

America vs. Britain: Republic vs. Empire

The departure of George W. Bush from the Presidency of the United States provides an auspicious time for Americans to reacquaint themselves with the fundamental principles of our republic, currently so tainted by eight years of disaster. Whether this lesson can be relearned, rapidly, may well determine the future of the planet.

Working from the mission set forth by the Massachusetts Bay Colony founders, and the link between them and the Founding Father—Benjamin Franklin—John Quincy Adams played the crucial role in defining our nation’s republican character, especially in foreign policy. His concept, based on the principles laid out in the Declaration of Independence, defined our nation’s approach to foreign relations as the search for a “community of principle” among sovereign nation-states, when he served as Secretary of State and President.

Specifically included as foundations for such relations were the anti-colonial principle, and the anti-entanglement principle.

Adams devoted his Fourth of July speech in 1821 to outlining these principles, in the context of the universal significance of the American Revolution itself:

“In a conflict [of] seven years, the history of the war by which you maintained that Declaration, became the history of the civilized world. . . . It was the first solemn declaration by a nation of the only *legitimate* foundation of civil government. It was the cornerstone of a new fabric, destined to cover the surface of the globe. It demolished at a stroke, the lawfulness of all governments founded upon conquest. It swept away all the rubbish of accumulated centuries of servitude. From the day of this Declaration, the people of North America were no longer the fragment of a distant

empire, imploring justice and mercy from an inexorable master in another hemisphere. . . . They were a *nation*, asserting as of right, and maintaining by war, its own existence. A nation was born in a day. . . . It stands, and must for ever stand, alone, a beacon on the summit of the mountain, to which all the inhabitants of the earth may turn their eyes for a genial and saving light . . . a light of salvation and redemption to the oppressed.”

Adams went on to argue that colonial establishments “are incompatible with the essential character of our institutions,” and concluded “that great colonial establishments are engines of wrong, and that in the progress of social improvement it will be the duty of the human family to abolish them, as they are now endeavoring to abolish the slave trade.”

Given these principles, it is no wonder that Adams rejected the proposal of the duplicitous British Prime Minister George Canning for an alliance between the U.S. and Britain on South America, on the basis that “Britain and America . . . would not be bound by a permanent community of principle.” Instead, Adams insisted that the U.S. ally with its southern neighbors on the basis of upholding the republican principle against monarchy, the American System against Europe, and mutually beneficial treaties of commerce and amity.

It was the tradition of John Quincy Adams’ “community of principle” that Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and John F. Kennedy picked up, to the benefit of both the United States, and the planet as a whole. Today, it is of the utmost urgency that American patriots, most especially President Obama, refamiliarize themselves with this noble mission for the United States. It’s time the Empire was destroyed, once and for all.