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A Foreign Policy of Peace and Freedom

by Scott McPherson

The Framers of the U.S. Constitution wisely advised a path of nonintervention in the affairs of other nations. As students of history, America's first statesmen established peace and free trade as a wiser foreign policy course over militarism, alliance-making, and empire. John Quincy Adams, the sixth president, best summed up America's original philosophy on foreign-policy: "America ... goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy."

For the last century, the United States has strayed from its noble roots, marching headlong into one war after another having no bearing on the security of the United States and bringing us the massive armies, debts, and taxes that James Madison warned of. These wars kill thousands; destabilize entire regions; destroy economies, civilizations, and cultures; engender resentments against Americans; put U.S. troops in the middle of civil conflicts; build a large and expensive overseas military empire; and alienate nations that would otherwise support it.

Many people argue that a foreign policy based on "peace, commerce, and honest friendship" is ill-suited to the modern age. As they march us to war, these folks often vilify anyone who objects to their messianic desire to use bombs and bullets to shape the world. The word "isolationist" is an easy pejorative label often employed in this act. Presidential candidate Ron Paul was so labeled in an October 5, 2007, [editorial](#) in the *New Hampshire Union Leader*. Those of us labeled "isolationists," the editorial suggested, reject the wisdom of the U.S. government's role as global dragon-slayer. (Paul's response to the editorial is [here](#).)

The *Union Leader's* editorial listed "decades of military interventionism around the globe" as "critically important components" of U.S. foreign policy.

The disastrous U.S. interventions in Korea, Vietnam, and Lebanon were "critically important"?

After a decade of sanctions in Iraq had killed hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians, the United States invaded Iraq to depose Saddam Hussein, a brutal dictator who had been, by the way, supported by the U.S. government for years as part of its interventionist foreign policy. All that was "critically important"?

Shall we discuss America's man in Chile, the brutal dictator Augusto Pinochet, who, with the assistance of the CIA, ousted the democratically elected president of Chile in a coup? That was "critically important"?

The U.S. government propped up the shah's brutal regime in Iran after the CIA ousted the democratically elected prime minister of that country in a coup. That was "critically important"?

U.S. officials armed and equipped mujahideen rebels, fanatics who would later attack New York City, to end the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. That was "critically important"?

Is this what the *New Hampshire Union Leader* claims is a rational foreign policy?

"[Ron] Paul's repeated insistence that 'there would be no risk of somebody invading us' is just what the isolationist Republicans of the 1930s believed — right up until Pearl Harbor," was the final jab from the *Union Leader* editorial page.

Contrary to the *Union Leader's* suggestion, the Republicans of the 1930s weren't "isolationist" — they were simply resisting Roosevelt's schemes to get America into another unnecessary and destructive war. After all, don't forget that President Wilson's "make-the-world-safe-for-democracy" debacle of World War I was still fresh on their minds.

But Franklin D. Roosevelt, like George W. Bush, was desperate for war. He engaged, without congressional approval, in the "destroyers-for-bases" deal, contrary to U.S. neutrality; he employed "lend-lease" to ship military equipment to the Soviet communists and Great Britain; he oversaw the use of U.S. military convoys to ship goods to Britain; finally, he ordered U.S. ships to report German submarine positions to the British — an act of war.

Failing to lure the Germans into attacking the United States, Roosevelt looked to the Pacific. While Japan was fighting in China, he prohibited American companies from selling Japan oil, iron, and scrap steel, and froze all Japanese assets in the United States. He refused to meet with the Japanese prime minister, whose government fell, ushering in the more hawkish prime minister, Tojo Hideki. An offer by the Japanese to leave China in exchange for normalization of trade was rebuffed. The "Flying Tigers" were a U.S.-backed air force in Burma training to fight against the Japanese — *before* Pearl Harbor.

There is nothing "isolationist" about desiring free trade, commerce, and honest friendship among all nations. It is quite the opposite of isolation. While it has been some time since the United States followed this path, a safer course for the future is one of strong neutrality, not the thuggish militarism always desired by some at the expense of peace and freedom for the rest of us.

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