

The Greatest Threat to World Peace? “USA, The Ruthless Empire”. Daniele Ganser

A Review of Daniele Ganser’s ‘USA: The Ruthless Empire’

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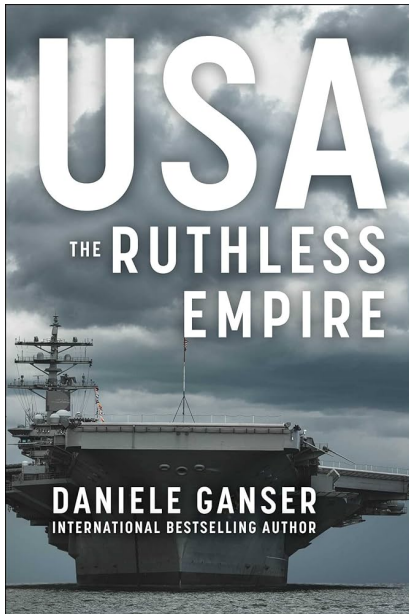
Note: Daniele Ganser will be the featured speaker at the [First Annual David Ray Griffin Lecture](#) on Sunday, December 3, where he will discuss this book and related current topics. The lecture is hosted by the International Center for 9/11 Justice and UK Column. More information is available [here](#).

If you regard the United States as perhaps flawed but overall a force for good in the world . .
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If you scoff at the notion that the US, a republic founded on principles of freedom and democracy, has morphed into a world empire, perpetrating assassinations, coups d’état, acts of terror and illegal warfare . . .

If you want to promote peace but haven’t yet explored deceptive events that precipitate US warmongering . . .

. . . here is a volume that will clear the air and paint an honest picture of the significant, not-so-rosy impact US foreign policy and actions have had in the world around us.



[*USA: The Ruthless Empire*](#), by Swiss historian and peace researcher Daniele Ganser, is the newly published English language translation of his book [*Imperium USA*](#), originally written in German and published in 2020. Here is a summary of key points — including some lesser-known ones — along with remedies for a more peaceful future, that are covered in the book.

Ganser takes us on a tour of meticulously documented historical events that would be shocking to anyone committed to fairness and basic human decency. His intention is to strengthen the peace movement, which encompasses people all over the world — including in the US — who reject war as well as the lies and propaganda used to initiate and perpetuate wars. Throughout the book, he emphasizes three key pillars to the peace movement: the United Nations ban on any kind of violence or aggression, mindfulness (allowing one to recognize and see through war propaganda and lies), and viewing all people as members of the human family.

Before delving into history, Ganser sets the stage in Chapter 1, “The USA Poses the Greatest Threat to World Peace.” He backs up this assertion with a dizzying array of figures about how many countries the US has bombed since 1945 (at least 23), how many military bases it has in foreign countries (more than 700), the US world record on military spending (now approaching \$1 trillion annually), the number of US troops abroad (over 200,000), and the US status as the only country to have deployed nuclear weapons. He shares results of a Gallup poll of 67,000 people in 65 countries that asked, “Which country poses the greatest threat to world peace today?” to which 24% named the US, while between 5% and 9% named one of six other countries and less than 5% named one of twelve other countries.

Chapter 2, “The USA Is an Oligarchy,” spotlights an ominous manifestation of empire: the astronomical disparities in wealth and income (540 billionaires vs. over 100 million living in poverty, not to mention impacts around the world) resulting from an oligarchy of super-rich running the empire and manipulating information flows with little meaningful influence by voters.

Chapters 3 and 4 describe key precursors to empire both before and after the new US republic established its independence from Britain in the late 18th century — namely, the mass murder and displacement of Native Americans and the importation and exploitation of

slave labor from Africa in much of the new nation.

Chapter 5 covers the overt launch of imperial actions in the mid and late 19th century, when the US initiated wars based on lies and often false flag incidents to annex half of Mexico and conquer former Spanish colonies either as outright possessions (Puerto Rico and Guam) or with nominal autonomy but under tight US control (Cuba and the Philippines). The Kingdom of Hawaii was captured and annexed under threat of violence.

Chapter 6, devoted to World War I, elaborates on how, even prior to the US entering combat in 1917, US-based war profiteers flourished. J.P. Morgan & Co. was financing England and France, and US corporations sold arms to Europe. Hence, vested US interests in intentionally prolonging the war cost millions of avoidable deaths. War propaganda thrived, with Germans — who had done nothing to the US — being severely vilified. Hamburgers became “Liberty Steak” and sauerkraut “Liberty Cabbage.” (Remember how in 2003, when France hesitated to join in the war on Iraq, the US Senate cafeteria sold “Freedom Fries”?) The Espionage Act was passed to prosecute pacifists (including Eugene Debs) and deny free speech — and is still being used today to persecute Julian Assange for exposing US war crimes in Iraq.

Chapter 7 scrutinizes the US role in World War II, unravelling its carefully cultivated image of fighting honorably on the side of righteousness, and exposes both belligerent proclivities and mixed loyalties. Ganser reminds us that US companies were allowed to sell oil to Nazi Germany both before and well into the war. Without that fuel supply, the Nazi threat may have dissipated prior to some of the worst atrocities being committed. Again, the war was unnecessarily prolonged.

Though officially allies of the Soviet Union, the US and Great Britain were pleased to see Hitler taking action against communist Russia, and they avoided opening a western front until mid-1944, when it looked like the Soviet Union (which lost 27 million citizens in World War II) would be the sole victor over the Nazis. Ganser unearthed this remarkable June 1941 quote by then-US Senator and later President Harry Truman: “If we see that Germany is winning the war we ought to help Russia, and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany. And that way let them kill as many as possible, although I certainly don’t want Hitler to win in the end.” *Divide et impera* — divide and conquer.

Truman, as US president, ordered the first and only deployment of nuclear weapons in history so far, killing hundreds of thousands of civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and terrorizing many more at a time when Japan was already prepared to surrender. Ganser documents how, in order to gain popular support for the US entering the war, it intentionally goaded the Japanese into attacking Pearl Harbor, providing the desired *casus belli*. The infamous December 7, 1941, attack was no surprise to President Franklin Roosevelt, who let it happen, sacrificing thousands of US servicemembers. As will become relevant to Chapter 12 on the September 11 attacks, Ganser notes that a Hollywood movie, “Pearl Harbor,” parroting the surprise attack myth, was released in May 2001, priming the public subliminally for what was to follow a few months later on September 11.

Chapter 8, “Covert Warfare,” tells us how the Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Council were born in the post-war years. It includes a laundry list of how the US used them to perpetrate multiple coups d’état (Iran, Guatemala, Chile), assassinations (Lumumba in Congo, Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, Diem in Vietnam, Che Guevarra in

Bolivia), assassination attempts against Fidel Castro, and the failed invasion of Cuba in 1961. President Kennedy ultimately became so outraged by these illegal operations that he fired CIA director Allan Dulles.

Note that Ganser devoted an entire previous book, [*NATO's Secret Armies: Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe*](#), to numerous additional covert operations involving the US, via NATO and the CIA, that are not covered in the present volume. These include false flag assassinations, bombing of civilians (blamed on communists), and fixing elections in much of Western Europe throughout the Cold War.

Chapter 9 focuses on the Kennedy assassination, summarizing evidence exonerating Lee Harvey Oswald and implicating Allan Dulles in a conspiracy to commit this heinous murder. After District Attorney Jim Garrison of New Orleans brought much of the evidence to light in 1967, questioning the validity of the Warren Commission Report (authored by Dulles), the CIA created and widely publicized the notion of “conspiracy theorist” as a derogatory term for anyone who challenged the official narrative. Interestingly, Ganser notes that in 1979 the US House of Representatives Select Committee on Assassinations “saw a high probability that two men had shot Kennedy. . . . The Committee believes, on the basis of the evidence available to it, that President John F. Kennedy was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy. The Committee is unable to identify the other gunman or the extent of the conspiracy.” This report was conveniently obscured by the media, and few are aware of it today.

Chapter 10, on the Vietnam War — which rapidly escalated after Kennedy’s murder — is a painful reminder to those readers who lived through it of the needless suffering inflicted on millions of Vietnamese and on tens of thousands of US soldiers and the peripheral damage to neighboring countries of Laos and Cambodia. The latter two countries were bombed by the US without provocation, inciting the brutality of Khmer Rouge communists, whom the US could demonize to deflect from its own role in the bloodshed. Ganser reminds us of the false flag Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964 that was used to provoke a dramatic escalation of the war in Vietnam. While we were repeatedly warned of the propagandistic “domino theory,” there was in fact no chain reaction of neighboring countries turning communist after Vietnam prevailed and defeated the US in 1975 — hence all that death and destruction was in vain, other than benefitting war profiteers.

In Chapter 11 on the Iran-Contra Affair, Ganser elucidates another example of the US pitting two of its adversaries against each other when it supported Saddam Hussein in Iraq’s war against Iran while simultaneously and covertly selling weapons to Iran and secretly using the proceeds to fund the Nicaraguan Contras, who supported the dictatorial Somoza regime. Ganser further shows how the CIA hypocritically engaged secretly in the cocaine trade to finance its covert operations. How many people’s lives have been upended by those operations abroad and in drug-infested US cities?

In Chapters 12 and 13 on 9/11 and the War on Terror, respectively, the US empire ushers in the 21st century with an overwhelming display of shock and awe. The first sub-heading is prescient: “A New Pearl Harbor” refers to a prophetic statement in the year 2000 by the neocon Project for a New American Century, noting that it would be difficult to get the US population to accept massive military spending and upgrades for fighting multiple wars simultaneously “absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event — like a new Pearl Harbor.”

Ganser offers three ways of evaluating the events of September 11, 2001: (1) Surprise

attack catching everyone in the US, including top leadership and intelligence services, completely off guard; (2) LIHOP (let it happen on purpose), implying foreknowledge by key players of what was going to happen but intentionally failing to stop it; and (3) MIHOP (made it happen on purpose), involving direct complicity of certain players within the US military-intelligence apparatus and their agents. He disproves (1) and points to (2) and (3) as much more plausible, leaning toward (3).

Abundant research has been conducted debunking the official 9/11 story that 19 Muslim hijackers and a few men in a cave in Afghanistan were solely responsible for the death and destruction that day, and Ganser includes references to much of it in his footnotes. Bringing us to the present day, the author of this review refers readers to the [International Center for 9/11 Justice](#) for an up-to-date collection of relevant 9/11 research.

In this volume, Ganser touches on a handful of key anomalies: obvious fallacies of the official 9/11 Commission report authored by Philip Zelikow, a Bush administration insider; the utter failure of the multi-billion dollar US defense system to prevent an attack, including on its own heavily fortified headquarters; the millions in profits made by unnamed individuals who invested heavily in put options in the days before September 11, 2001 (betting that United and American airlines stocks would soon plummet), indicating specific foreknowledge; the clear evidence that World Trade Center Building 7 was destroyed later that day by controlled demolition and the refusal of US authorities or media to even entertain that possibility; and the evidence for the use of explosives in the destruction of the Twin Towers.

With the fall of the Soviet Union ten years before, the US empire had been searching for a new major enemy, and the crimes of 9/11 offered an “ideal” replacement: the never-ending and amorphous “War on Terror,” which could be and has been used to justify numerous military incursions and the proliferation of US bases anywhere “terrorists” are deemed to be lurking. Ganser details the US role in illegal wars in Afghanistan, Iraq (initiated by spreading lies about alleged weapons of mass destruction), and Syria, all of which left millions dead in their wake, not to mention the horrendous abuses of Iraqi prisoners by US soldiers at Abu Ghraib.

On a note of optimism, Ganser points out how the blatant injustice of the wars in the Middle East — like the injustice of the Vietnam War before them — energized the peace movement in the US, prompting massive demonstrations and civil disobedience in opposition, indicating vast numbers who denounce war and empire and seek peaceful coexistence with all peoples. Beyond famous peace movement leaders like Jeannette Rankin, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mahatma Gandhi, he highlights the role of everyday citizens affirming their commitment to all people as members of the human family and rejecting attempts by the elites to divide and conquer. He also points out how the rise of alternative media has played a role in allowing for dissemination of information that counters the mainstream lies and war propaganda. The explosion of the internet and social media can be a two-edged sword, however, as Ganser points out in Chapter 14, “The Digital Empire,” with consolidation and monopolization of technology and information flows by such digital giants as Google, Facebook, and Wikipedia.

The 15th and final chapter, called “The Fight for Eurasia,” details the US role in the 2014 coup d’état in Ukraine — which was a catalyst for ensuing violence that has now escalated exponentially — as well as the relentless eastward expansion of NATO, contrary to US

assurances in 1991 that this would not happen, which is another key causative factor in the havoc being wreaked there today. The original German edition was written two years prior to Russia's 2022 "special military operation" in Ukraine. This new English edition does add a few paragraphs condemning Russia's invasion as a violation of the UN Charter, while noting the provocations by NATO and Ukraine that fueled this proxy war between the US and Russia.

The book likewise does not include the up-to-the-minute status of the US relationship with China, but does note in the last chapter that China's humiliation by the British Empire during the 19th century Opium Wars has prompted caution in its current relations with the West. We learn about China's 2013 announcement of the "New Silk Road" in the form of a massive transcontinental infrastructure project also known as the Belt and Road Initiative, now well underway, designed not as an imperial land and resource grab but rather to mutually benefit all participating nations, allowing them to respect each other's sovereignty and reducing tensions among them.

In his conclusion, Ganser notes that "the peace movement must trust that a world without war is possible." He is "convinced that a fundamental exit from the spiral of violence is possible. The decisive factor is whether we really want inner and outer peace. If this will is strong enough, we can orient ourselves according to the following three principles: the human family, the UN ban on violence, and mindfulness." These three principles, he notes, can be applied to overcome polarization, profiteering, and propaganda. A key tool of empire is dividing people into those who are favored and those who are demonized, pitting them against each other while enabling elites to generate profits for the few from the fighting of the many. Mindfulness can help people "wake up and quickly realize that war and lies always go hand in hand." Those who practice mindfulness can no longer be so easily deceived by psychological operations.

In the words of President John F. Kennedy, invoked by Ganser in the introduction to the book,

"Our problems are man-made. Therefore, they can be solved by men."

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