

We Americans Misread Our Enemies  
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We are the global giant who never seems to realize our own strength. Unlike so many others around the world who love to boast about how powerful they are, we almost never do this. Think about the Nazi goose-stepping marches in the 1930s, huge swastika flags unfurled, announcing to the world their intentions. Think about the annual Soviet May Day parades with marching Red Armies, tanks, displays of missiles, and aircraft in formation overhead.

These were the warlike adversaries that we thought could take over the world and were a real threat to us. The Nazi Thousand-Year Reich, however, became a mountain of rubble by 1945, having made the mistake of taking us (yes, indolent, unmilitary America) on. (Soviet Russia and Britain were no walk in the park either.)

Fascist Japan swallowed up the Asian colonies of Britain, Netherlands, and American Philippines in a flash and began devouring giant China. They woke sleeping America with an attack on Pearl Harbor, nearly destroying our Pacific Fleet, but that awakening was a huge mistake. Four years later, Japan was a smoldering heap.

We went into a great panic when the Soviet Union began to challenge us as the sole superpower. We actually thought they might take over the world.

When Japan became an economic giant, we thought they would soon clean our clock! They would overcome our economy. We thought the same about the Saudis and their enormous oil wealth. Next came the panic about the Chinese Miracle. Add to that the European Union. Talking Heads panicked that both would demolish America and relegate us to second class status.

When the economic panics proved silly, we turned to military ones. Iraq suddenly loomed enormous as a threat to us, a threat so large that we had to go to war! Now, the same Jeremiahs who sold us that war are preaching a war with Iran, for the same reason: that somehow, this third-rate Middle Eastern Islamic Republic will soon be able to send a nuclear bomb with an intercontinental missile that can hit the United States! Wow!

What is the matter with us that we get into such panics all the time? Every one of these predictions has been wrong! The Nazis were a menace and an alliance of the US, Britain, and the Soviet Union properly took them out. It was inevitable that they would fall, and their demise was already in the works internally even before the war began.

The dangerous Soviet Union, armed with nuclear weapons, also fell of its own weight in due time. Our patient policy of containment, proxy wars (some of them unnecessary), and intelligence, ultimately paid off.

Iraq was a mistake. Not taking out a bad dictator, but the long-term American policy of trying to plant democracies where they cannot take root. We are starting to see this; at least President Obama understands the folly of this policy and has resisted the hysteria to engage where panic leads.

Iran, he says, has a nasty government. It is a middling power that only has the ability to create trouble where opportunity permits. It has a young population eager to rejoin the modern world and a middle class ready for commercial opening. The only opposition to the Iran deal in Iran are the hard liners; they have the most to lose---their stranglehold.

The US is not the only country that sometimes does not know its own strength. Israel is another one. While Netanyahu imagines Iran to be ten feet tall, his own Security people see it for what it is: a country with more problems than advantages. For all of Iran's big talk and chest beating in their neighborhood, they have a terrible economy that even the unfreezing of their money will not immediately help. Their petroleum infrastructure needs an infusion of retrofitting right now. The country has a water crisis that dwarfs that of California. And their birthrate is plummeting. And that's just for starts.

Has anyone asked: Why would they lob a missile at us----or at Israel? What would they expect back?

679 words

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