

Harpers Declares It's Over – The 'American Century' Is Gone

Description

via [Moon of Alabama](#)

This month's *Harpers* title is astonishing.



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To declare that the U.S. century is over, without a question mark, is in the mainstream view still heresy. Sure the *American Conservative* has already [done that](#) years ago. But *Harpers* is positioned on the more liberal side of things and there the view is rarely expressed.

The lead essay in the edition, by one Daniel Bessner, is headlined:

[Empire Burlesque](#)

What comes after the American Century?

For the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States confronts a nation whose model—a blend of state capitalism and Communist Party discipline—presents a genuine challenge to liberal democratic capitalism, which seems increasingly incapable of

addressing the many crises that beset it. China's rise, and the glimmers of the alternative world that might accompany it, make clear that Luce's American Century is in its final days. It's not obvious, however, what comes next. Are we doomed to witness the return of great power rivalry, in which the United States and China vie for influence? Or will the decline of U.S. power produce novel forms of international collaboration? In these waning days of the American Century, Washington's foreign policy establishment—the think tanks that define the limits of the possible—has splintered into two warring camps. Defending the status quo are the liberal internationalists, who insist that the United States should retain its position of global armed primacy. Against them stand the restrainers, who urge a fundamental rethinking of the U.S. approach to foreign policy, away from militarism and toward peaceful forms of international engagement. The outcome of this debate will determine whether the United States remains committed to an atavistic foreign policy ill-suited to the twenty-first century, or whether the nation will take seriously the disasters of the past decades, abandon the hubris that has caused so much suffering worldwide, and, finally, embrace a grand strategy of restraint.

At *Consortium News* Andrew Bacevich provides additional background and offers a mild critique of Bessner's essay. He seems to [largely agree with it](#).

Me? I have always been for a policy of restraint, not just for the U.S., but for all countries on this planet. People are too different in personal beliefs, history, tradition and social surroundings to be put under one form of government or to submit to one peculiar form of economic organization. Attempting to do such is, as Michael Hudson provides, [ruinous for those who try](#).

It is also a question of personal capacity. The U.S. does not have the leadership, and has not had it for some time, to be successful in such an endeavor.

Even Democrats have recognized that their current president is not up to the task. The *New York Times* writes [Most Democrats Don't Want Biden in 2024, New Poll Shows](#). The *Washington Post* adds [Democrats are skeptical of Biden in 2024. Will the party's left finally win?](#) Other have also chipped in with a *NYT* columnist outright declaring: [Joe Biden Is Too Old to Be President Again](#).

Matt Taibbi calls this [political signaling](#):

Along with companion outlets like the *Washington Post* and *The Atlantic* (as pure a reflection of establishment thought as exists in America), the paper in this sense fulfills the same function that *Izvestia* once served in the Soviet Union, telling us little or even less than nothing about breaking news events but giving us comprehensive, if often coded, portraits of the thinking of the leadership class.

The Democrat 'leadership class' has declared that Biden is now a lame duck president and that he better signal that he will not run again before the likely catastrophic results in the midterms election come out.

I agree with that view but it is not just Biden's mental fragility that is the matter here but the incompetence of the people around him who essentially set his policies. The Sullivans and Blinkens of this world or what Ray McGovern calls the [Effete Elite](#):

The questions posed led me to comment candidly on the regrettable state of Western statesmen like EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Yes, the same Blinken who, in one breath excoriates China and the "systemic challenge" it supposedly represents, and in the next makes a pathetically quixotic attempt to cajole his Chinese counterpart to abandon Beijing's lockstep with Russia on Ukraine.

Blinken's anti-China policy is, to say it mildly, [not a success](#):

Washington has devised a series of plans to counter China, but few of them have won firm support in the region. A coalition between the United States, Japan, Australia and India, known as the Quad, is meant to show solidarity in the Asia-Pacific region, but India buys huge quantities of oil from Russia; a new U.S.-led economic group of 14 countries, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, received a lukewarm reception from its members since it fails to offer tariff reductions for goods entering the United States; and an agreement for the United States and Britain to share technology to help Australia deploy nuclear-powered submarines remains vague.

This 'elite' who thought out those policies is now baby sitting Biden to prevent him, but not themselves, from making more 'mistakes'.

Dan Cohen @dancohen3000 – [14:57 UTC · Jul 12, 2022](#) 2 days ago, the NYT reported that the White House is so concerned by Biden's age that it delayed his trip to the Middle East by a month so he could rest. Now we learn that Blinken will accompany him. Another daily reminder that Biden is a figurehead and his advisors run the show.

Biden's and Blinken's current Middle East trip is also likely [to add to their collection of failures](#):

President Biden is traveling to Israel on Wednesday for a four-day trip to the Middle East to try to slow down Iran's nuclear program, speed up the flow of oil to American pumps, and reshape the relationship with Saudi Arabia without seeming to embrace a crown prince who stands accused of flagrant human rights abuses. All three efforts are fraught with political dangers for a president who knows the region well, but returns for the first time in six years with far less leverage than he would like to shape events.

A month ago Biden declared that he [will not meet](#) the Saudi clown prince:

"I am not going to meet with MBS. I am going to an international meeting, and he is going to be part of it," Biden told reporters at the White House.

...

However, a Saudi statement announced that MBS and Biden: “Will hold official talks that will focus on various areas of bilateral cooperation and joint efforts to address regional and global challenges.”

We will likely soon see photos with Biden and MBS shaking hands. Biden needs higher Saudi oil production and lower prices at the pump to lessen the Democrats midterm losses. He can hardly condemn Mohammed Bin Salman for killing the ‘journalist’ and lobbyist for Qatar Jamal Khashoggi while at the same time ignoring the [Israeli murder](#) of the U.S.-Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh.

The return to the nuclear agreement with Iran was botched by Biden and Blinken when they dithered for months after their inauguration before starting talks. They then made new demands that Iran was obviously unwilling to fulfill. They are now left with contradicting [their own arguments](#):

In the early spring, Mr. Malley and Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said there were just weeks, maybe a month or so, to reach a deal before Iran’s advances, and the knowledge gained as it installed advanced centrifuges to produce uranium in high volume, would make the 2015 agreement outdated. Now, four months later, Mr. Biden’s aides decline to explain how they let that deadline go by — and they still insist that reviving the deal is more valuable than abandoning it.

Following various financial crises and too high spending U.S. financial leverage is gone. As it has proven in the Middle East, and now in Ukraine, its hyper expensive military is unable to win wars against small and big competitors. The U.S. role in international institutions has been diminished by China’s and Russia’s competing efforts like the Belt and Road program, the Asian Development Bank, Russia and Iran’s [North-South Transit Corridor](#).

The *Harpers* title is correct. The U.S. century is indeed over. As the *Harpers* lead essay [concludes](#):

The American Century did not achieve the lofty goals that oligarchs such as Henry Luce set out for it. But it did demonstrate that attempts to rule the world through force will fail. The task for the next hundred years will be to create not an American Century, but a Global Century, in which U.S. power is not only restrained but reduced, and in which every nation is dedicated to solving the problems that threaten us all. As the title of a best-selling book from 1946 declared, before the Cold War precluded any attempts at genuine international cooperation, we will either have “one world or none.”

One world, in which the individual countries refrain from boundless greed and provide for the common good, is certainly the better choice.