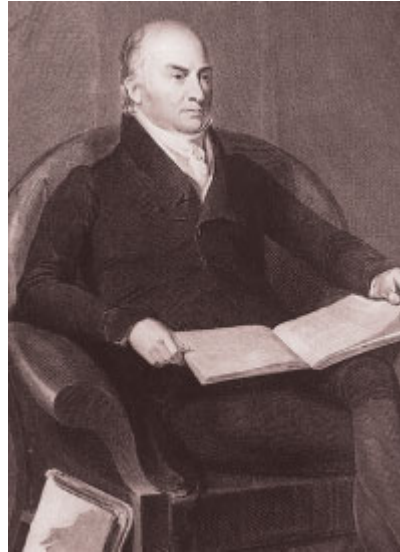




A July 4 Warning Against Empire

For America, said Adams, with the same voice by which it spoke itself into existence, similarly held forth to other lands the “hand of honest friendship, of equal freedom, of generous reciprocity. She has uniformly spoken among them, though often to heedless and often to disdainful ears, the language of equal liberty, of equal justice and of equal rights. She has in the lapse of nearly half a century, without a single exception, respected the independence of other nations while asserting and maintaining our own.”



Alas, respecting the independence of other nations has not been the hallmark of American foreign policy in the post-World War II era, and even less so in the 20 years since the demise of the Soviet Union. As for our own independence, we have been surrendering it, piece by piece, to the United Nations, to the World Bank, to the International Monetary Fund, and to myriad other international organizations we have created to perpetuate our dependence on foreign rulers, foreign alliances, and foreign capital to keep our nation going. We have all but made of America a debtors’ prison, enslaving future generations with a level of debt that will force them to choose between lives of crushing poverty or national bankruptcy and a stain on the honor of the United States of America that will last for decades, perhaps centuries, possibly forever. Were they honest, the “progressives” in American political life would admit they regard national sovereignty as an antiquated concept. Their allegiance is to their capital, and the capital to which they pledge allegiance is not Washington, D.C., or any of our state capitals, but the capital of accumulated wealth that will become greater as the economies of nations go under. There will, in the end, be one flag, one nation, one currency. And one set of rulers over all. This was not the kind of republic John Quincy Adams saluted on July 4, 1821.

Nor would Adams be taken in by the claims of the United States as world liberator, set out upon the lands and seas of the world to dethrone tyrants, capture flags, and set the captives free. “Wherever the standard of freedom and Independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be,” Adams said. Prayers are not to be dismissed nor neglected in this age of “enlightenment.” More things are wrought by prayer, Tennyson said, than the world has dreamed of.

“But,” Adams continued in tribute to his blessed America, “she goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy.” In other words, America has not as her mission to bring “regime change” to lands other than her own — not even in lands where the people are captive to unspeakable tyrants. For America, said Adams, “is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own. She will commend the general cause by the countenance of her voice and benignant sympathy of her example.” Long before Americans were compelled to don blue helmets and sent to fight under the banner of the United Nations, the America of John Quincy Adams knew that “by once enlisting under banners other than her own, were they even banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on July 4, 2011

individual avarice, envy and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom.”
Sound familiar?

How often in the past half-century has America, fighting under standards other than her own, been drawn into foreign wars “beyond the power of extrication,” as Adams warned? “The fundamental maxims of her policy would insensibly change from liberty to force,” Adams foresaw. “She might become the dictatress of the world. She would no longer be the ruler of her own spirit.”

The vision John Quincy Adams articulated in 1821 is still the right road map for America. Her “glory is not dominion, but liberty. Her march is the march of the mind. She has a spear and a shield; but the motto upon her shield is Freedom, Independence, Peace. This has been her Declaration: this has been, as far as her necessary intercourse with the rest of mankind would permit, her practice.”

The siren song beckons America toward the broad road that leads to the graveyard of empires. We would do well to heed voices of the past that urge us to follow the paths of our forebears. Concerning the lure of empire, there is a simple and faithful warning:

Don't go there!



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