

## September 11, ten years later

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*Folha de S. Paulo*, September 12, 2011

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September 11, 2001 may remain in the history of the United States as the date of the end of the American empire, in much the same way as the First World War marked the end of the last two *classical* empires (the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire), and World War II marked the end of the greatest *industrial* empire, already an outcome of the capitalist revolution: the British Empire. It was the date of a double tragedy for the United States. The classical empires and even the modern British empire existed in a time when it was still “legitimate” to have empires. I still remember when we were children, and my mother showed us the world map, and my brother admired the large British domains, always painted in red, whereas I supported the French Empire, painted in green. Who supports today the decaying American empire?

Imperialism ceased to have social legitimacy during World War II. Afterwards, dominated people rebelled and achieved independence, because the cost of keeping the empires became higher than the benefits of exploiting them. And also because, once the political domination ended, exploitation did not need to end: it could now be disguised, through the association with local corrupt elites. And that became the policy of the United States and of the old imperial powers – Great Britain and France. The domination that was achieved through commerce is now enforced through the foreign indebtedness of developing countries, followed by pressures and recommendations that are against their national interests.

This type of disguised imperial domination became even less legitimate when the imperial wars in Iraq and Afghanistan disclosed an open imperialism, that was however unable to interrupt the Western loss of power in view of the development of the dynamic Asian countries. The two wars were “successful” because they established puppet governments, but those wars were in fact a defeat, given the huge costs in lives (more than 130 thousand lives) and in dollars (around US\$4 trillion, according to the estimates of the Brown project) and the rejection they caused in the Arab people and in the public opinion worldwide.

It seems that the United States reached a dead end. Its people elected four years ago a progressive president, but this president does not have support in the American society to change foreign policy. The interest of American enterprises is still a criterion for intervening in developing countries, but the primary criterion remains “national security”. A vague concept, but that is the more powerful the more fearful are American citizens – a fear that is paradoxically strong in a society as strong as the United States, and that justifies everything in the name of national security.

The increasing weakening of the United States favors peripheral countries such as Brazil, since it enables them to gain more autonomy. But I cannot help being concerned for the great American country. After all, it has a very large amount of individuals, knowledge, values, culture – a huge world heritage. I do not believe that it is worth praying for them, but we should support the many Americans who become aware of American decadence and are indignant at the outdated imperialism that is one of its causes.