



Written by [Charles Scaliger](#) on June 27, 2014

## A Globalist's Plea to Stay the Course of World Order

When Robert Kagan (shown on right) writes, the Powers That Be in New York and Washington tend to take notice. A contributing editor for the *Weekly Standard* and the *New Republic* and a columnist for the *Washington Post*, Kagan, a historian and policy analyst, was also a co-founder (along with William Kristol) of the Project for the New American Century, a now-defunct but formerly highly influential Washington think tank, and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. Kagan has also served as a foreign policy advisor to various GOP presidential candidates, including, most recently, Mitt Romney, and to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.



But in addition to his impeccable credentials and establishment connections, Kagan is also a prolific and graceful writer, producing books and articles at regular intervals that focus on the role of the United States in the “new world order” (his terminology). Kagan’s 2003 book *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* attracted considerable attention for its analysis of the differing approaches of the United States and Europe in projecting power worldwide, claiming that Americans tend to favor problem-solving through force whereas Europe preferred peaceful negotiation. More recently, Kagan’s 2012 article in the *New Republic* “Not Fade Away: The Myth of American Decline” drew plaudits from President Obama and even a rapturous, point-by-point [endorsement by the president](#) in a meeting with select members of the media shortly before the 2012 State of the Union address.

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Neocon Kagan is, in other words, one of the modern American Establishment’s most revered mouthpieces. Kagan’s latest pronouncement, “[Superpowers Don’t Get to Retire: What Our Tired Country Still Owes the World](#),” also from the pages of the *New Republic*, is an effort to remind the American Establishment, in a time of waning national economic and military fortunes and growing popular distaste for the 21st-century version of American globalist policymaking, what the aims of the post-World War II new world order really are.

Laments Kagan at the article’s outset:

Almost 70 years ago, a new world order was born from the rubble of World War II, built by and around the power of the United States. Today that world order shows signs of cracking, and perhaps even collapsing. The Russia-Ukraine and Syria crises, and the world’s tepid response, the general upheaval in the greater Middle East and North Africa, the growing nationalist and great-power tensions in East Asia, the worldwide advance of autocracy and retreat of democracy — taken individually, these problems are neither unprecedented nor unmanageable. But collectively they are a sign that something is changing, and perhaps more quickly than we may imagine. They may



signal a transition into a different world order or into a world disorder of a kind not seen since the 1930s.

The problem is not, according to Kagan, that America is no longer equal to the task of maintaining global economic, financial, and military order; it is instead that Americans (and many of their political leaders) have grown weary of the burden, and “have either forgotten or rejected the assumptions that undergirded American foreign policy for the past seven decades.” As a result, “American foreign policy may be moving away from the sense of global responsibility that equated American interests with the interests of many others around the world and back toward the defense of narrower, more parochial national interests” — an outcome anathema to an American Establishment bent on global imperium by whatever means necessary. While Kagan, in keeping with the tone and terminology of earlier writings, declines to accuse Americans of “isolationism,” his is nevertheless a plea for re-engagement in the affairs of the world, from the Middle East to the Far East, lest the alleged Hobbesian chaos of the pre-Pax Americana world once again rear its ugly head.

In the years after the Second World War, two different “takes” emerged on the path to world government — the final outcome of the “new world order” project. One, the darling of European elites and the self-styled American Left, favored the rapid subordination of all national institutions to a single global authority, the United Nations or a similar successor organization. The other, favored by the establishment Right in the United States and now spearheaded by so-called “neoconservatives” such as Kagan, is that world order is best maintained simply by using the immense resources of the United States — her military and her tax base, in particular — for policing the planet; the UN, NATO, the WTO, and other such instruments of globalism are, in this view, instruments to be subordinated to the policy aims of American Establishment visionaries. In Kagan’s version of history:

American leaders [after WW II] set out to erect and sustain a new order that could endure. This time it was to be a world order built around American economic, political, and military power. Europeans had proved incapable of keeping the peace. Asia was entirely unstable on its own. Any new order would depend on the United States. It would become the center of a new economic system that would encourage open trade and provide financial assistance and loans to nations struggling to stay afloat. It would take a substantial and active part in the occupation and transformation of the defeated powers, ensuring that some form of democracy took root in place of the dictatorships that had led those nations to war. America would also have to possess preponderant military strength and when necessary deploy sufficient power to preserve stability and security in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

As it turns out, notes Kagan, this transformation in American foreign policy proved remarkably easy to effect and sustain, thanks to the Cold War and the threat of nuclear annihilation. With the Cold War mentality still firmly entrenched in the early '90s, President Bush’s Gulf War coalition against a threat unconnected with the Soviet Union and communist expansionism encountered scant popular resistance. After the end of the Cold War, the economic expansion of the 1990s furnished financial cover for the various U.S. military adventures during the Clinton years in the former Yugoslavia, in Haiti, in the Sudan, and in the Middle East. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 gave the American Establishment a convenient new global enemy and justification for yet another round of military adventurism in the Middle East and elsewhere.

But now, with the bill coming due for a trillion-dollar war and occupation of Iraq — an effort that the recent military success of Sunni fundamentalists in Iraq threatens to nullify completely — and the



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prospect for a similar collapse in post-U.S. occupation Afghanistan, Americans are perceiving that, as with Vietnam and Korea in previous generations, our high-minded militarism on the other side of the world has cost lives and fortune in exchange for few benefits. Add to that the unprecedented levels of debt that now hold our nation captive, and citizens of “the indispensable nation” are becoming disillusioned with global hegemony.

But Kagan dismisses any such objections, claiming that, whatever the costs, America must hold fast to her role as global savior. Holding up the era of American global domination as an exemplar of peace and stability in comparison to what preceded it (a characterization that the Vietnamese and the citizens of many African and Latin American Cold War pawns might dispute), Kagan insists that a continuation of this version of the new world order is worth any sacrifice on the part of Americans. Kagan, in a flight of alarmist rhetoric, ponders a new-world-order-less world:

Could the United States survive if Syria remains under the control of Assad or, more likely, disintegrates into a chaos of territories, some of which will be controlled by jihadi terrorists? Could it survive if Iran acquires a nuclear weapon, and if in turn Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt acquire nuclear weapons? Or if North Korea launches a war on the South? Could it survive in a world where China dominates much of East Asia, or where China and Japan resume their old conflict? Could it survive in a world where Russia dominates Eastern Europe, including not only Ukraine but the Baltic states and perhaps even Poland? Of course it could. From the point of view of strict “necessity” and narrow national interest, the United States could survive all of this.... As in the past, Americans will be among the last to suffer grievously from a breakdown of world order. And by the time they do feel the effects, it may be very late in the day.

And he concludes ominously:

Perhaps Americans can be inspired in this way again, without ... an attack on their homeland. But this time they will not have 20 years to decide [like Americans between the world wars]. The world will change much more quickly than they imagine. And there is no democratic superpower waiting in the wings to save the world if this democratic superpower falters.

The reader can only wonder what non-democratic power or entity is being primed to fill the vacuum left by an America whose decline is being engineered by those who want a new world order on more truly globalist terms.



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