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Fixing America Begins With Foreign Policy

By Philip Giraldi

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Many Americans are rightly appalled at what has happened over the past ten years. A culture of fear has taken hold nationwide and there are regular [accounts](#) of swat teams kicking in the wrong door in the middle of the night and killing a homeowner seeking to defend his family from unknown intruders. Neighbors have been encouraged by the government's Department of Homeland Security to look at those living next door to see if they might be terrorists. Recently, questionable provisions of the Patriot Act have been extended for an additional four years, without any debate at all. It all means that many constitutional liberties that were taken for granted for more than two hundred years have recently been relegated to the dust bin of history.

And there is considerable danger that the "overseas contingency operations," as the Obama Administration refers to its war on terror, will increase in number. A [section](#) of the current \$690 billion Defense Appropriation bill referred to as the "Authorization for the Use of Military Force" will permit the president to wage war against anyone anywhere without any specific approval by congress, an expansion of the executive authority authorized by the legislature to pursue al-Qaeda which was granted in the aftermath of 9/11. Only it no longer has to be al-Qaeda and, given the elasticity in the definition of the enemy, it means that the war on terror will go on forever. Any group or even individual will do to keep the global conflict going. The head of the Department of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano [believes](#) that the Pakistani group Lashkar-e-Taiba is "an equal danger to (sic) al-Qaeda," while former Assistant Secretary of State Richard Armitage has [named](#) Hezbollah as the "A team" of terrorists. The fact that neither group actually threatens the United States appears to be irrelevant. Congressman Buck McKeon, the drafter of the relevant section of the appropriation bill, has [said](#) "the threats posed by al-Qaeda cells in

Yemen and Africa underscore the evolving and continuing nature of the terrorist threat to the United States."

We Americans have to decide what kind of country we want to have. Chalmers Johnson [summarized](#) the dilemma. "A nation can be one or the other, a democracy or an imperialist, but it can't be both. If it sticks to imperialism, it will, like the old Roman Republic, on which so much of our system was modeled, lose its democracy to a domestic dictatorship."

Can it happen here? You'd better believe it. A well-known quotation incorrectly [attributed](#) to Sinclair Lewis "When fascism comes to American it will be wrapped in the flag and carrying a cross" describes perfectly why many self-styled "conservatives" support the steady march towards a police state. But it does not have to happen. If we remain faithful to the type of nation envisioned by the Founding Fathers we will have a land at peace with itself, prosperous and respected, prepared to defend itself if attacked but otherwise relatively uninterested in the intrigues of other countries. If we decide instead that we want to continue to be a player in the often fractious politics of foreign nations, we will have to accept that there will be a price to pay both domestically and internationally. We will be poorer, our liberties will be at risk, and we will be hated by many around the world, a situation that is essentially analogous to the bipartisan supported status quo.

Critics will argue that an either-or vision of America's future is simplistic. Also, due to the way it is framed it is weighted heavily towards non-interventionism as a preferred policy for the United States. They would be correct on both counts but sometimes it is necessary to simplify complex issues before it is possible to come to any real understanding of what is involved. The Ockham's razor axiom is that the simplest explanation is normally the correct answer. Applying that to America's failed foreign policy, which has assumed Washington's right to intervene worldwide to overthrow governments if they displease us, would be to recognize that failure and change the way we do things. But instead we are seeing a doubling down on bad bets, with the Obama Administration continuing questionable policies from the Bush years and even expanding upon them. The only question right now is who will be next ♦♦" will it be Syria, Iran, Yemen, or Somalia?

If overseas interventionism has worked there is little evidence to support that view. It is up to those who advance an imperial America agenda and an intrusive national security state to explain to all of us what has been gained from all the foreign adventures and sacrifice of constitutional freedoms over the past ten years. Iraq has killed nearly five thousand Americans, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, has cost in excess of \$1 trillion, and is still ongoing. Five more Americans died on June 6th. Afghanistan costs more than \$10 billion a month and there is no end in sight. Libya makes no sense whatsoever. Finally assassinating Osama bin Laden, accomplished after ten years of effort, is not enough to justify the worldwide carnage, the loss of fundamental liberties, and the waste of trillions of dollars.

The Federal government is twice as big now as it was in 2001 because of America's foreign entanglements and the over-hyped fear of terrorism. The national debt has ballooned for the same reason and liberties that are vanishing at home have all been sacrificed based on the oft times repeated warnings about the terrorist threat. That means that if we want to address the

malaise in the United States we have to address the root cause, which is an out of control and imperialist foreign policy that is embraced by both major political parties.

So it is time to do several things: first recognize that the fractured foreign policy and the exaggerated fear of terrorism have brought with them many evils, including the wrecked economy and an encroaching domestic police state. Recognizing the problem will then permit us to make some repairs. We have to bring the troops home and make clear to the rest of the world that the United States no longer seeks to intervene to correct the misgovernment of others. No one will believe it at first, but eventually the new reality will sink in. Then we as a people can begin to respond to what has gone wrong here at home. Repeal the Patriot Act and Military Commissions Act for starters and then rein in the National Security Agency's warrantless wiretaps. Close Guantanamo to restore the principle that a person can only be sent to prison after a fair trial in which the accused is able to confront the charges against him and produce witnesses in his defense. Restoring the rule of law and getting the federal government out of the personal lives of Americans will be a tonic to a country that has been ailing for far too long, but it all must start with rejecting interventionism. That is the key.