

The Desquamation of America

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desquamation

[də'skwə-mā'shən] ☆

See synonyms for *desquamation* on [Thesaurus.com](https://www.thesaurus.com)

n.

The shedding or peeling of the epidermis in scales.

The shedding of the outer layer of a surface.

Two tweets leapt out at me this past week and have caused me to do a deep think. Here's the first one:



There is a bit of sleight-of-hand in this one by Howard French as he is condensing three different parts of [Biden's speech](#) at the US State Department from this past Thursday into one bit-sized morsel for us to savour. Yet it is not completely dishonest.

On the 'no longer a bright line':

There's no longer a bright line between foreign and domestic policy. Every action we take in our conduct abroad, we must take with American working families in mind. Advancing a foreign policy for the middle class demands urgent focus on our domestic economic renewal.

And that's why I immediately put forth the American Rescue Plan to pull us out of this economic crisis. That's why I signed

an executive order strengthening our Buy American policies last week. And it's also why I'll work with Congress to make far-reaching investments in research and development of transformable — in transformable technologies.

These investments are going to create jobs, maintain America's competitive edge globally, and ensure all Americans share in the dividends.

Biden is tying together foreign policy with domestic economic renewal. Sounds rather good, doesn't it?

'Push back against authoritarianism':

All this matters to foreign policy, because when we host the Summit of Democracy early in my administration to rally the nations of the world to defend democracy globally, **to push back the authoritarianism's advance, we'll be a much more credible partner because of these efforts to shore up our own foundations.**

'Racial Equity':

We've taken steps to acknowledge and address systemic racism and the scourge of white supremacy in our own country. **Racial equity will not just be an issue for one department in our administration, it has to be the business of the whole of government** in all our federal policies and institutions.

All of this had me thinking about a theme that I've been hammering home lately in places where I am still allowed to speak my mind: that the USA is rapidly transforming by way of shedding its older, dying skin as the newer, more vibrant one underneath begins to see the light of day.

Europe's collective suicide by way of two catastrophic world wars left the USA as a 'last man standing', essentially untouched on the domestic front by the ravages of those conflicts. Shortly thereafter, some 50%(!) of the world's manufacturing was based in the United States of America. The 'Arsenal of Democracy' lucked out by being bordered by two oceans, with no natural predators nearby, an abundance of natural resources (or access to them, such as the famous oil deals struck with the Saudis that made US industry hum for decades), and a highly educated professional class, particularly in the sciences, which allowed them to dominate technological advances.

Stalin broke the nuclear monopoly not too long after the end of WW2, meaning that the USA faced its first existential threat. America managed to cobble together a global anti-communist coalition to defend itself from communist encroachment, both real and perceived. This was done through NATO, and through the propping up of various anti-communist regimes globally, some of which had no truck whatsoever with democracy and were rather antagonistic towards it by design.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union left the USA without an existential threat and allowed it to erect a system called Globalism, in which its proclaimed economic interests would be safeguarded not just by international institutions and conventions, but also by the spread of liberal democracy. This ‘flowering’ of liberal democracy was seen as an inevitability as communism was relegated to the dustbin of history. The USA was no longer the ‘Arsenal of Democracy’, but rather became the global hegemon.

For the first two centuries of its existence, the USA was White and Christian in composition as well as culturally and philosophically (US Blacks, although numerous, were at first slaves, then segregated, and only de-segregated later on). Historical, cultural and religious assumptions were rather common, allowing for a unity that faced only the challenge of the Civil War, which it faced down and put to rest.

The ability of the USA to assimilate so many millions of Europeans from various nations and religious denominations did, in fact, serve as a strength as it rose in power from outsider to superpower by 1945. The American Dream was real, and one was expected to conform to its contours and outlines so that they too might be able to climb the social ladder in the ‘land of opportunity’. You were an American, not a hyphenated American. Your elites were white, your faith Christian (largely Protestant), your understanding of what America was supposed to be was crystal clear.

Thanks to the [Hart-Celler Act](#) in 1965 and especially thanks to the tidal wave of social liberalism that has engulfed the USA since that decade, what it once meant to be an American has completely changed. No longer is one expected to conform to a White and Christian majority. Diversity is celebrated, differences elevated, social mores turned on their heads.

The end of mass immigration from Europe saw the rise of mass migration from Latin America, and then later from Africa and Asia. These (especially the latter two) came from cultures that didn’t have the same cultural and philosophical assumptions as earlier immigrants. New cultures from new peoples create new narratives. Demographic fissures create the space for challenging existing ruling structures.

Since 1965 we have seen the first-slow, and now rapid, collapse of Christianity in America, with Christians losing the Culture War. Christian America as a political force is now largely dead, with a redoubt only in the Supreme Court where the justices are trying to carve out exceptions to protect Christians from the tyranny of individual rights. Alongside this collapse we are witnessing the ebbing of White America not just demographically, but also philosophically, as it is now demonized as “White Supremacy” that upholds “Structural Racism”. ‘Whiteness’ is now tantamount to Original Sin.

Lastly, new elites have taken the place of the old, many of whom are from cultures that would have been considered rather alien to Americans as recently as the 1960s. East Asians, Subcontinental Asians, Middle Easterners, are all rapidly scaling the walls as they leave behind older populations, particularly Blacks of Slave Descent.

The second tweet that caught my attention:



Anne-Marie Slaughter has one hell of a resume. Former Director of Policy Planning in the Obama-era US State Department, Former Harvard Law Professor, Former Dean of Princeton University, she is as elite as it gets. More on her and her tweet below.

For well over a decade I've been having an ongoing debate with friends as to whether US policymaking elites are true believers in spreading democracy and its 'values' or whether they are cynics who use these values as a fig leaf for their national (read: economic) interests. I have long leaned towards the 'they are cynics' side as I am genetically a cynic, being of Balkan stock. Friends have taken the other side, insisting that US policymakers are not all that bright and actually do mean what they say.

The truth is no doubt somewhere in the middle, but I have a sneaking suspicion that I am increasingly wrong as time goes by. I asked Glenn Greenwald this question a few weeks ago and he suggested that at first it was largely cynical, but they have now become true believers.

This makes sense to me.

In IR (International Relations), states are rational actors because there are checks on behaviour that is irrational as irrational acts are almost always destructive. The USA is in an interesting position since the end of the Cold War as there are no real checks on its behaviour (think of this era as akin to the *Pax Romana*). It may have been taken aback by the Russian mission to save Bashar al-Assad and his government in Syria, but the cost to the USA has been minimal and easily digestible. The failure to turn Iraq into a bastion of democracy in the Arabic Middle East hasn't seen a reckoning for those who launched that misguided war and occupation. Military officials, politicians, policy planners, even journalists, have all fallen upwards as they have not been held accountable.

If one is not held accountable for their actions and is allowed to repeat them even as they continuously fail in their stated goals, it is easy to understand why one will then begin to believe their own bullshit. "Real interventionism hasn't been tried", might as well be the refrain.

And this brings me back to Anne-Marie Slaughter's tweet up above. With Biden saying that the lines between foreign and domestic policy continue to blur, and with the USA the global hegemon, why shouldn't domestic crusades become international ones? After all, that is what is demanded by consistency. Biden is kicking into high gear the internal transformation of America from a White and Christian state into a multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and secular global empire. Racism is the greatest sin of this new theology-ideology and slavery its Original Sin. And if its values are universal, then they must be imposed on the rest of the globe, either through diplomacy, coercion, or violence.

This is the ideological state. The Prime Directive of the USA was "The Business of America is Business" for ages. Pure, undistilled Mercantilism. In recent days I've had a discussion with online friends as to when the USA became mercantilist. Most suggested that it was mercantilist from its origins, with others suggesting that it required the defeat of the Agrarian South by the Industrial North for it to be triumphant. Regardless of which is the correct answer, there is no doubt that the USA was a mercantilist power (until free trade orthodoxy) for which ideology took a back seat.

The Cold War era was one of anti-communism, but that is a negation of an ideology. Now the USA has found a new religious fervour in its post-Christian character, a fervour that is fanatical and that serves its imperial interests rather well. One can't help but think back to the early days of Bolshevism, particularly that of Lenin and Trotsky, in which communist revolution was 'inevitable'.

Is the USA completing this transformation?

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