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## How To Dismantle the American Empire

by Laurence M. Vance

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The WikiLeaks revelations have shined a light on the dark nature of U.S. foreign policy, including, as Eric Margolis recently described it: “Washington’s heavy-handed treatment of friends and foes alike, its bullying, use of diplomats as junior-grade spies, narrow-minded views, and snide remarks about world leaders.”

As much as I, an American, hate to say it, U.S. foreign policy is actually much worse. It is aggressive, reckless, belligerent, and meddling. It sanctions the destabilization and overthrow of governments, the assassination of leaders, the destruction of industry and infrastructure, the backing of military coups, death squads, and drug traffickers, and imperialism under the guise of humanitarianism. It supports corrupt and tyrannical governments and brutal sanctions and embargoes. It results in discord, strife, hatred, and terrorism toward the United States.

The question, then, is simply this: Can U.S. foreign policy be fixed? Although I am not very optimistic that it *will* be, I am more than confident that it *can* be.

I propose a four-pronged solution from the following perspectives: Founding Fathers, military, congressional, libertarian. In brief, to fix its foreign policy the United States should implement a Jeffersonian foreign policy, adopt Major General Smedley Butler's Amendment for Peace, follow the advice of Congressman Ron Paul, and do it all within the libertarian framework of philosopher Murray Rothbard.

Thomas Jefferson, our first secretary of state and third president, favored a foreign policy of "peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations — entangling alliances with none." This policy was basically followed until the Spanish-American War of 1898. Here is the simple but profound wisdom of Jefferson:

- "No one nation has a right to sit in judgment over another."
- "We wish not to meddle with the internal affairs of any country, nor with the general affairs of Europe."
- "I am for free commerce with all nations, political connection with none, and little or no diplomatic establishment."
- "We have produced proofs, from the most enlightened and approved writers on the subject, that a neutral nation must, in all things relating to the war, observe an exact impartiality towards the parties."

No judgment, no meddling, no political connection, and no partiality: this is a Jeffersonian foreign policy.

U.S. Marine Corps Major General Smedley Butler was the most decorated Marine in U.S. history. After leaving the military, he authored the classic work *War Is a Racket*. Butler proposed an Amendment for Peace to provide an "absolute guarantee to the women of America that their loved ones never would be sent overseas to be needlessly shot down in European or Asiatic or African wars that are no concern of our people." Here are its three planks:

1. The removal of members of the land armed forces from within the continental limits of the United States and the Panama Canal Zone for any cause whatsoever is hereby prohibited.
2. The vessels of the United States Navy, or of the other branches of the armed services, are hereby prohibited from steaming, for any reason whatsoever except on an errand of mercy, more than five hundred miles from our coast.

3. Aircraft of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps is hereby prohibited from flying, for any reason whatsoever, more than seven hundred and fifty miles beyond the coast of the United States.

Butler also reasoned that because of “our geographical position, it is all but impossible for any foreign power to muster, transport and land sufficient troops on our shores for a successful invasion.” In this he was echoing Jefferson, who recognized that geography was one of the great advantages of the United States: “At such a distance from Europe and with such an ocean between us, we hope to meddle little in its quarrels or combinations. Its peace and its commerce are what we shall court.”

And then there is our modern Jeffersonian in Congress, Rep. Ron Paul, the only consistent voice in Congress from either party for a foreign policy of peace and nonintervention. In a speech on the House floor several months before the invasion of Iraq, Ron Paul made the case for a foreign policy of peace through commerce and nonintervention:

A proper foreign policy of non-intervention is built on friendship with other nations, free trade, and open travel, maximizing the exchanges of goods and services and ideas.

We should avoid entangling alliances and stop meddling in the internal affairs of other nations — no matter how many special interests demand otherwise. The entangling alliances that we should avoid include the complex alliances in the UN, the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO.

The basic moral principle underpinning a non-interventionist foreign policy is that of rejecting the initiation of force against others. It is based on non-violence and friendship unless attacked, self-determination, and self-defense while avoiding confrontation, even when we disagree with the way other countries run their affairs. It simply means that we should mind our own business and not be influenced by special interests that have an ax to grind or benefits to gain by controlling our foreign policy. Manipulating our country into conflicts that are none of our business and unrelated to national security provides no benefits to us, while exposing us to great risks financially and militarily.

For the libertarian framework necessary to ensure a foreign policy of peace and nonintervention, we can turn to libertarian political philosopher and theoretician Murray Rothbard:

The primary plank of a libertarian foreign policy program for America must be to call upon the United States to abandon its policy of global interventionism: to withdraw immediately and

completely, militarily and politically, from Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, from everywhere. The cry among American libertarians should be for the United States to withdraw now, in every way that involves the U.S. government. The United States should dismantle its bases, withdraw its troops, stop its incessant political meddling, and abolish the CIA. It should also end all foreign aid — which is simply a device to coerce the American taxpayer into subsidizing American exports and favored foreign States, all in the name of “helping the starving peoples of the world.” In short, the United States government should withdraw totally to within its own boundaries and maintain a policy of strict political “isolation” or neutrality everywhere.

The U.S. global empire with its 1,000 foreign military bases and half a million troops and mercenary contractors in three-fourths of the world’s countries must be dismantled. This along with the empire’s spies, covert operations, foreign aid, gargantuan military budgets, abuse and misuse of the military, prison camps, torture, extraordinary renditions, assassinations, nation building, spreading democracy at the point of a gun, jingoism, regime changes, military alliances, security guarantees, and meddling in the affairs of other countries.

U.S. foreign policy can be fixed. The United States would never tolerate another country building a string of bases around North America, stationing thousands of its troops on our soil, enforcing a no-fly zone over American territory, or sending their fleets to patrol off our coasts. How much longer will other countries tolerate these actions by the United States? We have already experienced blowback from the Muslim world for our foreign policy. And how much longer can the United States afford to maintain its empire?

It is time for the world’s policeman, fireman, security guard, social worker, and busybody to announce its retirement.