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The End of American Independence

By Justin Raimondo

July 1, 2012

We celebrate the fourth of July with fireworks, memorializing the American colonists' struggle against the British empire by reenacting, in symbolic fashion, what was a war for independence – that is, an assertion of American *sovereignty*. As we've built an empire of our own, however, the celebration has naturally degenerated into an orgy of [nationalist vaunting](#), with the original conception obscured and mostly lost. Indeed, the US government disdains the very concept of national independence, routinely [violating](#) the sovereignty of others – and even denying its own.

When the colonists declared their independence, they recorded their reasons in a document – a [Declaration](#) that demonstrated this wasn't just a territorial matter. They asserted [their right](#) to make a revolution because sovereignty resided in the people – not the king and his councilors. They didn't want to create a centralized European-style state that would mimic the imperial grandeur of Britain. They wanted a republic – and they wanted to be [left alone](#).

Flash forward 236 years, and – *poof!* – the republic is a [bloated empire](#), one that asserts its ["right"](#) to attack any nation on earth for any [reason](#). Having divested itself of its modest republican cloth coat, and taken to wearing the imperial purple, Washington has also discarded the old-fashioned concept of popular sovereignty as conceived by the Founders. When the President can take the country to war with a single command, without consulting anyone, sovereignty is no longer in the hands of the people, but of one person – our de facto king.

If this hegemonic power has no respect for the sovereignty of other nations, neither does it honor its own. Instead of petitioning Congress to unleash the dogs of war, American presidents

routinely go before the UN Security Council to seek international sanction first – while stoutly maintaining congressional approval is [unnecessary](#). When George Herbert Walker Bush went to war against Iraq he did it in the name of a “[New World Order](#)” – a concept that takes old-fashioned imperialism to a new level. For it would not be an American empire so much as it would be a trans-national entity, one that hovers over the world, but owes no special allegiance to any particular spot.

The idea was taken up by Bush I’s successors. “In the next century, nations as we know it will be obsolete,” [declared](#) Strobe Talbot, Bill Clinton’s Deputy Secretary of State and one of that administration’s Deep Thinkers. “All states will recognize a single, global authority. National sovereignty wasn’t such a great idea after all.” The American revolutionaries, according to Talbot’s logic, should have saved themselves the bother of [Valley Forge](#).

As Ron Paul has [pointed out](#), the very idea of national sovereignty has been under attack, with all sorts of “multilateral” institutions – not only the UN but also the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the proposed North American Union – that are chipping away at the traditional concept of America’s independence.

These institutions are inhabited and controlled by a wealthy, [arrogant](#), continent-hopping elite that owes no allegiance to any national entity, but only to its own interests as an [emerging ruling class](#). Centered not just in Washington, but in all the capitals of Europe and the developing world, this unmoored elite of government officials, international bureaucrats, transnational corporate honchos, and professional do-gooders is hungry for its turn at power, and ruthless about attaining it. There is no international “crisis” where they haven’t meddled, making it worse – and providing an opening for direct military intervention by the Western powers.

Syria is a perfect example of how this crowd operates. [Fund](#) the “opposition,” funnel [arms](#) to the rebels, [manufacture](#) atrocity stories and feed them to complicit “mainstream” media outlets – then let the UN and NATO do the rest. In thinking about how the concept of national sovereignty has fared recently, I was struck by [this account](#) of the UN’s latest pronouncement on the Syrian crisis:

“The UK and French foreign ministers have said a UN communique drawn up in Geneva on Saturday night to address the escalating conflict in Syria will mean President Bashar al-Assad is ‘finished’ and will have to step down.

“The communique, which agreed terms for a transitional authority to oversee the end of violence in the country, was hammered out with the inclusion of Russia and China and called for ‘clear and irreversible steps’ after a fixed time frame.

“It stated that present members of the government could be included in the new body and initially leaving unclear the key question of whether Assad could be part of that transitional government.

“However, speaking on Sunday morning, the foreign secretary, William Hague, confirmed Assad would be excluded from any unity government under the terms of the agreement.”

Not an eyebrow is lifted by the imperious tone – and the assumption that the UN has the right to depose and enthrone at will. What if the Security Council decided a duly-elected US president was to be excluded from holding office? Americans think they are exceptions to this New World Order-ish rule, but they may wake up one day to find out they aren't.

We surrendered our independence the moment we set out on the road to empire. We are tied by a thousand strings – by treaty and by implicit understandings – to countries all over the world, our freedom of action inhibited by considerations the Founders could never have imagined. We are a prisoner of our own allies, who have constructed a thousand tripwires that can set us careening off into yet another war at a moment's notice. We are, finally, a captive to our own self-conception as “[the indispensable nation](#),” so puffed up with our own sense of ultimate power that we cannot conceive a crisis in which we do not have a hand.

Please do go out and celebrate the fourth of July – get out the grill, invite some friends over, and enjoy the show. When you see those fireworks light up the sky, think of the second war for independence you – or more likely your children – will have to fight if you want to keep what little freedom you have left.