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1/31/2020

Modern Day Imperialism

As a child we often feel restricted by our parents. We view their rules and policies as both useless and unjust with cruel consequences. When we get into our teens we begin to want to make our own decisions more and plead with our parents to no avail. However, when we ascend into adulthood and have children of our own we often impose similar rules that were enforced on us. Upon reflection this cycle can be viewed as hypocritical. But, it is the same cycle that has governed our world affairs. America, even though we supposedly view control by a foreign power to be immoral, often put our own hand into the cookie jar of other nations. I, as most Americans, take a great deal of pride and patriotism in my country. We feel that we live in the best nation on earth. We also believe the message of Luke 12:48: "To whom much is given, much will be required." America has been a major player in world politics and conflicts for the last century. Currently the US has a military presence in one hundred fifty countries and has provided aid to over two hundred. The United States military has fought in wars on six continents and has participated in fighting in eighty-four nations. But this intervention is not always beneficial or even necessary, for the United States or the countries being 'helped'. US intervention sometimes aggravates these affairs, provides an unnecessary use of United States soldiers and resources, and is causing us to become the very empire we broke free of nearly two

hundred and fifty years ago. With such a firm grip and strong influence on the affairs of the world the United States has become the newest face of imperialism.

In 1776 the United States signed the Declaration of Independence and spent the next five years fighting for its independence from the British Empire. Since then the United States government has helped numerous other countries break free of similar bonds. However this has not always produced the results that we have sought. Through these conflicts and foreign aid the United States has become an empire in of itself. Source B shows US military bases across the globe with red dots, and the result appears as if the world has a serious case of chickenpox. In the words of Matt Eversmann in the book *Black Hawk Down*, the US soldiers “{travel} the world”(Bowden 1) in order to deal with anyone who “pick{s} a fight with the United States of America”(Bowden 1). Source C shows a similar concept as it shows all the countries in which the US has influence with varying shades, causing the globe to appear as a brilliantly colored painting. Imperialism is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as “extending a country's power and influence through diplomacy or military force.” This US ‘expansion,’ as it could be called, fits perfectly into this definition. The Cold War was a time of great tension in the world as the United States and the Soviet Union sought to convert as many countries as they could to their own ideals of government. When this war without a single bullet fired was over the Soviet Union had collapsed and the United States maintained extensive control over the globe. We had created legions of satellite nations in our image and under our influence. And this influence continues to grow. As referenced in Source E (Lee), the US grows more and more invested in the affairs of countries such as Columbia, which are in the stages of rebuilding, in an attempt to strengthen our hold on these countries. Often the US uses these ties as a tool by which to achieve their our

means. The succession of Panama was “US backed” (Source E). The new nation was then used to construct the Panama canal, a route commonly used by American trade and war ships. After the construction of the canal, the Americans then returned back to the Columbians and regained their good graces through a compensation payment. It is obvious that the US, while partially altruistic to the countries it is involved in, is mainly trying to protect and improve the welfare of its own people. In this respect, the United States is no better than the countries of colonial Europe.

Whenever a new crisis appears on the globe, the United States is generally the first one on the scene, seeking to resolve the issue. But often this is not how it appears to the people who are being assisted. As said in Source D (Sears), “people in other parts of the world often do not view the United State's involvement in world affairs in the same positive light that U.S. citizens do.”

While the US feels as if they are helping, their involvement is often actually hindering the resolution of the problems. One such example of this occurred in Somalia in the late 20th century. The nation had recently plunged into a civil war and was in a stage of rebuilding where the area was ruled by violent clans all seeking to claim power. Then the forces of the United States descended upon the capital of Mogadishu in an attempt to eliminate the clan leaders and establish a democratic government, as the one we have here. However these attempts were met with extreme resistance and the US forces eventually withdrew after nineteen US soldiers and an estimated thousand Somalis were killed and without any recognizable progress being made. This conflict is highlighted in the book *Black Hawk Down*. In the book a Somali soldier said, “he knew they meant well... {but} they never saw what their soldiers were actually doing” (Bowden 75). He continued to talk about how for each problem they resolve, a multitude spring up to take

their place. And the situation in other countries is no different. American intervention may be helping with certain aspects, but the overall equation is worsening. As supported in Source F (Hartung) the US recently made a deal with the Saudi government to give them \$110 billion worth of weapons. These weapons include “Boeing F-15 combat aircraft and Apache attack helicopters, General Dynamics M-1 tanks, Raytheon precision-guided bombs, and Lockheed Martin bombs, combat ships, and missile defense systems”(Source F). How can sending more weapons into these unstable war zones help? The answer is that it doesn't, it only serves to escalate the problems we are seeking to resolve.

It seems almost hypocritical that a country is seeking to solve the problems of other when it has similar issues of its own. According to Source G (Vitelli) the US has spent nearly \$6.4 trillion on Middle Eastern conflict and the number is still rising. Instead of using this money for guns and missiles, they could be using it to feed the impoverished in our own country. The USDA estimated that 12.3% of our population is insecure in its access to food. It was estimated that the United States government spends nearly 54% of its budget on defense/military. Meaning that less than half of the budget went to other sectors, such as healthcare or education. And while this is not so say that we should completely eliminate spending in this sector, it should certainly be decreased. By spending less on other countries we can focus more on the well being of our own. The trillions of dollars spent in international war zones could be used to create new welfare programs or social security benefits. Aside from committing our resources, the United States is also providing troops to these war zones. Since World War II over one hundred thousand US troops have been killed in response to the affairs of other nations, with nearly sixty thousand in the Vietnam war alone. In Black Hawk Down it highlights a single, day long firefight with

Somali rebels in which US forces lost eighteen soldiers. Even though the soldiers were the best of the best they were eventually overcome by the “determined rabble” (Bowden 125) of Somalian armed mobs. To make matters worse, the object of the mission was to capture only two leaders in the warrior clans. The result of the battle was two captured clan advisors, with eighteen US soldiers dead along with hundreds of Somalis. How could anyone justify the cost of this fight? While many of the battles we partake in simply waste missiles or rounds of ammunition, this fight wasted the lives of our servicemen for such a small price.

Almost all of the conflicts of the last 100 years have seen the stamp of US involvement, and while this is not necessarily bad, this foreign involvement has reached an extreme. Our investment in these countries has drained our resources and manpower, often worsened the problems, and made us into a new age empire. While this should not be completely abandoned as there are many benefits, it should be severely reduced. America should assist nations to do the right thing, but they should not be the major power enforcing these actions, as that is both the responsibility and the privilege of the individual nation. Nations should be their own sovereign state without a puppeteer controlling their strings.

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