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## Ferguson: Ten Days That Shook the Country

How the tactics of occupation came home

by Justin Raimondo  
August 20, 2014

The facts surrounding the murder of Michael Brown, an 18-year-old resident of Ferguson, Missouri, gunned down by Darren Wilson, a Ferguson police officer, are not entirely known – but enough is known that it's quite justified to characterize it as cold-blooded murder. Thanks to Brown's family, an autopsy has revealed that of the six shots fired by Wilson, five were survivable, but the sixth – which entered through the top of his head – was not. Although the evidence is not yet conclusive, the forensics – and the testimony of eyewitnesses – point to the fatal shot being fired as he was falling to the ground with his hands up in the classic posture of surrender.

Yet regardless of the circumstances surrounding his death, the significance of this event lies in the reaction to it – from the people of Ferguson, and, most importantly, from local, state, and federal authorities. From the former – anger: from the latter – repression.



As citizens of Ferguson took to the streets to protest what they view as a racist attack on their community, the response from the authorities was similar to that of the regime of Slobodan Milosevic during the turmoil that eventually ended in the Serbian despot's overthrow. Indeed, the comments of many in the news media – at least eleven, at the current count, who were arrested during the proceedings – were that it seemed like something that would happen in a foreign country.

Which hits the nail directly on the head.

Much has been said about the shocking "militarization" of the police, and how this seemed to many like a provocation: police in Ferguson were encased in armor that one veteran remarked was heavier than anything he wore in Iraq. And now the cry has gone up: demilitarize the police! Take away their MRAPs, their forest camouflage, and all the paraphernalia of intimidation that accompanies them into battle. Rep. Alan Grayson introduced legislation, shortly before Ferguson exploded, that would have ended the Pentagon program which funneled this gear into local police departments, but it was voted down. Several newer versions are in the works, and a good thing too, but this is attacking the symptoms rather than the disease.

The disease is imperialism, otherwise known as US foreign policy: the underlying condition is the American Empire, an international regime of terror and exploitation which cannot be expected to treat its own citizens much better than it treats its overseas subjects. How on earth did we ever expect otherwise?

It isn't just the fact that the Pentagon decided to offload its surplus military gear – formerly used to subjugate foreigners – onto local police departments. The problem is the culture of

imperialism which has leaked like a poison into the groundwater of American society. It permeates not only public policy but our art, our literature, and our minds: it is broadcast 24/7 via every media outlet, until it becomes like the air we breathe.

Every empire, by definition, is a multinational, multicultural entity: it extends its power over diverse populations who have in common a single conqueror. While this means more open borders and favorable trading arrangements – conditions libertarians would applaud – it also means that the methods of state repression and control are universally applied. It means you get hit with the same truncheon that struck some demonstrator in the West Bank: it means, in short, that being a US citizen doesn't immunize you from being treated as if you were a member of the Taliban. Mike Brown discovered this too late.

To the ruling class, we are all foreigners, outsiders in our own country. Geographically and culturally, they live in a world apart, in the protected enclaves of the Washington-New York corridor, and the details of their lives have as much in common with the ordinary American's than ours do with the daily routine of an Eskimo. Truly transnational "citizens of the world," the Washington elites have more regard for the delicate sensibilities of some Ukrainian oligarch than they do for the average American businessman – because the former suits their purposes, while the latter is only a cash cow. The dogma of universalism, which is the official ideology of the Empire, dictates that all shall be treated *equally* – and so why shouldn't our police force present themselves to Americans as our occupying forces confront the peoples we have conquered?

Imperialism doesn't recognize national boundaries, and so there's no reason why our rulers should show any regard for the civil liberties of an American citizen any more than they would respect the rights of an Afghan peasant. Just look at the ways and means by which they spy on us: as Edward Snowden revealed, while the "legal" rationale for scooping up online data supposedly protects US citizens, and is unleashed only on "foreign" communications, in reality the nature of the technology – combined with the inherent nature of government to expand its power at every opportunity – means that all Americans are subject to the Panopticon's unblinking gaze.

Racism is an essential ingredient in the alchemy of empire, and always has been. America's first venture on the world stage, in the aftermath of the Spanish-American war, showcased this aspect of the expansionist creed. We were going to lift up the "savages" of the Philippines and Cuba, "educate" them out of their native ways and introduce them to the joys of civilization – and these were the "progressives" of the day!

The sickening racism underscored in the wake of Michael Brown's death illustrates the plain fact that the problem didn't disappear with the election of Barack Obama – instead, it got worse.

With Barack I's ascension to the throne, American imperialism was allowed for the first time to wear blackface – and, in spite of his campaign promises, it helped empower the President to embark on an ambitious campaign of conquest and mass murder that made George W. Bush look like a piker. Libya, Syria, Somalia, Ukraine, and now the stunning turnabout into Iraq – who would've thought the "liberal" "peace" candidate, who excoriated Hillary Clinton for her vote in

favor of the Iraq war, would launch such a wide-ranging series of military and "soft power" interventions?

When one of the provinces rebel – be it in Donetsk or Nevada – the Empire's response is identical. The MRAPs assemble in military formation, the Long Range Acoustic Devices are set off, and the helmeted camie-wearing troops advance toward the crowd, guns pointed at the rebel rabble.

It's important to characterize the rebels as a mere rabble: this is the whole strategy of the local Ferguson-St. Louis authorities, who leaked video of Brown shoplifting from a convenience store shortly before his death. Complementing this, the neocon media has been alight with tales of his rap songs, and his alleged criminal history, with the clear implication that he got what he deserved. The US government does this routinely to its overseas targets, from inventing stories of incubator babies trampled underfoot. If you're wondering why the FAA has established – and recently extended – a "no fly zone" over Ferguson, it's to keep news helicopters out to merely reiterating irrelevant but nasty stories of the very real crimes committed by Saddam Hussein and others of his ilk.

The target of this racist propaganda campaign has been extended to the entire community of Ferguson, which has dared to fight back against a full-scale military occupation similar to those endured by the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan. The media plays a key role in all this, focusing on the riots rather than their cause, and dwelling in particular on the actions of a few looters – anything to smear the rebels, the "dead-enders," as Donald Rumsfeld would put it, who insist on resisting the civilizing mission of their betters. Amid this media onslaught little items like this – the fact that four armed white men were arrested minutes from the central scene in Ferguson yesterday [Monday] – are brushed aside.

Yet there's always the danger that the very sight of what is occurring will reveal the true nature of the Empire to its subjects, that word of what's really happening will somehow get out. That's why the police assault on the media in Ferguson is a key part of the Empire's war plans. For while the political class has absolutely no compunctions about treating Americans the way they treat Iraqis, there is still the illusion in this country that we as citizens are exempt from such depredations. Imperialism, wherever it strikes, does its best dirty work in the dark – especially the "liberal" imperialism practiced by our present rulers. That's why on the morning of Day Eleven, the government line was trotted out: it's the media that's the problem, not Governor Jay Nixon's conquering army of occupation. By exposing the methods of the occupiers, say government officials and their "conservative" allies, the media has become part of the story – and that's not supposed to happen. Or is it?

But of course the media is always part of the story, and a key part at that, whether we're talking about US intervention in Libya or Missouri. Their role is often that of handmaiden to the State, but in this instance they're getting in the way of carrying out the mission – which is to silence the people of Ferguson and crush the rebellion underfoot.

Officer Wilson will never be charged, let alone prosecuted: far worse crimes have been committed by police officers in this country, and they almost always get off scot free. The reason

is simple: the police embody the State, and the State cannot afford to be held accountable for its crimes, which are committed on a daily – nay, hourly – basis. To challenge the authority of a police officer to act with virtual impunity is to attack the very nature of all governments everywhere, which are nothing more – or less – than monopolies on the use of force in a given geographical area.

In normal times, it's relatively easy to maintain the illusion of "democracy," and "liberalism," with elections that are merely contests between two rival gangster clans, and a "free" yet mysteriously complicit media that has by now been almost entirely subsumed into the political class.

In times like these, however, the masks come off, and the reality of the Thug State is revealed in all its brazen ugliness. That's when journalists are arrested and thrown in jail cells along with the rest of the helots, and the MRAPs come rolling down the streets of residential neighborhoods.

Yes, the militarization of the police is a Bad Thing: but it didn't just pop up out of nowhere. The American State, in the year 2014, Anno Domini, is unlike any other the world has ever seen: it is not only superior militarily to all possible rivals, it is also imbued with an arrogance, an unmitigated hubris, of the sort not seen since the Roman Caesars. Most governments in the world limit their sphere of claimed authority to the geographical boundaries inherited from history. While Putin makes his little foray into Crimea and the Chinese may seek suzerainty over a few disputed atolls, no other nation on earth seeks to extend its monopoly on coercion over *the entire surface of the earth*. While the soldiers of the "Caliphate" may voice this goal as their ambition, no one with any sense takes them seriously, and for good reason: they can't possibly succeed.

Washington, on the other hand, has every intention of succeeding, and our rulers actually believe they have to means to accomplish their goal. Indeed, the expression of this boundless ambition is a staple of American political rhetoric: what US political leader doesn't assume America's solemn obligation to take up the burden of "world leadership" and police the globe the same way we're policing Ferguson? After all, anything less is "isolationism"!

In order to do this, however, it is necessary for us to not only outfit our armies with the latest hi-tech weaponry, it is also a requirement that we abandon the old-fashioned anti-imperialism of the Founders and acquire a certain mindset, one more accommodating to Washington's ambitions. The Founders, and the revolutionary generation they represented, looked on government as a necessary evil, and, potentially, a fearful master. This archaic psychology had to be fundamentally changed in order for the State to acquire its present gargantuan condition, and slowly, over the years, the change has come. From fear to worship is not a very long road to travel, in any event, and in the end our political class has succeeded in pulling off this ideological inversion, at least insofar as a great proportion of the population is concerned.

That's why, up until this moment, only a few libertarians, like Ron Paul, and even fewer old-fashioned liberals, objected to the Pentagon-to-Peoria transfer of military-style weaponry to local police departments. This has become routine in American society simply because *the American character has changed*: instead of worshipping God, or the gods, we burn incense at the altar of

government, which is expected to solve all our problems, from how to get health insurance to how to educate our children.

Yet the culture of statism is a thin overlay that is thinnest in certain sectors of society: among the rebellious youth, and among the most oppressed, i.e. American blacks, whose rebellious impulses have been tamped down over the years by a welfare state designed to buy them off with crumbs from the table of our rulers. Yet every once in a while the black Democratic politicians and the parsimonious bribery of the welfare office both fail in their task of pacification: and when that kind of "soft power" fails, the hard power comes charging down the street in the form of the cops (on a daily basis) and the National Guard (on special occasions).

Ferguson is a conquered province, no different in principle from Fallujah after the "surge" or occupied Gaza. The "crime" of the Fergusonians – like the Iraqis and the Gazans – is that they are fighting back. In their inchoate, doomed, and heroic way, these much put-upon people, members of a color-caste that once wore actual chains in this country, are getting up off their knees and defying the mightiest military machine the world has ever been cursed to know. For ten days – and counting – they have been putting up a heroic resistance that every person who loves liberty must stand and salute.