1898, the kingdom of Hawaii, which lasted nearly a hundred years was overthrown and became a US territory.

There was no International Law, and might continued to make right. It was the norm throughout the world in the 19th century. In the 20th century, before World War II, there were interventions in, Haiti, Cuba, Panama, Mexico, and Nicaragua. They didn't take those countries as possessions of the United States, but installed governments and created opportunities for American investments and exploitation.

In 1914 European nations became entangled in a multi nation conflict called the Great War (WWI). It lasted four years, cost six million lives, and challenged the assertion that might made right. It inspired the formation of the League of Nations in 1920 as a component of the Treaty of Versailles. The League seems to have been ineffective in preventing wars, and most importantly, Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939. At the end of World War II and 60 million deaths, the League of Nations was incorporated into the United Nations with 51 countries. The United States not only joined, but hosted its headquarters in the City of New York.

The UN charter calls for the maintenance of peace, international security, respect for human rights, and the power to investigate and mediate disputes; it authorizes economic, diplomatic, and military sanctions, as well as the use of military force to resolve disputes. It incorporated much of the Atlantic Charter agreed to by the US and UK just before its creation.

At the end of WWII, the Soviet Union emerged with the largest and perhaps the most powerful military on land (not at sea) in the world. It was expanding its hegemony and its totalitarian socialist system. It gave military and material support to China, Korea and other's conflicts, while invading and forcing many other countries into the Soviet Union. It appeared that the Soviet Union was attempting to dominate the world. It was the military might of the United States with military contingents from several other countries that stopped the reunification of Korea by the Soviet supported North Korean Socialists from 1950 to 1953. Months later, the US and UK orchestrated, the overthrow of the elected government of Iran. They reinstated the former Shah (king) in the interest of British and American oil companies. In 1954 the CIA provided air support and planes for a coup in Guatemala to prevent the redistribution of land.

In 1961 the US supported the unsuccessful counterrevolutionary invasion of Cuba (Bay of Pigs). The US supported a coup in Indonesia that killed more than 500 thousand people. For ten years starting in 1964 the United States with military contingents from several other countries fought against the North Vietnamese who fought to unify the country under socialism. As a result of U.S. military actions, it is likely more than two million people were killed. In the '80s the US funded the Contra terrorists in Nicaragua.

In the 21st Century there were the invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. — neither of whose governments were involved in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. And for more than half century the U.S. has sent funds to the Israeli government, a colonial settler state, enabling it to become the most powerful and belligerent military in the Middle East.

According to one study, the U.S. is known to have performed at least 81 overt and covert interventions in foreign elections from 1946 to 2000.^[6] According to another study, the U.S. engaged in 64 covert and six overt attempts at regime change during the Cold War. That would include US involvement in the widely reported murder of Patrice Lumumba, prime minister of the newly independent Congo.

So, yes, the United States has been "run by strength, force, and power" as Steven Miller asserted. However, I do not believe that if a nation does not become an empire, it will necessarily become the victim of an empire. If I can not give examples of nations where the people are prosperous and secure in their defense from other nations and are not empires subjugating and exploiting other lands and people, neither can I think of nations where all have an equal opportunity, the right to the fruits their labor, and an equal share of the socially created wealth.

Some Empires last longer than others. The record of conquests, greatness, and decline goes on and on. How many great empires were conquered before their economies declined from within? Rome is history's classic. It was not defeated by an even greater empire. It became corrupt, divided, and inefficient. It declined from within and was overrun by Germanic tribes in the west, and the Ottomans in the east during the next millennium.

Empires can only exploit external territories and their people as long as they can support their military and occupying forces. Historically, empires brought raw materials and agricultural productions to the home country in an exploitive relationship, giving the home country greater resources to extend its military might in acquiring minerals and subjugating the peoples of those territories. Whether it was corruption or ill-conceived inefficient policies and institutions that reduced the power of empires to control and exploit external territories, all previously expanding empires have lost their reach. The Spanish, Ottoman, and Russian Empires ruled over vast regions for centuries. The British Empire was the biggest in history, incorporating parts of three continents and Oceania.

Colonies also provide empires with a vent for the unemployed, who would otherwise become a burden on the church or the state as paupers, or criminals. In the colonies with access to land, the vast majority of these same people became prosperous citizens as they would have been at home with the same opportunities.

Although they may no longer qualify as empires, the United States, China, and Russia still benefit from their hegemony over many parts of the world. China is rapidly increasing its productivity through trade and investments, especially minerals in other countries; Russia's productivity seems static, and American productivity seems to be increasing at a much slower rate. Statistics show, in terms of purchasing power parity, the Chinese are producing over twice as much as Americans. However, they have over four times as many people. So, Americans are still producing over twice as much per person.

Key to an empire's extension of power is its industrial base. It must be able to maintain its economy and workers at home, and also produce weapons (war material) and support military personnel abroad. It is enhanced by resources and productions from its colonies. But, without enormous economic surplus, it could not extend its military power, subjugate peoples, and exploit lands abroad.

Some historians have argued that prior to the 19th century, slavery enabled empires to project their power, exploiting land and people abroad. This was done by Rome, Spain, and Britain. It was coal and steam, they argue, in the 19th century, and oil in the 20th. If true, it would follow that in the 21st century computers and artificial intelligence give empires the technological advantage to subjugate others and draw on lands and people abroad.

This superior productivity is applied in Agriculture and mining (including oil extraction). And most important, manufacturing, which takes place in cities and urban areas. Cities are the engines of civilization. There each worker becomes enormously more productive with mutual support. The great concentrations of people with minute specializations of labor, and gigantic machines that whirl, tier upon tier 24 hours a day 7 days a week are made possible by elaborate infrastructures and administration: streets, bridges, utilities, subways, law enforcement, fire companies and courts. And it is the far greater results above and beyond wages and the return to buildings, machinery, and inventories, that enables taxes. They fund the infrastructures, administration, and the military that plunders the resources and exploits the people of other nations.

It is said that the United States is in decline — losing its influence and power abroad. Technologies and invention continue to increase the results of labor generally, but, among our cities, where technologies are transformed into products and services there is clear evidence that many old American cities are functioning at far less than their potential. They have many obsolete buildings that were never replaced with those of the most profitable heights, providing the maximum number of jobs or housing and surplus wealth. There are empty buildings and vacant lots, all of which are brought about by ill conceived taxes that incentivize underdevelopment as they increase the cost of infrastructure and public services.

The United States manufacturing sector has been slow to reinvest in the latest technically advanced automation, while thousands of idle abandoned factories waste the infrastructure of once thriving cities. Very recently, tariffs, particularly on steel and aluminum, have increased the cost of production, reducing the Gross Domestic Product. Extreme tariffs on electric cars have prevented their importation, which could have been exchanged for American agricultural productions and other products, reducing the cost of automobiles by at least 50%. Trade is the life's blood of civilization, and tariffs reduce its flow.

Ultimately, it is treating land (the gifts of nature) as private property that has engendered land speculation: Holding valuable unused and underused land for the increase in its selling value. This has diminished productivity and the total production of the country. It has reduced the ability of the United States to project a hegemony beyond its borders. For more than a century the potential of the United States has been impeded by the same intractable problems: ample jobs, sufficient housing, stagnant wages, and the recurring economic cycles of recession and depression. And these problems are getting worse.

The total tax revenue of federal, state, and local governments is now \$6.5 trillion per year. The federal government borrows between one and two trillion dollars, and the Federal Reserve transfers anywhere from nothing to \$100 billion to the government. That totals around \$8.1 trillion per year.

Social Security and disability payments equal about \$1.38 trillion, and Medicare expenditures total around \$1.6 trillion. The military gets nearly \$1 trillion; Education gets about \$1 trillion; and welfare totals over \$1 trillion. Federal, state, and local governments together pay well over a trillion dollars per year in interest. That leaves only \$1.2 trillion for infrastructure, law enforcement, and everything else the Federal, state, and local governments provide. How much these burdens can increase and for how long they can continue before the United States becomes a second rate nation is not clear — but many people have judged this as evidence of decline. How long the resources of America's Vassal states, like the oil in Venezuela, will make up for the shortcomings of our cities, time will tell.

Nonetheless, the independence of a nation state is possible without becoming an empire, and without being vulnerable to the imperialism of others. Shifting all public revenue from confiscatory taxes to revenue from the rental value of land (our common opportunity) would create the greatest incentive for those who hold it to use it to its full potential. That will increase the number of jobs and units of housing. By collecting the full rental value of land, it will maximize the incentive to fully use all valuable land. It will encourage cities to develop to their full potential, and re-create a free-land opportunity. That will raise wages until they are equal to what every worker could have produced by utilizing the natural opportunities that are equally available to all. That is as high as

wages can be. Governments should perform all business in which there can not reasonably be competition, like the roads and pipes and wires that run along them, and abolish all government granted monopolies, like franchises and licenses.

By doing that within the bounds of a nation state, it will insure full employment, ample housing, and increasing wages. It will insure an ample return on building, machinery, and inventory sufficient to stimulate their investments. And it will give the government ample revenue to build and maintain the infrastructure and public service, without which productivity could not be maximized. And it will give enough beyond that to fund national healthcare and people who are physically and mentally unable to take care of themselves. It will also fund all reasonable needs for defense, and research enabling society and civilization to advance []