

Patriotism vs. Jingoism

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Hollywood, MD - Independence Day has arrived in the form of a three-day weekend. The United States of America celebrates its 240th birthday Monday, July 4.

The Ottoman Empire—the powerful Turkish state—existed for over 620 years. The Holy Roman Empire was in existence for over 10 centuries. So what, you say? Well, the lengths of those entities easily top the number of years the United States of America has been in existence. In many ways we're still a kid. The other reason it's important to keep those two empires in mind is that although both were around a long time, neither exists today. Arguably, because we have marginalized the learning of world history, a relatively few individuals living today even know they ever existed. We should never take for granted that our democracy will always exist. In fact, our republic, while certainly not frail, is quite fragile.

While the enthusiasm of being American is obvious, especially around Independence Day, all the flag-waving, saluting, marching, fireworks and singing isn't going to spark the self-perpetuation of our special empire of freedom. Values are a whole lot more important than pageantry. Deeds matter a great deal more than words.

The signers of the Declaration of Independence had values and many of them sacrificed their means and comfort to do something daring. Their collective accomplishment continued long after their lives were over. As Americans we can best honor what they did by emulating them. Each of us, by our actions, should strive to accomplish something that will outlive us for many years to come.

There's nothing wrong with progress or capitalism or political ambition. There is absolutely nothing inappropriate about wanting to be the number one nation in everything that matters—education, energy, commerce, economics, science, military strength, medicine, athletics and all things competitive. But remember it was the conquer-at-all-costs mindset that proved to be the undoing of many empires of the past.

What could be a better blessing from God for a nation so young than to celebrate another birthday! Happy birthday, America! May all our readers have a wonderful Independence Day Weekend!

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