

A Letter to Nationalists

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Humanity needs a world government. Can we really imagine this planet remaining politically divided for hundreds of years? Thousands of years? Eternally? One of two scenarios is bound to happen: either humanity will adopt a planet unifying government, or in an age when we can exterminate ourselves, that will happen. Eternal division is not a plausible scenario.

There is good reason to believe only one of the two scenarios. Power concentrates. The separate kingdoms of Medieval Europe congealed into nations. Now Europe is experimenting with a European Union. On the scale of whole civilizations we find what historians call the “Universal Empire,” the inevitable empire that embraces the whole civilization. The Roman Empire was an example. It included all of Classical Civilization, and more. The Persian Empire was the same that included the whole Middle East before Islam. Even the Inca Empire by the time of its destruction had engulfed the whole Andean World with its independent cities. The Chinese Empire was one that never ended, that swallowed most of East Asia and is still expanding due to the remarkable growth of its economy. And now we have a putative American Empire with its imperial Presidency, a position that originally was considered little more than that of a Senator. The only difference that these empires have had from the global rule commonly understood as “world government” is extent. None occupied the globe that a global government would do.

In all other aspects they were indeed ‘world’ governments. Consider that the Roman Empire gave a two hundred year “Pax Romana,” before which there had never been a time of peace that lasted as long. It gave free trade with an empire-extended system of roads and pirate-free shipping lanes, an age of prosperity upon every land where roads, bridges, aqueducts, public baths, amphitheatres, constructed sewers, porticos and grain elevators could be found. The pursuit of wealth, displayed in their dress, table, houses and furniture became the standard by which Roman life was measured. The Roman Empire gave a common international language, unified weights and measures, an extended system of Roman law that could postulate: “Better that a guilty man go free than an innocent many be convicted.” A person then was innocent until proven guilty. Women gained more influence in society than was ever possible in ancient Greece. The practice of freeing slaves grew and laws protected the enslaved. Political authority did not require that one be born a Roman. Cities grew cosmopolitan. By most measures, even of today, this was an age of civilization.

If empire is the inevitable culmination of historical societies, giving peace and prosperity to the ‘world’ under its control, it is nonetheless not what humanity wants or needs for its continued development. All such empires have decayed. They passed from history due to internal rot and the hostility of external enemies, but a global empire would have no external enemies. Its decay conceivably could last forever, supported by an advanced military with sophisticated surveillance capability. Empire carries liabilities as well as assets. They are all world dictatorships, with corruption, exploitation and impoverishment of masses in contrast to the luxury of elites. Rome under its empire became a scene of meaningless human flesh, living off state doles of meat and grain and entertained by bloody spectacles. Except for its elites, the people of Rome were relieved when their empire ended. This is the prospect envisioned of world government held and feared by nationalists today. Regardless of that revulsion, it is the world government we are most likely to have due to the natural course of history. Power concentrates.

Does empire have to be the future of humanity? We live in a technological age that ancient civilizations never had. We can chat over thousands of miles, and fly from one end of the globe to another in less than a day. Cell phones give public displays of police brutality, while social media challenges official versions of events. It would seem that technology guarantees that empire will remain far from our lives. Such optimism is lessened when realizing that technology is also the main tool for controlling dissent, seen in use today most extensively by the two thousand year old modern empire of China. A more optimistic development derives from the ancient lands of Europe.

With the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, Europe was left with no government at all. Independent kingdoms were free to proclaim national sovereignty, which led to later developments: Magna Carta, Laissez Faire, Parliamentary democracy, the Rule of Law, *liberté, égalité, fraternité* of the French Revolution. Such development of freedom is unique in history. Western Europe is still the hot-bed of dissent from imperial rule, exhibited most emphatically by “Brexit” but also in the populist movements against imperial ambitions of elites embedded in the European Union. If the European Union could become a federation of truly sovereign nations, we could possibly see the development of a *federalist form* of world government different from empire. Indeed, the union itself could be *embryonic* of that new development.

Additionally, Europe is bereft today of social ideology since the collapse of Christianity among its people, which leaves an opportunity for *secular* belief. The hope of world government is not alien to even the most spiritual thought. We have mention of it in the Bible: Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3 proclaim a time (in the latter days) when “...nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor shall they learn war anymore.” In Europe today exists a situation where there is an ideological vacuum, at a time when never before was there such need for international peace. Hope is needed, the hope that can be provided by a secular belief articulating a vision for the future of humanity. An enduring world order requires secular belief, and a secular belief requires political authority. From religion comes civilization, not because of moral teaching so much as the cohesion religion always offers to masses of people who believe the same. The connection is simple: from mass religion comes community, and from community comes civilization. Modern Europe is therefore fertile ground to be an example, if not the embryo, of an enduring non-imperial, federation-type, freedom-respecting world government of nonetheless *sovereign* nations. From its inception it would need to be a *religious* establishment in the way the Christian Church gave *unity* and birth to a Christian Europe different from the ancient pagan world.

Such a federation would have its challenges. The most likely candidate to develop a Western Imperium is the United States. No other Western nation has the power to do so. But America is a crippled ‘Rome,’ due to itself being born as the colony of a powerful empire. That inception left a continuing revulsion against the practice, to the extent that military colonialism has always been an embarrassment to Americans, who today feel a liberal attachment to the colonized. The ancient empire of China, however, has no such impediment. Beginning as a small state on the Yellow River, that empire now occupies almost the whole of East Asia, and has no compunction against using all the instruments of empire. We must wait to see what confrontation these two empires, one in decline, the other in renewed ascendancy, will have when they meet. That is when a European Federation, if described as above, will offer a very significant hope for humanity.