

The Empire That Feared Itself

by Elias Marrow

Fear is a stabilizer. Not because it is true—but because it is effective.

Every durable power learns this eventually: people are easier to govern when they are afraid of something external. Fear compresses complexity. It simplifies moral questions. It converts uncertainty into obedience. And once installed, it becomes self-sustaining—no longer requiring evidence, only repetition.

The United States did not become powerful by accident. Geography, industrial scale, oceans as moats, and unmatched military capacity insulated it from the historical forces that ended empires elsewhere. It is, by any sober strategic definition, secure. Overwhelmingly so. And yet it speaks as if it is perpetually one step from annihilation.

That contradiction is not a mistake. It is the system working as designed.

An existential threat is not a vague danger or an abstract rivalry. It is a force capable of ending a nation's continuity—its people, its institutions, its ability to recover. For the United States, no such external threat exists.

There is no army that can reach its shores in force. No coalition capable of sustaining an invasion. No rational state actor that benefits from attacking it. Even the most extreme scenario—total nuclear war—offers no victor, only mutual extinction. Deterrence holds not because leaders are moral, but because they are self-interested.

Fear stabilizes power by collapsing debate, redirecting blame, and justifying permanence. Emergency becomes normal. War becomes policy. Peace becomes suspicious.

War is not merely policy—it is an industry. Permanent readiness demands permanent spending. Permanent spending demands permanent enemies. Peace threatens profit. Conflict sustains relevance. Resolution is unnecessary; continuation is enough.

Aggression is rebranded as defense. Power projection becomes “security.” Intervention becomes “stability.” Resistance becomes “terror.” Language is laundered until cause and effect reverse places.

The United States speaks like a victim while acting as an initiator. It claims fear while projecting force. It warns of danger while manufacturing exposure.

Strip away the rhetoric and symbols. What remains is simple:

The United States faces no true existential threat from external aggression. It is not surrounded. It is not vulnerable. It is not on the brink.

It is the aggressor playing victim. The white washer of words.

War persists not because it is necessary—but because it is lucrative. Because fear is stabilizing. Because peace would require honesty.

And honesty is far more dangerous to power than any foreign enemy.