



The Decline of American Power: The U.S. in a Chaotic World

Immanuel Wallerstein

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The United States in decline? Its admirers and detractors alike claim the opposite: that America is now in a position of unprecedented global supremacy. But in fact, Immanuel Wallerstein argues, a more nuanced evaluation of recent history reveals that America has been fading as a global power since the end of the Vietnam War, and its response to the terrorist attacks of September 11 looks certain to hasten that decline. In this provocative collection, the visionary originator of world-systems analysis and the most innovative social scientist of his generation turns a practiced analytical eye to the turbulent beginnings of the 21st century. Touching on globalization, Islam, racism, democracy, intellectuals, and the state of the Left, Wallerstein upends conventional wisdom to produce a clear-eyed—and troubling—assessment of the crumbling international order.

The Decline of American Power: The U.S. in a Chaotic World Details

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From Reader Review The Decline of American Power: The U.S. in a Chaotic World for online ebook

Matthew says

We're caught in a trap, I can't walk out..

Um actually the only complaint I have about Wallerstein is that many of his books harp on his same (giant) analysis. Capitalism has run out of frontier, the proletarianization of the populace, the coming bifurcation and likely emergence of a new global system. He gets the fifth point for covering the one thing that Negri/Hardt got right in Empire, the material contextualization of postmodernism, but in a much clearer and explicit way.

David says

In many academic circles Wallerstein is considered passé, not quite as much as, say, Levi-Strauss, but still a creature of the past. It shows the stupidity of academic fashion because the man keeps churning out brilliant new ideas which have largely gone unnoticed even in radical academic debates, except in the relatively restricted world of world-systems analysis itself, where of course he is the Grand Old Man and always will be. In the '90s, he was responding to the hegemony of the pomo turn after the fall of the Soviet bloc by producing a really brilliant new theory of world revolutions which has been largely ignored. In this one, he pulls off two feats. First of all, he manages to make himself one of the few academics who correctly predicted the economic crash of 2008 - like Dean Baker (coming from a different, neo-Keynesian, perspective) he noted that logically, the US faces three bubbles, each of which must necessarily burst: the tech bubble (which already had), the 8 trillion dollar housing bubble (which as we all know did in 2008, but had not at the time of writing) and then the dollar bubble, based on imperial seigniorage (the fact that as a world empire the US provides the world currency, and attains huge economic advantages from this.) That one hasn't burst yet but when it does it's hard to see how it won't be curtains for the US empire.

His second brilliant point: the real secret of neoliberalism, which I haven't seen elsewhere anywhere. US power, he explains, must decline because US productivity is so much lower than that of our rival centers of industrial production in Europe and East Asia. This seems startling because on paper US productivity is extremely high, but that's just because we cook the books, just counting wage laborers - who are exploited here like nowhere else in this respect - but never white color salaried workers. In fact, Wallerstein argues, in a delightfully provocative but also ultimately perfectly common-sensical argument, US executives in particular are the least efficient and least productive in the world: it takes 3 US executives to do what one Chinese or even French one can do, and each one has to be paid much, much more. As a result we are burdened with an unproductive largely parasitical class that's pulling us down. One of the points of the US attempt to impose the neo-liberal economic model on other parts of the world was a vain effort to force other countries to create a similar class of overpaid parasites to slow down their economic advantages, and delay their inevitable overtaking us.

The long-term prospect? I'm not sure if it's in the book, but Wallerstein suspects over the next generation or two, East Asia will overcome its major divisions and achieve global hegemony, reducing the US, slowly and subtly, to the role of military enforcer for East Asian capital. The EU will be forced to turn to Russia to provide a similar role - provider of resources and military enforcer. That is, if capitalism endures, which, he

is always careful to point out, is by no means guaranteed.

Harper says

The author is an academic, and a theorist. So steer away from this book if you get intimidated by jargon. However it's a really good examination of political and economic power in the global marketplace through the lens of systems theory. The title doesn't do it justice - the subject matter is a lot broader than just US hegemonic power. I really need to read this again, because I read it for class during a busy semester and just caught the most relevant points.

Sarah says

right title, wrong cover and wrong title on cover

Dana says

Na rozdiel od ?alšieho ?avicového intelektuála, Baumana, je Wallersteinovi rozumie?. A to je super, lebo z tejto zbierky esejí som sa tak toho ve?a dozvedela. Ani nie tak o USA, ako o celej planéte, pretože o Štáty sa tátó kniha iba štrajchne. V skuto?nosti je skôr o tzv. "svetosystéme", ?o je Wallersteinov termín pre to, ?o si možno predstavíte pod globalizáciou. Immanuel má skvelú schopnos? pozrie? sa na spletité planetárne vz?ahy z dia?ky, vytiahnu? to najpodstatnejšie a popísia? tak, ?o sa deje.

Ke?že ide o pozbierané eseje, niektoré jeho myšlienky sa opakujú, ?o ?asom za?ne liez? na nervy (napríklad bifurkácia svetosystému). Preto dávam štyri hviezdice. A možno aj kvôli jemne zavádzajúcemu názvu knihy, lebo o úpadku USA sa tu toho dozvieme menej, než s?ubuje.

Kristin says

This book is dense - I'll pick it up again after the holidays. I'm not a poli sci specialist, but Wallerstein's analysis is intriguing, especially in light of the economic meltdown this fall (though my opinion is that the meltdown was caused by a lack of confidence). I give it a 4 because of its density, if that is fair - it's an academic book.

Jonathan says

read for sociology class in college, but kept it because of its accurate portrayal of our precarious position "on top" and recommendations for how to deal with our declining power in that position.

Benjamin Thomas Sutpen says

<http://sensemania.blogspot.com/2008/0...>

Matt says

A collection of essays on America's geopolitical status and, as the name suggests, its decline that international scheme. This is a book I'd dearly love to give more attention to at another time, but as my interests are elsewhere right now I found it a chore and not nearly rewarding enough to finish completely.
