

Outing the US Empire: Trump's Military Parade

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Region: [USA](#)

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You only had to see him goggle eyed and enthusiastic beside France's President Emmanuel Macron last Bastille Day. The tricolours were fluttering, the jets booming above in the manner usual for a lapsed empire, and the President of the United States was thrilled to bits, [delighted](#) at the spectacle.

"It was one of the greatest parades I've ever seen. We're going to have to try and top it."

Donald Trump wetting himself over a military parade in another country was one thing. That he is now attempting to bring that experience back to the United States has local policy figures in a fix. According to White House press secretary [Sarah Sanders](#), the

president "has asked the Department of Defense to explore a celebration at which all Americans can show their appreciation."

The good citizens of the United States have tended to associate such military affairs with the goosestepping types, eyes glazed and bayonets erect with purpose before authoritarian clowns. Only foreign types, unmoved by the impulse of American liberty, engage in that sort of thing.

In some ways, having such a parade would be a natural order for a power that remains in denial about its imperial pedigree, bastard or otherwise. There is a near pathological preference to live in the bright delusional light of free world defender of peace.

"As distinct from other peoples," wrote the late [Chalmers Johnson](#), that keen student of US empire and its consequences, "most Americans do not recognize – or do not want to recognize – that the United States dominates the world through its military power."

An orgiastic display of US military symbolism would be a direct, if discomforting change from the usual pattern. States often tend to have military shows that are inversely proportionate to their economic and social success. More guns do not necessarily imply more butter in the home. The Soviet Union, and the current Russian incarnation, insisted on military parades as matters of pride, though such shows are as revealing as they are concealing. As Moscow terrified with its military prowess and gritty warriors parading before

the greys and browns of the politburo, the state was unravelling in sickness, awaiting ultimate implosion.

North Korea similarly insists on the star studded show, the pantomime of military hardware and vocal troops captivated by supreme leader, Kim Jong-un. To take such an aggressive stance serves to also conceal weakness and internal fragility. Besides, such displays provide epic distractions for troubled populaces, a sort of cinematic release packaged in military grandeur.

To that end, a US military parade would reverse the order of things. To have such a parade could be likened to a coming out ceremony, a grand confession to the globe. The United States, through dozens of military bases webbing the entire globe like Arachne's thread, prefers the rhetoric of restraint and order while waging a series of conflicts that result in an order of permanent war for permanent peace.

It was the coming of the Cold War, and the emergence of the United States as the pre-eminent power after the Second World War, that prompted the remark by the sharp Charles Beard that the foreign policy of both Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman could be classed as the waging of "[perpetual war for perpetual peace](#)". That assessment duly stuck, though the US public, for the most part, went into a state of permanent amnesia.

One symptom of empire common to all entities which have undertaken this venture is the illusion of some lingering order without disturbance, the civilizing effects of the *Pax Romana* delivered through soldiers bearing the gift of peace or the more recent *Pax Americana*. This supplies the nursery story, widely disseminated, that international peace is maintained in such circumstances while swords are turned to ploughshares.

Quite the opposite is true. Such states of affairs ensure a constant demand for conflict, the need for police operations and bloody corrections, the deployment of auxiliaries and allies, and the necessity for a hardened military industrial complex.

A mild acquaintance with those blood thirsty deliverers of peace, the Romans, provides the surest precedent by which subsequent empires supposedly interested in peace thrive upon. The parallels between US narratives of power, and those of Rome, are striking. True, the Roman empire incorporated local power elites and spread citizenship.

"It was generosity," notes classicist [Mary Beard](#), "even if sprung from self-interest."

But it was Tacitus in his inimitable account of [Agricola](#), his father-in-law's exploits as governor of Britain in the late first century AD, that left a superb critique of empire that remains as pertinent to the US as any other.

Tacitus takes note of the Caledonian resistance figure Calgacus, [whose speech](#) does not merely attack the imperial predations of Rome, but the euphemising nature of power and its concealments.

"To ravage, to slaughter, to usurp under false titles, they call empire; and where they make a desert, they call it peace."

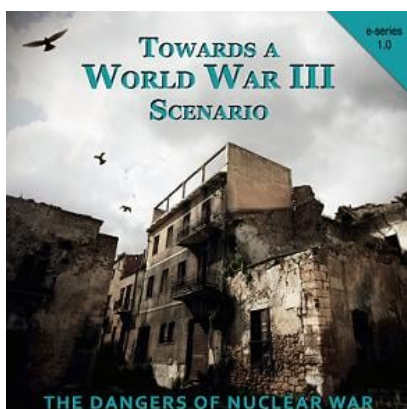
There is nothing to suggest that Calcagius ever said anything of the sort in the name of liberty to rouse his troops – Tacitus was a despairing critic of empire and its consequences, being both recorder and analyst.

From matters of conspiracy to an emphasis on the fake news complex; to the suspicions of suited establish doyens who have long steered empire in the shadows while proclaiming the virtues of liberty, Trump's opportunity for another show is here. It is time to put the US empire on display.

As he has done before, the current president overturns convention and confronts the deep seated psychic disturbances of the US state. Forget the clichés and deceptions about delivering peace. Ignore the alarm from the imperial closeted types. (We, claimed [Representative Jackie Speier](#), "have a Napoleon in the making here.") Put stock, instead, in matters of belligerence, of making deserts. Place that weaponry on show in lusty, persuasive fashion. And most importantly of all, make [Little Rocket Man](#) green with envy.

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