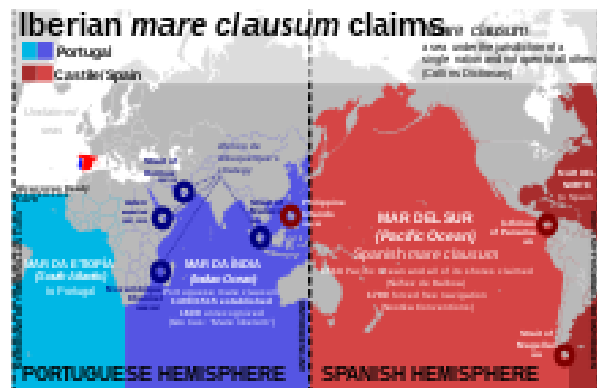


IRON HEMLINE ON THE SAND

From the day I was born (in 1947) until the protracted fall of the Soviet system (1989 to 1991), my world appeared to be divided by an “Iron Curtain” into two incompatible halves: the “Free World” or West –led by the U.S.A.– and the Communist East –led by the U.S.S.R. The struggle between these two halves of a schizoid world was known as the “Cold War” –though it got pretty hot and bloody in multiple surrogate wars carried out in poorer, peripheral countries –euphemistically known as the “Third World.”

The first recorded use of the term “iron curtain” came in a May 12th 1945 telegram British P.M. Churchill sent to President Truman regarding his concern about Soviet actions, stating “...[a]n iron curtain is drawn down upon their front. We do not know what is going on behind.” He repeated it in another telegram to Truman on June 4th of the same year, mentioning “...the descent of an iron curtain between us and everything to the eastward...” and in a House of Commons speech on August 16th, stating “...it is not impossible that tragedy on a prodigious scale is unfolding itself behind the iron curtain which at the moment divides Europe in twain.” *

Of course, this was not the first time that the world was “halved” by superpowers, claiming to own whole continents and oceans by right of imperial conquest. A startling example is the Treaty of Tordesillas, signed on June 7th 1494, which divided the newly discovered lands outside Europe between the Kingdom of Portugal and the Crown of Castile (Spain), along a meridian 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde islands, off the west coast of



Africa. All the lands to the east would belong to Portugal, and all the lands to the west to Castile –modifying an earlier bull by Pope Alexander VI. The treaty was signed by Spain on July 2nd 1494, and by Portugal on September 5th 1494. The other side of the world was divided a few decades later by the Treaty of Zaragoza, signed on April 22nd 1529. ** Indeed, we could certainly go back to ancient times to find demarcation lines drawn on maps claiming what territory belonged to, say Imperial Rome as opposed to the Carthaginian Empire or, say between Alexandrian Macedonia and Babylon in 323 B.C.

The main thesis of this essay is: That for the ruler of any state to decide to conquer the world, is an irrational chimera, and therefore, that it could never have been accomplished before, and should therefore never be undertaken in the future.

I will now present my arguments:

1. The “world” is an illusion of the human mind. As German philosopher Markus Gabriel asserts in his book *Why the World Does not Exist* (ed. by Polity, 2015): “...the world cannot exist at all, because it is not found in the world. For, as we are thinking about the world, this is only a very small event in the world.” ***

(Nota Bene: Of course, this idea is not new, as we find it in the Hindu philosophical concept of *māyā* –the cosmic illusion that the phenomenal world is real– and in the Mahayana Buddhist concept of *Śūnyatā* –that the world is empty of meaning.)

Corollary 1.1: Therefore, no individual human being can really have a “worldview,” because to do so, he or she would have to be instantaneously conscious of all human events happening everywhere on planet Earth (i.e., the “world”) at the same exact time and at all levels (i.e., socially, politically, economically, industrially, culturally and personally) as they are being perceived and judged simultaneously by each and every other human being, in each and every nation.

Corollary 1.1.1: No individual human being can really have a true and accurate conception of his or her “nation,” (or of her or his “town,” or immediate “community,” for that matter), as these space/time reference-framed loci are in a constant state of change.

2: No ruler of any contemporary state, no matter how powerful and/or well-informed, can ever conquer any new territory for any length of time without negative consequences undermining his or her original objective.

Corollary 2.1: Therefore, “world conquest” is an insane aberration of the human mind not found in the mental apparatus of any other species on this planet.

3. It is evident that neither Spain nor Portugal rules the whole world today. The same can be said for Rome, Carthage, Babylon, the Third Reich or the Empire of Japan.

4. The enormous scale of devastation and human suffering caused by all the megalomaniacal attempts at conquering the world since the birth of civilization, is incalculable. Just since World War II, more than 65 million people have died due to war-related causes. This includes both military personnel and civilians. The estimates vary, but military deaths are believed to be between 21 million and 25.5 million, while civilian deaths include those from war crimes, famine, and disease. ****

In conclusion, some readers might think this philosophical approach of mine to the critique of world conquest is a bit insane. But I would retort that, as Einstein once said: “The definition of insanity is doing the same experiment and expecting different results.” Which is what wannabe world conquerors keep on doing again and again.

SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI.

Written by © Pascual Delgado, July 1st 2024.

* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron_Curtain

** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Tordesillas

*** https://www.harvard.com/book/why_the_world_does_not_exist/

**** <http://www.bing.com/search?q=how%20many%peoplediedbywarsinceww2>