



## America Must Return to a Policy of Peace Through Strength

Theodore Roosevelt’s famous “Speak softly and carry a big stick” has been repeated nearly *ad nauseam* in this country, yet the truth behind the words isn’t *sticking* like it should.

Much of the foreign-policy debate in American politics is between two equally untenable extremes: On the one hand, there is the neocon interventionism favored by the military-industrial complex; on the other, there is the side, partly born in reaction to the neocons, that seeks to completely forsake any American influence in the world.

Roosevelt’s “speak softly and carry a big stick” philosophy is the happy medium between those two extremes. It is the belief that while we shouldn’t get involved in matters that are none of our business, we *should* be willing to get involved when we do have legitimate business, not shrink into irrelevance.

The futility of the neocon position has been made painfully obvious to anyone who’s been paying attention during the last 20 years. The needless loss of life and astronomical debt incurred by our adventures in the Middle East are all the evidence we need to prove that trying to be the world’s policeman doesn’t pay off.

But the harsh realities of interventionism have led many, including many on the Right, to go all the way to the opposite end of the spectrum.

A growing segment of the dissident right has made it a habit to attack all talk of a U.S. presence outside our borders, to slam all efforts to influence affairs abroad as imperialism, and to call for deep cuts to our military.

And there are legitimate reasons why some on the Right feel this way. Part of it is that the political establishment has completely failed when it comes to securing the American border — the most fundamental task for our armed forces. If our military can’t successfully defend our own border from invasion, then what’s the point of it?

However, this frustration has led to a case of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Surely, we can both walk and chew gum — both secure the border and secure our legitimate interests abroad. We don’t have to abide by a false binary choice.

Indeed, while this author is not going after the background of any particular individual, as ascertaining



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who's being paid by whom is a complex effort, it would not be surprising if at least some of those western voices calling for the dismantling of American military and diplomatic supremacy are secretly agents of China being paid by Beijing under the table.

Why is it that for these individuals, it is reprehensible for the United States to have military bases in other countries, yet they celebrate China and Russia having a military presence abroad? Why do they attack America's military-industrial complex while supporting Beijing's and Moscow's efforts to expand their armies and navies? Why do they blast the United States for exerting influence on smaller countries, such as those in Asia and Latin America, yet applaud while Russia and China do the same?

And why do those voices call it "imperialism" for the Washington to speak out for Taiwan's sovereignty, yet cheer when China talks of invading it? After all, Taiwan wants to be independent of China. Aren't nationalists supposed to be for self-determination?

For that crowd, it appears any action is good so long as China and Russia are the ones doing it, but it's bad if it's the United States. Clearly, their true desire is simply to see the U.S. fade into insignificance while China becomes the new top superpower.

Note that having a strong international presence is not in and of itself imperialism or wasteful interventionism.

The Venetian Republic is one of the most notable examples of a historical state that, while small, held an extensive maritime empire of forts, ports, and outposts throughout the Mediterranean.

These possessions were not mindless interventionism or military-industrial complex greed; rather, they were vital assets for Venice's seafaring, trade-based economy. If Venice could not protect its holdings abroad, its entire economy would collapse; thus, they were willing to fight to the death to protect what was theirs. And they did, often quite successfully due to their superior naval power.

Unfortunately for Venice, though, the time came when they found themselves unable to compete against a larger military force: the Ottoman Empire. The Venetian-Ottoman wars concluded with the loss of much of Venice's maritime empire to the Turks, which spelled the beginning of the end for Venice's status as an economic and political powerhouse.

The idea that we should protect our dominance against rivals such as China is not new. President James Monroe, a Founding Father, declared the Monroe Doctrine, opposing foreign interference in the Americas and establishing U.S. hegemony in the Western Hemisphere.

Yet this seems to have gone out the window now, as China is openly courting Latin American countries, recently making moves to bring Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and Honduras (among others) more firmly into its orbit. Before long, the United States will find itself geographically surrounded on all sides by adversaries.

If the United States does not get its act together, build up its military capabilities, and become proactive in the diplomatic race, then within a few years there will be Chinese missiles pointing directly at American towns from across the Mexican border.

In short, America desperately needs to return to a foreign policy of "peace through strength."



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