



The Center Cannot Hold (American Empire, Book Two) (Southern Victory: American Empire)

By Harry Turtledove

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AMERICAN EMPIRE: BOOK TWO

In this spectacular, thought-provoking epic of alternate history, Harry Turtledove has created an unparalleled vision of social upheaval, war, and cutthroat politics in a world very much like our own—but with dramatic differences.

It is 1924—a time of rebuilding, from the slow reconstruction of Washington’s most honored monuments to the reclamation of devastated cities in Europe and Canada. In the United States, the Socialist Party, led by Hosea Blackford, battles Calvin Coolidge to hold on to the Powell House in Philadelphia. And it seems as if the Socialists can do no wrong, for the stock market soars and America enjoys prosperity unknown in a half century. But as old names like Custer and Roosevelt fade into history, a new generation faces new uncertainties.

The Confederate States, victorious in the War of Secession and in the Second Mexican War but at last tasting defeat in the Great War, suffer poverty and natural calamity. The Freedom Party promises new strength and pride. But if its chief seizes the reins of power, he may prove a dangerous enemy for the hated U.S.A. Yet the United States take little note. Sharing world domination with Germany, they consider events in the Confederacy of little consequence.

As the 1920s end, calamity casts a pall across the continent. With civil war raging in Mexico, terrorist uprisings threatening U.S. control in Canada, and an explosion of violence in Utah, the United States are rocked by uncertainty.

In a world of occupiers and the occupied, of simmering hatreds, shattered lives, and pent-up violence, the center can no longer hold. And for a powerful nation, the ultimate shock will come when a fleet of foreign aircraft rain death and destruction upon one of the great cities of the United States. . . .

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

At its best, alternate history holds a mirror to our society, allowing us to understand our own past by examining hypothetical responses to similar but altered conditions in real or imagined worlds. In the latest installment of his retelling of the world wars, *American Empire: The Center Cannot Hold*, Harry Turtledove demonstrates convincingly how a native fascist ideology could spring up in a defeated Confederacy, as well as how economic conditions can develop independent of government policies.

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From Library Journal

As Jake Featherston campaigns his way across the Confederate States of America (CSA) in the name of his militant Freedom Party, other forces in the world are preparing to move against the CSA's northern neighbor, the hated United States. Set in a North American continent divided into two American nations and an occupied Canada, the sequel to *American Empire: Blood & Iron* continues an American history that might have happened. Turtledove never tires of exploring the paths not taken, bringing to his storytelling a prodigious knowledge of his subject and a profound understanding of human sensibilities and motivations. For most libraries. [For more alternative history, see *Worlds That Weren't*, a collection of novellas by Turtledove and others, reviewed on p. 127. - Ed.]

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From [Booklist](#)

In the first chapter of the sixth volume of the alternate history Turtledove began in *How Few Remain* (1997), Mary McGregor, daughter of Canadian resistance fighter (or anti-American terrorist) Arthur McGregor, seems like a would-be Palestinian suicide bomber. That resemblance immediately establishes that the book's world is not ours, and that Turtledove, still the complete master of his creation, is going to give us a book even scarier than its predecessors. In so doing, he advances all the subplots and all the characters still alive and kicking, although the major themes here are the decline of American military superiority, the further advance toward power of Jake Featherston's gray-shirted Freedom Party in the Confederacy, and the onset of a global depression. Turtledove exercises both his historiography and his wit, on the grand scale as the French restore their monarchy, and on the small scale as Quebecer Lucien Galtier loses his wife to cancer and Sylvia Enos' son George, grown up and gone to sea, readies for marriage. He also shows Sylvia unable to take her ghostwriter, Ernie, as a lover because of his war wound (the culturally literate only need one chance to correctly guess Ernie's last name). Another harrowing and literate installment in Turtledove's standard-setting alternate history. *Roland Green*

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