

Stopping Bernie

by Bill Herbst

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I hate the American Empire. I've felt this way for the bulk of my life. My animus toward the Empire began in the mid-1960s and has grown steadily over time. Now, in old age, my rejection of the Empire has blossomed into passionate loathing. This places me far from the center of the bell curve and seriously at odds with the majority of Americans who love the Empire, or, at the very least, accept it without many reservations. Millions of Americans serve the Empire, either actively or passively. I don't, although, like all of us in this country, I am complicit just by being an American and living here. I reap some of the fruits of the Empire's spoils and suffer some of its consequences as well. As a result of my open hostility to the Empire, I am among those people deemed radical by the mainstream media — an America-hater. If Donald Trump knew of my existence, he'd tweet that I'm a despicable traitor and a terrible person. Actually, though, I love America. I just hate the Empire.

The American Empire is yet another chapter in a long and unbroken succession of imperial societies that arose, flourished, and eventually fell over the history of civilization. Oh sure, Americans tell ourselves that our Empire is different, that we're the Good Guys, and that our ideals of freedom and justice distinguish us from Rome, the Ottoman Turks, or the Dynasties of China and Egypt. But this is true only to the most limited extent. Despite the waxing and waning oscillations of fervent creedal passion, America has never actually lived up to our ideals — not even close — and those ideals have served most often as cover veneer and philosophical justification for our more primal, rapacious motivations toward power, wealth, domination, and control.

When in decline and approaching collapse, all empires go insane. Their societies and cultures become increasingly crazy. As they fail, empires resort to more egregious attempts to assert their power, taking risks that in earlier, more vital phases of the same empire would have been regarded as foolhardy. The closer to collapse, the more extreme these misadventures become. The empire not only suffers defeats from its external enemies, it begins to eat its own citizens. This is happening in America now. Our brief reign as the world's superpower, not even a single century in duration but spectacular nonetheless, is waning rapidly. And we are going mad as it unravels. This madness isn't something new. It emerges from our own inner shadow that was previously kept, if not hidden, at least in check by social cohesion. As coherence falters, however, the shadow erupts, like volcanic magma breaking through a lava dome or pre-shocks to an earthquake.

Questions I have grappled with for decades include: *Can the American Empire be reformed and at least partially redeemed? Is it possible that our maturing as a society might stave off collapse and the suffering that comes with it?* My answers have historically been *maybe*, or, less optimistically, *we'll see*. Over the first two decades of this century, however, America has moved into decline more obviously, with the accompanying unwise policies and increasing social insanity.

It now appears to me unlikely that the empire can be reformed or redeemed. Collapse seems inevitable and may be the only road forward. I wish that were not my conclusion, but all the evidence I trust (which is not *all* the evidence, only that portion I see as valid and reliable) lines up in that direction.

That said, here we are, in another Presidential election campaign. I'm not optimistic about the outcome, whatever it might be, for we are in a very dark and disturbed time where the unthinkable is possible. But, out of all the Democratic candidates who might oppose Donald Trump, I regard Bernie Sanders as the best fit to the astrology of the zeitgeist in 2020.

Not that I am "all in" for Bernie. I'm not. He's another old white guy, which I'm not in favor of. Bernie doesn't hate the American Empire, only some parts of it. As a Congressional Representative for 16 years and a Senator for 14, he's been pretty much all in for the military-industrial complex. That disappoints me. In other ways, however, Sanders and I see eye-to-eye in seeking to limit corporate domination, Big Money in politics, and extreme wealth inequality. Bernie says that a political revolution is necessary to correct our course, something more substantial than Obama's "Hope and Change." He also holds that this revolution must be based on a grassroots movement of the American people from the ground up rather than the top down. I agree with both assumptions.

Bernie emerged in 2016 as a foil to Hillary Clinton, and the other side of Donald Trump's embrace of disaffection and anger at how things were. Hillary got the Democratic nomination, but, in the wake of Trump's unexpected victory, Bernie continued building his organization to run again this time. No longer an upstart challenger, he's now leading the pack with millions of committed supporters.

A formidable array of Americans opposes Bernie. This includes institutionalists, many in the managerial class who actually run and maintain the day-to-day business of America, the so-called liberal mainstream corporate media (CNN, MSNBC, New York Times, Washington Post, etc.), and most of the permanent professional political class within the DNC (acronym for the Democratic National Committee, the principal campaign and fund-raising organization affiliated with the Democratic Party). Anyone who supports the status quo is against Bernie.

A slew of narratives have been launched into the zeitgeist, especially in the mainstream media, about why Bernie can't beat Trump and shouldn't get the nomination. He's too radical. He's a socialist. His support has a ceiling. He would cost the Democrats both the House and Senate. The Dems need a moderate centrist, not a polarizing figure. Even if by some miracle Bernie were elected, he couldn't actually deliver any of the changes he talks about. I could respond to

each of these objections, but I don't feel a need to do so. My general reply is that all these narratives aren't reality. They're stories — essentially marketing — designed to shape public opinion by manipulation. Repeat the narratives often enough, and people will believe them.

Hillary Clinton recently stated in an interview *that "Nobody likes [Bernie], nobody wants to work with him, he got nothing done."* That's probably true if she meant the above-named groups. Curiously (or perhaps not-so-curiously), the only people who like Bernie are regular American voters, and they apparently like him a lot, judging by his performance in Iowa, New Hampshire, and Nevada.

Perhaps the South Carolina and Super Tuesday primaries will derail the Bernie train and bring him crashing back to earth, which is the hope of those who love the Empire. We'll know soon enough.

If Bernie overcomes the powerful forces working against him, wins the Democratic nomination, and convinces Stacey Abrams to be his running mate for Vice President, I think he's got a shot at winning. That may sound uncertain, and it is. What I'm sure of, however, is that "centrism" and "moderation" are guaranteed losers for the Dems. Unity among all Americans is a forlorn dream, simply impossible at this point. We are in a war, we have to win, and the only viable strategies are no-holds-barred, go-for-the-jugular, and take-no-prisoners. His hour in the sun might be brief, but Bernie Sanders is our best George Patton.

For those of my readers who are astrologically skilled, Bernie Sanders' natal chart and current long-term transits are below. Depending on how events unfold, I may write more about Sanders' astrology in the months ahead.

Bernie Sanders
 Natal Chart
 Monday, September 8, 1941
 12:27:00 PM EDT
 New York, New York
 Tropical Placidus True Node

