



POX AMERICANA: BEYOND AMERICAN STUDIES AND THE 'SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP'

With no further ado, American Studies in five episodes:

EPISODE 1: WE'RE NUMBER ONE

A young boy grows in the US South of the 1960s. His overriding impression, reinforced by parents, church, television, and (his childhood obsession) sports, is how lucky he is to have been born American. He could have been born to starve in India or to suffer under Communism in China or to endure the decaying Old World of Europe but, no, he has been born in America, the Number One country in the whole world.

EPISODE 2: A COLD WAR CITY

Did I mention that the young boy lives in Huntsville, Alabama? Huntsville is a city of the Cold War. In 1950, it was a pokey cotton town of 15,000 people, little more than farms, mills, and hardware stores. Then the US Government brought the German scientists in, allegedly because Huntsville's hills look like those of Bavaria, equally likely because the military base in the southwest quadrant of town offered plenty of land to test fire missiles and rockets. By 1962, when the Apollo launcher that Huntsville developed took Alan Shepard beyond the stratosphere, when our missiles were readied to hit Cuba if the Soviet didn't withdraw theirs, the population was 75,000. And by 1970, it was 150,000. Many of the newcomers worked for the Government but many more were employed by IBM, Lockheed, McDonnell-Douglas, Boeing. We were vibrant testimony to the benefits of the military-industrial complex.

Huntsville wouldn't have existed, the way it did, without the Cold War; the Cold War wouldn't have developed, the way it did, without Huntsville. Yet I recall few of us having any appreciation of the conflict that had raised us from obscurity. Sure, my mother would tell terrifying tales of late pregnancy during the Cuban Missile Crisis --- how was she going to breastfeed her baby if the fallout became real? --- but I don't think anyone was cognizant of how close the US had come to using the Bomb in Vietnam in 1954, long before the troops went



in, or against China in 1955 over some uninhabited offshore islands. I doubt anyone would realize how close we would come to dropping the Big One in 1970 when tensions rose in the Middle East. (Conflict with China? Escalation building upon Arab-Israeli disputes? The more things change....)

Few of my townsfolk, I suspect, could have located the Congo on a map, let alone recall that the US Government tried to assassinate Patrice Lumumba, the legally-elected President. The laundry list of US-backed coups, some successful, some farcical --- all of Eastern Europe between 1949 and 1956, Iran in 1953, Guatemala '54, Syria '57, Indonesia '58, Iraq '59, British Guyana '61, Brazil '64, Dominican Republic '65, Australia '74: I'll stop there to keep the lecture within 45 minutes --- never a topic for conversation.

And why should it have been? After all, these were all countries far, far away --- psychologically, if not geographically. I think my grandmother put it best when I asked if she had been concerned about civil rights, given that the clashes in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, those clashes that became notorious worldwide with the police releasing Alsatians and water cannons upon the marchers, had occurred a few miles from her home. "Why, no," she said, a bit surprised, "We just got on with our lives."

EPISODE 3: ME AND THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

When I was 13 or 14, I won Best Speaker in Huntsville's Voice of Democracy contest. After the award ceremony, I met the organiser, who was red with fury. Apparently one of the other winners hadn't placed his hand over his heart during the playing of the Star-Spangled Banner. "I'm glad to see you're not like that," he said to me.

Fifteen years later, Sinead O'Connor refused to sing at a concert at the Meadowlands Arena in New Jersey if the National Anthem was played. At the concert, Frank Sinatra --- all-American guy, despite or possibly because of his simultaneous connections with freedom-loving crime bosses and the Kennedy White House --- said courageously that, if he met O'Connor, he'd "kick her ass". The incident provoked the most heated argument I have ever had with my mother. She backed Ol' Blue Eyes and loyalty to nation; I asked, unwisely, if the same principle of loyalty applied in Hitler's Germany or Stalin's Soviet Union.



When I announced that I would have problems with standing up during the National Anthem if the US was involved in a war, my Mom was horrified, ostensibly on the grounds that I would get beaten up by a patriotic audience.

EPISODE 4: BAD TRANS-ATLANTIC KARMA

Two years before Sinead and I acted so petulantly, I flew home from London via New York on Pan Am 102. Thirty-six hours later, Pan Am 103, the evening flight from London to New York, exploded over Lockerbie. The next year, hours after arrival for Christmas vacation, I woke in a jet-lagged stupor to find Press Secretary Marlon Fitzwater announcing US Marines had landed in Panama to free that country from the menace of Manuel Noriega. And the year after that, my stay coincided with the ultimatum to Iraq that unleashed Desert Storm and the “liberation” of Kuwait. I was beginning to worry that some twisted karma meant my trans-Atlantic crossings were destabilising world order.

To reassure me of the fundamental goodness of America, my father decided to take me to the three-hour extravaganza called the World Wrestling Federation. This is a bit of what I, and 10,000 other screaming Huntsvillians (in the Von Braun Civic Center, incidentally, the only auditorium named after a former member of the National Socialist Party) enjoyed: VIDEO CLIP

EPISODE 5: UNGRATEFUL FOREIGNERS

Earlier this month there was a strange incident at the United Nations. The 54 members of the Economic and Social Council of the organisation met to select the 13 representatives on the Human Rights Commission. They were supposed to re-elect the United States as one of the 13. After all, hadn't the Commission been created in 1947 under the chairmanship of Eleanor Roosevelt? Hadn't the US --- “democratically”, of course --- been a member of the Commission for 54 years? Hadn't more than 40 countries given pledges that the status quo would be maintained?

But something went haywire. When the results were read out, the three “Western” seats on the Commission went to France, Sweden, and Austria (only recently, post-Jorg Haider, restored by the European Union to respectability). The Europeans hadn't followed the “stitch-up” script; the US only had 29 votes.



When Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, taking a break from pointing lasers at China, was asked about the embarrassment, he was blunt: "With the Soviet Union gone, that gratitude [for protecting the Free World] is gone, that appreciation is gone. People who never believed the United States had a monopoly on all political wisdom or all economic wisdom or all cultural wisdom now don't feel grateful for the role the United States was playing to the same extent, and so they're perfectly willing to express their views." Far from petulantly, Rumsfeld added: "That's fine. We don't have a monopoly on all wisdom in the world, and we can live in that world very successfully."

These are some of my "American studies". I freely acknowledge that they are far from objective; heck, they're not even very academic. Yet, for me, they have been essential, for they have forged my conception that the story of US foreign policy, particularly since 1945, must be told not as the rational actions of high-level policymakers defending "national security", "international stability", and, of course, freedom. Instead, what we are confronting is an America and its foreign policy, then and now, which has been forged as much by culture and ideology as it has been by those concerns of "orthodox" historians, diplomacy and geopolitics.

And I acknowledge that my presentation today is one of personal politics. I believe that the primary threat to world order today is not necessarily from Islamic fundamentalism, neo-fascism, or Chinese expansionism; it is from Americanism. Moreover, that threat is not one which has suddenly emerged with the Administration of George W. Bush, a.k.a. Boy George, a.k.a. The Shrub. That threat has been developing ever since the US decided that it was its God-given and dollar-given sanction and responsibility to lead the Free World. This threat may have been offset in the early years of the Cold War by the acknowledgement of the vital if belated contribution of the United States to World War II, the symbiotic threat of Soviet-backed Communism, and by the perceived benefits of the Marshall Plan. But, if the Western European "core" may have found advantage in a short-term alliance with Washington, I do not see how the so-called "periphery" --- South America, Asia, Africa --- profited from America's global mission. To the contrary, that laundry list of US-backed coup attempts --- should we add Ecuador 1962, Chile 1964 and 1970, Angola from the 1970s to the present? --- of the support of American "democracy" for not-so-democratic regimes, killing tens of thousands of their citizens, keeping a narrow elite in power and the vast majority in poverty, indicates the opposite.

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In 2001, in this post-Cold War era, World War II's special relationship is 60 years distant, the expansionistic menace, if indeed it ever was expansionist, of Soviet Communism, is long gone; Western Europe has not only recovered economically, it is now a powerful if not fully unified economic community. Behind the facade of NATO and the illusion of the United Nations, the US and Europe are increasingly in conflict, usually conducted politely (although the Banana War of 1999 is an intriguing exception), but with the potential to raise broader political, economic, and social issues. One need only consider what might have transpired at the environmental summit at the Hague last November if John Prescott had chosen to blame the breakdown on American arrogance rather than on the frailties of women, in this case the French Minister for the Environment, carry out late-night negotiations.

Almost daily there is another incident, another statement to ponder, and not just the ones in the headlines. Example: European companies announce plans for a new super-aircraft and Washington, not influenced in any way by Boeing, bleats that this isn't fitting because of European "subsidies". Example: the United States, to the chagrin of its "allies", has refused to sign an international treaty banning the use of land mines. Example: on the bottom of page 17 of the Guardian on 12 May 2001, this two-paragraph item: "Washington yesterday cancelled talks with a European parliamentary delegation investigating its Echelon network, which Europe fears is being used for industrial espionage." Example: This past Sunday, White House sources leaked to the New York Times information that the United States would NOT be acceding to an international protocol to enforce a ban on biological weapons. The officials offered the reason that the treaty "would be inefficient in stopping cheating". Yet, way, way down, the article mentioned, without a hint of cynicism, that the US has "worked to limit the scope of visits by foreign inspectors in order to protect American pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, which dominate the worldwide industry and are concerned with protecting their trade secrets. And at the behest of the Pentagon, the government tried to limit inspections of American biodefense installations, which develop vaccines and protective equipment and analyze the germ warfare threat."

There are portentous omens about. Two weeks ago, I read the following opinion: "The rightwing press, largely owned by two North Americans, is still as uncritically pro-American as it was in the cold war. But whereas we knew then

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that their motives were respectable and patriotic, now we can have no such certainties....I rather doubt that it has been reached only on the merits of the strategic and military arguments. All kinds of military-industrial corporate agendas could also be in play, as they quite certainly are in the Times's coverage of China and the Far East." Who was this radical voice? Noam Chomsky? John Pilger? Step up, Peregrine Worsthorne, formerly a bastion of the Telegraph-reading establishment in the Cold War.

Is it proper, however, to take a corner in this fight, to adopt a political approach to "American Studies" in the contemporary world? Do I not give up my claim to that precious commodity called "objectivity"?

My reply is simple. "American Studies" is not an objective discipline, for it is a political construction of the Cold War. The development of the academic subject in this country was the product of the US Government's campaign to promote the American way of life throughout Europe in the 1950s. The Cold War was a total conflict between two opposing systems. In this conflict, it was not enough to pursue geopolitical objectives through political, economic, and military measures, "hearts and minds" had to be won through intellectual and cultural initiatives.

This was not a case, however, of Government hegemony imposing itself upon all sectors of society. To the contrary, private individuals and organisations had their own reasons for co-operation with Washington's officials in the great crusade against Communism. In many cases, those private actors approached the Government with ideas, offers, requests for assistance. It wasn't just the New Day of Father Divine Movement, which advised officials that a ball of dust would envelop the earth, the Bowman Gum Company, which offered to airdrop chewing gum with anti-Communist cards rather than the standard cards of baseball players, or the photographer who advocated using extra-sensory perception because he knew "one person who is being driven almost to the point of insanity by the continued reception of magnetic drivel". (Actually, the CIA did embark on protracted experiments with ESP and "psychiatric warfare".)

It was also the National Student Association telling the State Department that it would put a "center-left" but vehemently anti-Communist line abroad. It was Rose Peabody Parsons who would tell her acquaintance from university days, CIA Director Allen Dulles, that with a small subsidy, say \$25,000, she and her

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fellow New York socialites would tell women around the world of the lies of Soviet propaganda and the virtues of life in America. It was leading US and US-based intellectuals --- the political philosopher Sidney Hook, the novelist Arthur Koestler, the world's "greatest living historian" Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. --- who would arrange Government finance of the "independent" Congress for Cultural Freedom, an initiative that would lead to CIA subsidies of the Abstract Expressionist art movement, the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra, the New York City Ballet, and the leading British journal Encounter, and many other intellectual and artistic ventures.

And it would be academics who would place their objectivity at the beck and call of the US Government. It wasn't just those in applied sciences and engineering, where private institutions carried out 75 percent of the State's research, who did their duty. Conyers Read, the President of the American Historical Association, declared in 1949: "Discipline is the essential prerequisite of every effective army whether it marches under the Stars and Stripes or under the Hammer and Sickle....Total war, whether it be hot or cold, enlists everyone and calls upon everyone to assume his part." The Russian Research Centers at Harvard and Columbia and the American Studies programme at Yale were established with covert support from the Government. Project TROY of 1950-51, with participants from Harvard, Princeton, Michigan, Chicago, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was initially funded by the State Department as a study of how to overcome Soviet jamming of US radio but soon expanded into a multi-disciplinary evaluation of how to overthrow the Soviet regime. The project established the Center of International Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and launched the careers of cold warriors like Walt Rostow (economist, Pitt Professor at Cambridge, and eventually the Deputy National Security Advisor and then National Security Advisor in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations). Many more would follow: according to one source, the CIA would eventually work, directly or indirectly, with about 5,000 academics.

I'd like to tell you about American Studies and my favourite egomaniac, sycophant, and war criminal. This is the story of how the CIA launched the glorious career of Henry Kissinger.

In 1951, Harvard Professor William Elliott (an alumnus of Vanderbilt University, just like me, according to the Harvard Crimson, "tall, brooding, and dapper", why, just like me) was a consultant for the Office of Defense Mobilization and



the CIA. But something must have been missing from his public service, because he had the idea of starting an international summer seminar for students and young, emerging public figures. Elliott, like any good head of department, turned over the idea for development to an ambitious, sycophantic Ph.D. student. In the first statement of the Seminar's aims, Henry Kissinger declared: The Harvard Summer School Foreign Students project can...[give] inwardly alive, intelligent young Europeans an opportunity to study the deeper meaning of U.S. democracy. This does not imply a program of dogmatic indoctrination. It does mean that contact with intense young Americans may demonstrate to foreign students that a concern for abstract problems is no European monopoly and that the U.S. does not exhaust its aspirations in material prosperity. Just like today, the problem with Kissinger's lofty proposal was finding the money. Harvard was not willing to cover the total cost, and no foundation immediately stepped forward. Informal discussions, however, led to a notable letter from Kissinger to a Mr Gates Lloyd of 2823 Q Street NW in Washington, with a timetable for the delivery of more than \$20,000 in assistance. Q Street was the location of one of the CIA's offices; Lloyd was a permanent official of the Agency.

The CIA had provided a short-term lifeline. Forty participants attended the Seminar in 1951. Kissinger launched the journal *Confluence* which, despite its limited circulation, became an influential publication in the circulation and debate of US foreign and defense policy.

The Seminar still faced the recurring problem of funding. In 1953, the issue reached the highest levels of the Eisenhower Administration. The President's Special Assistant, C.D. Jackson, stepped in to ensure funding, lending his name to Elliott in letters to foundations and phoning Thomas Braden, the CIA official in charge of subsidies for private groups, "to tell him that I thought this was useful activity'. This time, the "angel" was the Farfield Foundation, nominally the philanthropic enterprise of Julius Fleischmann, who had made millions from the sale of family businesses in gin and yeast. In fact, Farfield was a conduit for money provided by the CIA. Finally, in 1954 the Seminar achieved longer-term stability with a three-year grant from the Ford Foundation. The representative of Ford who handled the Seminar's application, supported by a personal plea from Elliott, was Don Price. Conveniently, Price had joined Ford on a four-year break from the Harvard Center for Public Administration, the administrative home of the Seminar.

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No doubt because of Kissinger's combination of persistence and obsequiousness, I mean, charm, as well as the fact that it was funding the Seminar as a major psychological initiative, the Government provided very important speakers. The State Department offered Robert Bowie, the Director of its Policy Planning Staff, while Deputy Director of Intelligence Robert Amory explained how the CIA was everybody's friend. Most importantly, on 12 May 1955, Henry Kissinger issued a gushing invitation, "Mr Elliott joins me in asking if you would come to Harvard as our opening speaker..., as we would like...someone who could set the tone for the subsequent effort and to whom international relations was of more than academic interest." The recipient? Dwight Eisenhower's Vice-President, Richard Milhous Nixon.

The Harvard case isn't significant only because it was the start of a beautiful relationship between Henry and Dick. It established that the role of "American Studies" in the Cold War was to win hearts and minds for freedom and democracy through the presentation of US literature and culture as well as instruction in politics, economics, and history. This wasn't the product of Government "hegemony", however, but of "private" individuals and organisations pursuing their own interests and promoting their own values. As important as the CIA's role was in ensuring the success of the Seminar, the arrangement was the outcome of dynamic negotiation between State agency, private organisation, and the intermediary of the philanthropic foundation.

And what of American Studies closer to home? Well, World War II had fostered some attempts to raise the profile of the discipline in Britain, and of course the Fulbright Act of 1946 had established a general American programme for the dissemination of US values through educational exchange. The following year, the State Department was involved in the formation of the Salzburg Seminar, arguably the first forum for American Studies in postwar Europe and still an influential presence in scholarship today (perhaps far from coincidentally, given the latest story of International Summer Seminar, it was Harvard that provided the first students for Salzburg). This overt dimension was eventually complemented by a series of covert initiatives, such as support for the new Free University of Berlin, the establishment with CIA money of the Free European University in Exile in Strasbourg, and the backing of the educational programmes of the American Committee for a United Europe, headed by future CIA officer Thomas Braden.

Despite these efforts, the historian H.C. Allen was gloomy in his own inaugural



lecture in 1956, concluding that less than 14 percent of secondary students in Britain had received instruction in any American subject. The limited US effort in this country was receding even further as a series of annual conferences for educators, financed by the Fulbright Commission and the Rockefeller Foundation since 1952, came to an end.

It was in this environment that the catalyst for a permanent organisation for American Studies came, not only from Washington but also from 12 British scholars, almost all of them historians, who established a temporary committee in 1954. Seizing the opportunity, the US Cultural Attaché, Richard Taylor, encouraged the academics to believe that significant funding could be obtained from a foundation. (I can only dream that the US Embassy would have the same response to a Head of Department's appeal in 2001.) He said, perhaps disingenuously, "He did not seek in any way to influence their decision about the formation of an Association for American Studies. He wished simply to point out the urgency of taking action immediately if it was felt that some action should be taken."

So, at two meetings in July 1955, the 12 scholars (does one call them apostles of American Studies?) agreed on Articles of Association which established that "the purpose of the Association shall be the encouragement of study and research in the history, institutions, literature, and geography of the United States". More importantly, the Chairman, Frank Thistlethwaite of St John's College, Cambridge, "was directed to make an approach to the Rockefeller Foundation for certain financial assistance". The 12 requested funding for both conferences for BAAS members and larger bi-annual "missionary" conferences for schoolteachers as well as university lecturers, publication of lengthy articles, possibly in a journal, and of an index of resources on America held in Britain, and collection of documents on microfilm.

The creation of BAAS, however, was not the end but the start of the struggle over autonomy. American and British members of the ad hoc committee were divided on the role that BAAS should play, especially on the question of scale. Taylor was proposing an eight-point program which would in effect create a centre for American Studies whereas the Articles of Association envisaged only a "centre of record for research materials in the United Kingdom".

These early exchanges, rather than confirming a US-imposed vision of American



Studies, set the pattern for detailed and often divisive negotiations which would take place for the next two years. The Association sought an approach directed primarily at practitioners and teachers, supporting those individuals and institutions teaching or researching topics within the areas of American Studies. Taylor, as a representative of the US Government, viewed American Studies more as part of a general cultural relations program promoting awareness of the United States amongst people in the United Kingdom.

The involvement of the Rockefeller Foundation, rather than unifying these negotiations, added a third element especially as both Taylor and the BAAS founders were scrambling to win Rockefeller's interest. The Committee had initially asked the Cultural Attaché to inform the foundation of BAAS's formation in May 1955 but by August they were independently "approaching the Rockefeller Foundation in hope of enlisting [their] financial aid." The Committee's quest for autonomy was clear; their letter to Rockefeller was sent a day after Taylor had informed them that he was intending to write the Foundation.

Moreover, Rockefeller's initial enthusiasm was soon curbed by its insistence that any grant was conditional upon the recipient having a permanent office, a condition that BAAS would not be to fulfil for the foreseeable future. By March 1956, as the Committee met at the first BAAS Conference at Selwyn College, Cambridge, it had all but given up on Rockefeller and was desperately pursuing informal contacts with the Ford and Nuffield Foundations. There was even talk of "self-help through individual universities", notably Manchester.

Once more, it was the State that revived hope. In March 1956, the new Cultural Attaché, Myron Koenig, suddenly informed Frank Thistlethwaite "that there was some possibility of financial support for the Association from US governmental sources". Two days later, Koenig, conveniently a historian of the United States, told an emergency Committee meeting that "he was anxious to help in every possible way, and this desire was shared by other colleagues in the American Embassy". The range of the possible grant was from \$5,000, which could be renewable, to a "one-shot" \$100,000 which the Association could use as an endowment. The Embassy "clearly realized that assistance rendered to the Association by a government might be interpreted as a 'propaganda' activity, or might be unfortunate in other ways"; however, it was willing to transfer "part or all" of its funds for cultural purposes for 1956-57 to BAAS. Koenig confirmed, "No strings would be attached [to any large-scale aid]; the Association would be



free to use the money in whatever ways it thought best, so as to avoid all semblance of 'interference' by the US government."

Further promotion of the Association followed. In April, Cunliffe produced the first Bulletin of BAAS, including HC Allen's gloomy inaugural on the sparse provision of American Studies in Britain, and sent a copy to Koenig. Three weeks later, the New York Times published a lengthy article, "British Libraries Held Lacking Collections for Studies of US; Some 'Astonishingly Bad' Says Report of Association Formed to Push Project; Information Service Offers Help"; the two-column piece was a paraphrase of the Bulletin and the note that the US Embassy had offered to help with provision of books and microfilms. In May, Koenig agreed with Thistlethwaite, Cunliffe, and H.C. Allen the terms for the \$20,000 grant for preparation of the Index, hiring five full-time researchers for one year.

It was obvious that Washington, whether prompted by Koenig or on its own initiative after the apparent demise of the Rockefeller negotiations, was taking quick action. The Government even spurred the New York Times to publish a lengthy article summarising HC Allen's gloomy inaugural on the sparse provision of American Studies in Britain. Yet here the problem of private "autonomy" arose. Thistlethwaite was worried, despite Koenig's assurances, that acceptance of a large grant would identify BAAS as an unofficial agency of the US Government. Within weeks, he was writing Cunliffe and another Committee member, Max Beloff, about the "astounding and alarming proposal": I am increasingly inclined to look this gift horse in the mouth. Oh! For a private angel! And yet it would be a considerable responsibility to turn down the means of getting ourselves so comfortably established. Fortunately for BAAS, there had been another twist in the tale. Rockefeller's representatives, Edward D'Arms, touring Europe in May 1956, met Thistlethwaite (a longtime acquaintance) and offered a possible solution to BAAS's lack of a headquarters. The Commonwealth Fund, whose Warden was a member of the BAAS Committee, was providing grants of \$200 to universities (including the Department of Modern History at the University of Birmingham) to improve their library facilities in American Studies Perhaps they could provide the Association with office space?

There was still some way to go in negotiations but the breakthrough came in autumn 1956, fostered by two fortuitous circumstances. First, Thistlethwaite took up a Visiting Lectureship at the University of Pennsylvania and lectured occasionally at Princeton, in the vicinity of D'Arms' home. By November, regular



communication between the two men established that BAAS's mistake was an excess of caution: "The Rockefeller Foundation are unlikely to give us any money unless they are convinced that we are the controlling monopoly in American Studies in Britain and we have an aggressive, and almost totalitarian programme stretching out over the years....Our present piece-meal plans, by themselves, do not appear to be enough." While Rockefeller would not give money for overheads, D'Arms offered a loophole of using "money for this purpose which had been granted for conferences" if Rockefeller were "convinced that such conferences were part of this broad, all-embracing programme". "Very sympathetic as always" to BAAS's proposals, D'Arms arranged that Thistlethwaite come up to Princeton for a weekend so the two men could "draft an application which the Foundation may find attractive".

Thistlethwaite's Princeton trip came after a second, somewhat perverse, stroke of luck. In early November, Britain, allied with France and Israel, had invaded Egypt in the Suez War. The US not only refused to support the British operation but intervened, with economic pressure, to force a cease-fire and humiliating British withdrawal. Anti-American feeling in Britain reached fever pitch. A motion "deploring the attitude of the US, which is gravely endangering the Atlantic alliance", was signed by 130 Conservative MPs. Cinema audiences hissed at Eisenhower's appearance on newsreels. Petrol stations, forced to ration supplies, near US air force bases posted signs, "No Americans Served Here".

So, when Thistlethwaite and D'Arms discussed the draft BAAS submission at the end of November, the Rockefeller representative was ready "to talk turkey about actual amounts of money". Incredibly, D'Arms suggested a five-year grant with a planning figure of \$100,000 a year. This would finance 25 travel grants for established scholars and postgraduates, purchase of microfilms, and support of major conferences. In addition, the large grant would allow "say, \$3,000/year of office expenses [to] be buried in it". Thistlethwaite was so taken aback by the scale of the proposal that he could only find ways to spend \$70,000 per year. He noted cogently to Herbert Nicholas, the Acting Chairman of BAAS, "I am inclined to think that Suez has had something to do with this sudden pressure."

The die had been cast. The BAAS Committee, predictably, "passed...through the familiar phases of delirious delight, incredulity, and dismay which attend the prospect of dollar grants running into six figures", balking at the commitment to holding large-scale conferences and quibbled over the "concealed" funding for administration. Thistlethwaite prepared a revised memorandum but learned "to



his astonishment" from D'Arms in January 1957 that Rockefeller had sanctioned a grant of \$150,500, to be spread over five years. A subsequent meeting in London in March between D'Arms and seven Committee members hammered out the details, notably that BAAS could devote between 5 and 10 percent of the grant to administrative expenses, and BAAS finally obtained rent-free office space in the Commonwealth Fund's Harkness House.

So were these guilty men? The question is, of course, too simple. It reduces those with good intentions to miscreants or puppets, and it reduces a complex State-private network to a simple us-and-them vision of hegemony. The Committee clearly tried to preserve its autonomy to the point of turning down the \$100,000 offered by the US Government and putting significant conditions, at points threatening any award, on the Rockefeller grant.

Yet it is not possible to close the door on the matter with this reassurance. It is all too easy to write out the US Government and political motives, both of the State and of BAAS's founders. The story becomes one of correcting past cultural wrongs towards the United States, with conclusions such as David Reynolds' emphasis on "the ignorance and prejudice about the United States that prevailed in Britain" and Richard King's statement that the "academic choice of American Studies reflected a quasi-rebellion against the domination of British condescension toward American culture".

The promotion of American Studies was always a "political" venture. Arthur Greenwood, the Minister for Post-War Planning, proclaimed during World War II that "only education" could build up "a mutual understanding between out two democracies who will carry the common burdens of the future". However, it was only in the environment of the Cold War, not World War II, that the US Government's interest would turn towards a systematic organisation for the "academic" discipline. BAAS would not have existed, or at best existed as an "obscure shop-talk group", had it not been for Washington's intervention from 1955.

The establishment of BAAS might have been the result of a three-way negotiation between State, foundation, and "private" academics but the Government would always seek to influence or direct those negotiations. This would be done not through the imposition of official personnel but through the more effective relationship of using "autonomous" academics in positions of leadership. The evolution of the role of Cultural Attaché is instructive. When

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Dick Taylor stepped down as Cultural Attaché in 1955, Washington asked Thistlethwaite to take over the position. When Thistlethwaite declined, Myron Koenig, a Foreign Service Officer but also a professional academic, was appointed. Within months of Koenig's appointment, the Government was asking an "independent" academic, Carl Bode, the first president of the American Studies Association, to move into the post in 1957.

The relationship between State and academics was not one of "hegemony" because it did not need to be to serve the purposes of either group. There must be some significance in the coincidence that, in May 1955, as BAAS was being founded, Marcus Cunliffe was writing about "Intellectuals --- The United States" for *Encounter*, the journal secretly funded by the CIA. Cunliffe's essay was not simple cheerleading --- with its references to intellectuals of the clerisy and the avant-garde, it offered no easy slogans --- but there is something in the conclusion which is critical, affectionate, and deferential at the same time: "Europe...has nothing quite like the current American intellectual texture --- lumpy, laconic, conformist, irreverent, rigorous, cheap, down-to-earth, and on the lookout with a visionary eagerness for another programme, so as to absorb it for a generation in the continuous task of self-discovery."

It could be argued that these initiatives were only effective in the short term, given the traumatic cultural as well as political effects of Vietnam and Watergate. The State-private network would be strained in 1967 with press revelations of the CIA's elaborate system, through both "dummy" and legitimate foundations, of funding. "Revisionist" historians would finally challenge the myth of all-American goodness in the Cold War. This, however, would prove a bump on the landscape of American superiority. Institutionally, the Government adjusted its strategy. Programmes like Radio Free Europe, formerly "private" but CIA-financed, were rendered acceptable through overt Government support. The Reagan Administration not only renewed the crusade against Moscow's "evil empire" and, more significantly, stepped up intervention from Moscow to Afghanistan to Angola but also revised the State-Private framework through initiatives like the National Endowment for Democracy.

Moreover, even if the State-private network does not exist in the same form it developed in the 1950s, our academic experiences are still a legacy of that political, cultural, and intellectual environment, of informal as well as formal interchanges between Government and the university. This is most obvious in

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the case of diplomatic historians (most of whom, ironically, would shun the term “American Studies” since they see themselves engaged in the broader, more tangible realms of international history and politics). Unsurprisingly, given distribution of resources and the nature of academic publishing, it is US or US-based scholars who dominate the field. This in itself might not be significant; however, these historians are both the product and the propagators of American “exceptionalism”. Few of the “leading” scholars have worked outside the US or, excepting the post-1989 scramble for treasured documents from the ex-Communist bloc, researched in foreign archives. And, even as they offer no more than a token reference to a US ideology, they disseminate it in their own words. In the world of a John Lewis Gaddis, probably the best known of the American “diplomatic historians”, objectivity is simply another white hat/black hat story: “Perhaps the Cold War really was, as Cap Weinberger explained to E. P. Thompson in that fabled year 1984, about individual freedom and the ability to pass it along to our kids.” Cap Weinberger as the bastion of universal goodness? E.P.Thompson as its foe? It is an exceptional moral vision.

Nor have those diplomatic historians who have embraced “culture” questioned this exceptionalism. To the contrary, their near-obsession with “Americanisation” has reinforced it. Geir Lundestad, who has built his career upon the thesis that the US built an “empire by invitation”, recently applied this with a broad brush to a realm beyond Presidents and Prime Ministers: “In the 1990s Europe remained culturally as attached to the US as it had ever been; as measured in everything from the popularity of American movies and television programs to the increase in sales of Coke in Central and Eastern Europe.”

And what of Britain? In the areas of diplomatic and military history, it is the curse of the “special relationship” that holds sway. London and Oxbridge are occupied by academics studying statesmen and generals, most working from the assumption that the world spins on an Anglo-American axis. The new Rothermere American Institute is blatant about its mission: Viscount Rothermere announced at its founding ceremony that it would promote “knowledge and understanding of America at a time when we seem to be shifting further apart”. The Department of War Studies at King’s College, the Royal Institute of International Affairs, the Institute of Strategic Studies, the Institute of Contemporary British History. Many of these institutions have been supported by special funding from the State or from large foundations, not to mention Rothermere’s Daily Mail. Some have effectively been private adjuncts of the State; for example, many personnel of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, seconded into Government service during World War II, remained in

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their posts after the war. In an environment where the prevailing assumption of the British Government has been that the world rests on an Anglo-American axis, the academic community has tended to follow, rather than lead. It has even continued to fight the Cold War: in one recent, high-profile case, British intelligence services fed material to a selected Cambridge-based historian to “prove” high-level Soviet subversion in London and Washington.

The hope, for me, lies in a new vision of “American Studies”. As my colleagues well know, we are no longer dependent upon the largesse of US sponsors since, in the “cultural” field, the US Embassy and American foundations have turned away from Britain, the “safe” ally, to transitional areas such as Eastern Europe. Here is the opportunity, through an interdisciplinary focus on literature, film, music, television, gender studies, class studies, ethnic studies, as well as history and politics, to provide a full critique of an “American” identity, not only of the nature of an American ideology but how that ideology shapes the foreign policy of the 21st century. Here is the possibility of giving ourselves some distance from the US monolith.

For all the virtues of the current work in our discipline, I believe we are at risk of cutting ourselves off from the central issues. For there is a trend in American Studies here to dismiss the “State”, to put one’s faith in “trans-national” and “post-national” communities. Following the lead of Stuart Hall and of Paul Gilroy, the British-born academic at Yale University who has made such an impact with the notion of the “Black Atlantic”, scholars such as Paul Giles have argued, “It is not...with an analytic reading of the “real” America that I am primarily concerned....The issue is one of ‘routes’ rather than ‘roots’, problematizing national boundaries through the dynamics of exchange rather than seeking to reify their essential contours.”

It is apparent to me that the “essential contours”, if one defines that through ideology and culture as well as “traditional” markers of politics, economy, and military strength and the geophysical conception of “boundaries”, of the US State have not disappeared. It is still the locus of power, albeit in alliance with economic actors and institutions which are increasingly trans-national. It is Boy George, a.k.a. The Shrub, or more precisely those officials for whom George W. Bush serves as a Forrest Gump-like mouthpiece, who make the decisions on the environment, or relations with China and the “new” Russia, on the international menace called the National Missile Defence, on Government intervention over

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issues such as debt relief and provision of affordable drugs for the treatment of AIDS in developing countries.

What then must we do? First, I suggest, we must ally consideration of the State to the perspectives on US ideology and culture that American Studies can offer. After all, it was the CIA that recognised in 1951 that "it wanted to unite all those people who were writers, who were musicians, who were artists and all the people who follow those people, people like you and me who go to concerts or visit art galleries" It was Henry Kissinger who asserted, 'The U.S. experience should serve as the starting point for an examination of such problems as the concept of freedom in the 20th century, the striving for self-realization in art against the felt pressure of convention, the quest for a reconciliation of rationalism, personal responsibility and dogmatism in religion.'

Let us use that critique to evaluate what the US is likely to mean to our environment in forthcoming years. For it is not just the connections of the Shrub, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham, Secretary of Commerce Donald Evans, National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and even the head of the Environmental Protection Administration, Christine Todd Whitman, with oil companies. (Bush's reported income, hamstrung by being Governor of Texas, was \$900,000 in 2000; Cheney, chief executive of the oil multinational Halliburton, reported \$36.1 million, of which at least \$5 million was salary and "deferred compensation and bonuses".) It is the addiction of most of the American populace to cheap energy and the unquestioned belief that they have the God-given right to use as much of it as possible. When Bill Clinton assumed the Presidency in 1993, he suggested a 30 pence a gallon (about 6.5 pence/litre) surtax on petrol, to be phased in over five years. Outrage is too mild a word for the public reaction: the plan, like so much of the Clinton Revolution, was dropped with a minimum of fuss. Today, as CNN shows footage of a motorist paying ---shock! horror! --- 30 pence a litre to fill his tank, the word "crisis" is being used.

Let us use that critique to evaluate the probable American contribution to world stability. For it is not just the intimate relationship that high technology and science --- not only the Lockheeds but also the Raytheons that make the Patriot missiles supposedly defending any freedom-loving nation, not just the Boeings but the scientists at Lawrence Livermore and other laboratories working on the lasers to turn Star Wars from fantasy --- has with the military and the Government. It is the trumpeting of American exceptionalism --- "We're Number

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One!" and "U-S-A", the mind-numbing mantras, are not just for sporting events -- combined with the special notion of American altruism --- we're protecting the Free World and, by God, they're going to thank us for it whether they like it or not. Thus, the notion derided as "Star Wars" only 15 years ago becomes the quite acceptable National Missile Defense. The chief obstacle to this boondoggle, provided it ever works, will not come from within the US; rather, it could be British refusal to allow the Americans to use Menwith Hill in North Yorkshire, an essential component of the electronic network.

When considering the US contribution to peace in the Middle East, it is not just the political effect of the Jewish vote affecting policy towards Israel, it is the pervasive negative stereotype of the "Arab", the towel-headed villain, in television and film. It is not just the geopolitics of oil and security bound up with the issue of Iraq; it is the simple cultural portrayal of Saddam Hussein as a) Hitler b) insane c) both that maintains the sanctions which have killed more than 500,000 civilians in the last decade. It is not just the struggle for Southeast Asia, the struggle to remedy the slight of Vietnam, that explains the US sabre-rattling towards China. It is the twin notions of the cuddly, ready-to-learn China, the notion promoted since the late 19th century by American philanthropists, missionaries, and teachers and of the evil, warmongering, and (by the way) Communist China that has preoccupied many Americans since the end of the World War II.

And it is the specific American notion of race and the enemy. For if the end of the Cold War brought the demise of the (white but Communist) Soviet threat, other long-established notions did not disappear. The US caricature of the Latin American --- lazy, corrupt, ineffectual --- would not only be propelled by the 19th-century conflicts with Mexico and Spain but by interventions throughout Central and South America. It is that caricature that both drives contemporary US involvement in countries such as Colombia, with a \$1.3 billion investment motivated as much by fear of Marxists as it by fear of drugs, and that makes Fidel Castro, the one leader who refuses to fall, such a persistent symbolic menace. The caricature of the "yellow peril", the menace in Japan, China, etc. to those missionaries, teachers, businessman more than a century ago, the menace of Hirohito's buck-toothed back-stabbers in World War II, the menace of Mao's millions, has been re-produced in the last decade in the fear of a Japanese economic takeover in 1992 and in the current animosity towards China. The caricature of the "black", for so long a dynamic in US domestic affairs, could animate US "civilizing missions" such as the toppling of Lumumba in the Congo (to be replaced by America's choice, Mobutu, a murderer of hundreds of

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thousands but not a Communist) and the 1990s interventions from Somalia to Haiti. The caricature of the "Arab", now bound up with the caricature of the religious fanatic, has shaped the American response in the last generation from Iran to Iraq to Libya to Afghanistan and beyond.

These are not "extreme" notions, the preserve of rednecks, backwoods survivalists, and Internet pamphleteers. One of the most "respected" academic tomes in recent years is 1996's *Clash of Civilizations* by Harvard professor (and former staff member of the National Security Council) Samuel Huntington. The following passage is typical: "Historically American national identity has been defined culturally by the heritage of Western civilization and politically by the principles of the American Creed on which Americans overwhelmingly agree: liberty, democracy, individualism, equality before the law, constitutionalism, private property. In the late twentieth century both components of American identity have come under concentrated and sustained onslaught from a small but influential number of intellectuals and publicists. In the name of multiculturalism they have attacked the identification of the United States with Western civilization, denied the existence of a common American culture, and promoted racial, ethnic, and other subnational cultural identities and groupings." For emphasis Huntington brings forth Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., that legendary historian and acolyte of the Kennedy Administration who has been at the heart of the Cold War network since its inception, and his proclamation of "ethnocentric separatists who see little in the Western heritage other than Western crimes."

Am I inverting the "total" portrayal of the Cold War, pointing to Americans as evil? Of course not. Some of my best friends are Americans. Do I believe that the American people are essentially good but coerced or misled by evil leaders? No, I can't label Harry Truman or Dwight Eisenhower or even Ronald Reagan as "evil" (OK, Nixon and Kissinger might be a different matter) --- their belief in American freedom and democracy as a beacon for the world seems genuine even as, with an ends justifies the means approach, they approved operations which curbed freedom, subverted democracy, killed the innocent.

No, it is not a question of an evil people. It is not a question of an evil system although I do think that the drive for profits and influence of American "capitalism" has had a major role in the misdeeds of US foreign policy. No, it is the cultural effect of an Americanism, an "ism" which has cloaked the notion of US superiority --- economic, technological, political, moral --- in the belief that

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American values are universal values. It is the “city upon a hill”, that famous notion proclaimed by John Winthrop in 1630, spread globally. And, for that reason, it is not a simple concept of an American “hegemony”. I do not believe that all Americans share the cultural notions I have outlined above. After all, many Americans come from those areas --- Latin America, Asia, or Africa --- that I claim have been stigmatized and blighted by US attitudes and policy.

The power of the State-private network, however, is that it can “mobilise culture”, establishing a dominant conception to which most Americans either adhere or, if they do not accept this, do so passively. CNN’s initial mantra --- “We keep America on top of the world” --- is not only important for its multiple meanings but also for the implication that it packaged the “world” for those Americans who might be interested, giving a convenient guide to “us” and “them” in the New World Order. Its relationship (and that of its fellow networks) to the Government might not be that of State mouthpieces but I find more than trivial the fact that, in the latter years of the Clinton Administration, the State Department’s chief spokesman, James Rubin, happened to be married to CNN’s chief diplomatic correspondent, Christine Aznapour. (Or that the Department of Defense’s spokesman during the Gulf War, Pete Williams, found a post-war position as defense correspondent for NBC.)

What then must we do? I suggest that we must go beyond American Studies, for we must go beyond the United States. The “special relationship” is our albatross, for it means that, however we define our academic study, our culture, our society, we do so with one eye across the Atlantic. Not precisely with one eye, but with one tunnel-visioned eye which defines “American” as USA. One tunnel-visioned eye which does not see, for example, to the North, to Canada. Canada -- - merely a country with 25 million people, a member of the G-8 economic club, a country with, as I understand it, a few historical ties to Britain, a country which has grappled with issues of “multiculturalism” as complex as those in the US. Yet at the end of last November, when Prime Minister Jean Chretien won an unprecedented third term, there it was in a few paragraphs at the bottom of an inside page of the broadsheets. Page 1? I believe it was given over to the ongoing saga of the “hanging chad” in Florida.

The “special relationship” is Britain’s albatross, for it ties our Government to US military ambitions, no matter how misguided, US environmental policy, no matter how destructive, US economics, no matter how exploitative, and it cuts off alternatives. Just last month, John Prescott, that bastion of sensitivity who

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caved in before the Americans at the Hague summit and then blamed French women for the failure, told reporters just before he begged George W. Bush for an audience, "The relationship with America is there for historical reasons - it's in the psyche of our country, this alliance Westward. As for the Europeans, well, we fought most of them!"

What must we do? We must go beyond anti-American Studies. For as satisfying as it may be to sneer at the bumbling colonials, embodied in the current yokel in the White House, as purging as it may be to rage at the Imperial Giant, it doesn't do much in the long run. Not only is it a contradiction of emotions --- if the Americans are so bumbling, how did they wind up wielding so much power --- it is a distraction. We might kick the ankles of the schoolyard bully and run away, but he'll still be there the next day. Worse, that negative conception is always going to come up against the calm if misguided assurance of British elites that this country can still provide the brains for American brawn.

We must, in short, look to being part of Europe. Initially I advocate this not as a cultural response to our US counterpart but as what Henry Kissinger would appreciate as necessary realpolitik. No one country has the resources to counter-balance US power. Instead, a European federation --- economic if not political --- is the only possible alternative at this point. From that base, it may be possible to construct new approaches to global issues --- environment, health, political and military stability --- which are not subservient to Washington's conceptions and ambitions.

I offer a slightly different historical episode, one from this country. In the Cold War world of January 1948, the Attlee Government made an important announcement. The Prime Minister told the nation on radio:

At the one end of the scale are the Communist countries; at the other end the USA stands for individual liberty in the political sphere and for the maintenance of human rights. But its economy is based on capitalism with all the problems which it presents, and with the characteristic extreme inequality of wealth in its citizens....

Great Britain, like the other countries of Western Europe, is placed geographically and from the point of view of economics and politics between these two great continental States....Ours is a philosophy in its own right. Our task is to work out a system of a new and challenging kind, which combines



individual freedom with a planned economy, democracy with social justice. This task which faces not only ourselves but all the Western democracies requires Government inspired by a new conception of society, with a dynamic policy in accord with the needs of a new situation. This was not just rhetoric. Days before the broadcast, the Cabinet, in one of the most important peacetime meetings, had discussed no less than five memoranda including global policy, policy vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, and policy on Germany and Austria. Special Government machinery, including a top-secret propaganda department which (unsurprisingly) made use of academics as well as journalists, trade unionists, and other "private" actors, was established to promote the British message.

But the moment was lost. France as well as Britain traded in the Third Force for US involvement in NATO. The war-damaged British economy could not sustain the pound; the 1949 devaluation was symbolic as well as practical recognition that the Dollar ruled. More importantly, British bowed to US pressure in the Korean War and trebled its defense expenditure, undermining domestic economic development. Most importantly, Britain watched as a "limited" Third Force took shape through the European Economic Community and, at the critical point, declined to join. Instead, it deceived itself with platitudes such as Harold Macmillan's portrayal of Britain as the Greek brains to America's Roman brawn.

I do not wish to portray "Europe" as the white knight of enlightenment. I do not wish to trade in the arrogance of an "American superiority" for an European alternative. Apart from the internal issues that must be resolved --- the position on immigration, the definition of a meaningful Social Chapter, indeed, the definition of how far "Europe" extends --- one must recognise that "Europe", with its own economic interests and actors, will not suddenly act upon altruism when addressing the complex and diverse issues now loosely identified as the offspring of "globalisation".

I do believe, however, that "Europe", probably because it is a federation of different cultures as well as different systems, does not present the same excessive response that the United States offers. "Europe" has not embodied Saddam Hussein as the Devil and Hitler incarnate, thus countries such as France and Italy (if not yet Britain, still hamstrung by the "special relationship") can press for some sanity over a sanctions policy which has caused more casualties than the worst excesses of the Iraqi leadership. "Europe" has not branded China as the next Yellow Peril, offering hope that it might defuse some of the tension

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deliberately escalated in recent months by the Bush Administration. "Europe" has not elevated North Korea to the status of Giant Rogue State, so it did not threaten (as the Clinton Administration apparently did in the mid-1990s) conventional and allegedly nuclear bombing.

The March 1954 issue of *Encounter* --- funny how that esteemed journal keeps popping up --- featured a comment by the prominent American critic Leslie Fiedler on "The Good American". Mr Fiedler was quite distressed that his stay in Italy had been marked by heated arguments. He pondered, "What was I doing, playing the earnest advocate, the patriot at bay --- I who, by temperament and on principle, have always been a critic and dissenter; and who had hoped in Europe to open a dialogue based on fairness and moderation?" Mr Fiedler did not ease his troubled soul by considering the America of 1954 but by concluding: "The self-distrust of the [European] intellectuals, their loss of faith in their function and in the value of their survival, blends with the Marxist dogma that one's own bourgeoisie (if you are a bourgeois, yourself!) is the worst enemy. Conditioned by this principled self-hatred, the European intellectual finds it hard to forgive America for being willing and able to let him live; and even harder to forgive himself for knowing that he could be, in our 'McCarthy-ridden' land, if not happy at least unhappy in his customary way. Both these resentments he takes out on a mythicised image of all he hates, which he calls America."

It is a devious and effective technique. Any criticism of the United States stems not from any flaw in the exceptional American system but in the critic: jealous Brits cling to an antiquated system, sneering French hide their hypocrisy behind "philosophy", Germans protest out of soft-hearted guilt over their past, the rest of the world turns its back on the US-proffered gifts of freedom and democracy. Remember Donald Rumsfeld's words: we are not grateful, we are not appreciative for what the Americans did in the Cold War.

I am not a "good American". But I do not hate myself, and I certainly am not willing to go on hands and knees blessing "America for being willing and able to let [me] live". Nor am I prepared any longer to trade in a moral and political position for the accolades of academic "objectivity". That objectivity is a device, one which can be and has been manipulated by the State to serve its interests rather than any "pure" notion of scholarship. If I use "objectivity" to remain passive today, I am no better than those (even Henry Kissinger) who cooperated with and then became the State in the past. If I remain passive, then I must accept the fate of the "pox Americana".

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Thank you for listening.

Scott Lucas