

The Great Withdrawal

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An extraordinary thing happened this week: Taro Kono, Japan's Defense Minister, got up and [announced](#) that the Japanese government would be halting its plan to deploy a new, multi-billion dollar missile defense system. Tokyo had committed itself to buy the Aegis Ashore system from the fine folks at [Lockheed Martin](#) back in 2017, a.k.a. the height of the hysteria over North Korea's missile provocations. But Kono has put the plans "on hold" indefinitely, citing budget and schedule overruns.

What makes this announcement so unusual is that it took *everyone* by surprise. Not just the governors of the prefectures where the system was to be sited—who, according to [Kyodo News](#) were only informed about the change in plans in a last-minute phone call—but even the US government, which [Nikkei Asian Review reports](#) was not informed of the decision ahead of time.

What? Japan scrapping a multi-billion dollar defense deal with a key US contractor without warning? What's going on here?

To those who don't follow geopolitics and military matters in the Asia-Pacific, this may not sound like the most extraordinary thing to happen in 2020—and, to be fair, given the year we're living through perhaps it isn't. But the Japan-US military alliance has been the backbone of the security order in the Asia-Pacific since the end of the Second World War, and the idea of Japan making such a monumental decision unilaterally without even informing their American

counterparts beforehand would have been unthinkable even a few years ago. Yet here we are.

In fact, it's not just the Asia-Pacific. From Europe to the Middle East to South America, there is an extraordinary change that is taking place, one that is seeing US power and influence waning around the world. So is the post-WWII era of "[Pax Americana](#)" truly over? And, if so, what does that mean for the future of global geopolitics?

To better understand this issue, let's take a look at just a few of the incredible stories slipping under the radar as Americans concern themselves with arguing about [pancake syrup characters](#).

- Earlier this month Trump signed off on a plan to [withdraw 9,500 American troops](#) from bases in Germany, a move that would reduce the current American deployment in the country by nearly one-third.
- After the Iraqi parliament's [passage of a resolution](#) calling on the government to expel US forces from the country earlier this year, the US State Department published a [statement](#) this month affirming its commitment to withdraw troops from Iraq.
- The US is actually keeping its promise to draw down troops in Afghanistan, with Washington having [met its commitment](#) to reduce American forces stationed in the country to 8,600 a month ahead of schedule.

Yes, it seems that Uncle Sam is finally taking the old refrain of "[Yankee Go Home!](#)" to heart.

And why not? The United States is experiencing incredible internal turmoil right now—from the bitter political divide over the response to the coronavirus scamdemic to the outright political warfare that has erupted between left and right in this era of Russiagate and Fake News and Orange Man Bad to the latest flare ups on the streets with the Black Lives Matter

and police brutality protests. Heck, there's a self declared Autonomous Zone "operating" (in the loosest sense of the word) in the heart of one of the country's major urban centers right now. It only makes sense that America is turning inward at the moment and devoting less of its attention to the problem of projecting its will around the world, doesn't it?

Of course that also means that the recalling of troops from around the world has an ominous undertone to it. After all, we've just spent the last few months under the lingering specter of [medical martial law](#). In the past few weeks, that prospect has been replaced with the threat of [martial law to quell the protests](#). But once the [second wave narrative](#) takes full effect, it's very possible that half of America will be clamoring for medical martial law and the other half will be clamoring for anti-protest martial law. Whatever the case, it's darn lucky that all those troops will be returning from their overseas deployments, isn't it?

But the withdrawal of US troops around the globe isn't necessarily a withdrawal by choice. As I noted in [this week's edition](#) of New World Next Week, the Trump administration's attempts to "negotiate" with North Korea Washington-style—i.e., by pointing a loaded gun to their head and telling them to disarm—has blown up in their face, with tensions on the Korean peninsula arguably even worse than they were before the much-ballyhooed Trump-Kim summit was even held.

And, as I have [noted in these pages](#) in recent weeks, the mighty, world-conquering superpower that is the United States of America can't pull off a simple [regime change operation in Venezuela](#), or even offer to mediate the India-China border dispute without being [laughed off](#) by [both powers](#).

And now even Japan, a US vassal state in all but name, is brushing Uncle Sam and his military contractor vultures aside without even the nicety of a phone call to warn him beforehand.

For anyone who has been paying attention to global geopolitics over the past 75 years, these are remarkable times. To the conspiracy realists who have long noted that the Old World Order could never become the New World Order without the controlled demolition of America's economic and military might, it comes as no surprise. Regardless, the end of an empire and the shift over to a new system are the types of world-historical moments that the history books are written about ([by the winners](#), of course).

And while no one of these stories itself amounts to an End of the Empire moment, taken together they point definitively to the tectonic change that is coming. If you thought 2020 has been a rollercoaster ride, you ain't seen nothin' yet . . .