



**The Unraveling of Empire?
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This quarter we shall study how George Bush's short-sighted foreign policy has only accelerated America's decline. Iraq may be the straw that broke the camel's back, but domestic factors are also undermining America's international position, i.e. the dramatic shift from production to consumption, unprecedented indebtedness, low tolerance for casualties, and the rise of spectator politics. In short, the current imperial project cannot be sustained militarily, politically or economically.

Ron Suskind's 2004 article in *The New York Times Magazine* contains one of the most revealing passages about the Bush administration ever reported, in which "a senior advisor to Bush" speaks derisively about journalists and their "reality-based community." The aide – now assumed to have been Karl Rove – goes on to say, "We're an Empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality.... We're history's actors ... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do." Though the article appeared two weeks before the 2004 election, the aide was interviewed during the summer of 2002, when the White House was trying to sell the Iraq war. Yet reality has finally caught up with rhetoric.

Business Week's 2003 cover story "Gambling on Growth" reported how Bush seemed more than willing to mortgage America's future by going to war while simultaneously cutting taxes and domestic spending. However, instead of defunding the Left and its entitlement programs—Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, his statecraft has damaged the "Washington consensus" and brought the U.S. closer to "imperial overstretch," i.e. the notion that long sustained wars place an unbearable burden on a country's economic resources. If the U.S. doesn't restrain its foreign policy and concentrate on its relative geopolitical advantages; namely, overwhelming naval and air power, it will lose its supreme position in the world, as have all past empires. In any