



International Relations

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A basic question needs to be answered in the realm of international relations; does America want to be the leader of the free world? A decade ago this would not have been a question. However, times have changed and our leaders have changed. And while the reflexive response to whether we want to continue as the free world's policeman and leader of liberal democracy is that it is a bad idea, the question is worth asking. It has become apparent that having this leadership role has cost a great deal of American money, manpower and machinery. And our partners have freely accepted this treasure with little guilt or remorse. Understandably so. But have we received anything in return?

Those who support the concept of liberal democracy feel that the 70-plus years since the formation of this unified program have been relatively peaceful from a global perspective. There have been no world wars, and that fact alone has perhaps saved us in terms of our "lost" treasure. They will also say look at what has happened to the world since America has started to step away from this leadership position? Autocratic governments appear to be on the rise and the general sense of security that was a birthright to baby boomers and generations to follow has been greatly diminished. In addition, on a lesser scale, the general sense of goodwill and shared vision amongst Western countries has all but disappeared. This security vacuum has created space for divisive forces to enter, threatening the foundation of a mutually shared trust and understanding.

What is my position on this? I acknowledge that some long-standing agreements between American and her partners have eroded over the years, leaving the USA with a heavier share of the burden in what might be perceived as an outdated security contract. There has been an assumption that we would always be there to write a check and provide the soldiers but that the benefit to us may have been diminishing due to fluid socioeconomic forces over more than three quarters of a century. That being said, I feel these costs should certainly be renegotiated on a regular basis along with the value proposition for all parties involved but I strongly feel that these agreements should not be abandoned altogether.

There have been many events during the liberal democratic era that followed World War II - in global hot beds such as the Middle East, the Balkans, Asia and Central America that could have become much more than the small-scale conflagrations that they turned out to be due to these strategic relationships that were designed and refined over many years. To walk away from them simply to send a message that we are not being treated fairly seems to me, to be very shortsighted and unfortunate. Even more alarming is the apparent lack of thought given to what will take the place of these agreements. Simply erecting Fortress America and pulling up the drawbridge is not a sound national security policy. Not only that, it destroys a framework of diplomacy and fraternity that bleed into all aspects of international affairs to include commerce, the environment and human rights.

For these and other reasons, I do not agree with the policy of walking away from solid and long-standing alliances. However, now that it is done, and now that people see the inherent threat of not having these relationships, it is not too late to write new agreements that are stronger, more appropriate for current threats and fairer for all parties involved. Having lived with these arrangements for so many decades, they became assumed entitlements and, therefore, open for abuse and reinterpretation. According to the precepts of my DETOX methodology for instability in the name of enduring forward progress, revisiting – and perhaps even destroying – old agreements should be part of a defined and on-going process. But, by definition, it should be continuous, committed and organized. Aggressive and possibly foolhardy change should not simply be the result of a knee-jerk response to a campaign promise. Let's take advantage of this ill-advised separation to extend a new, clean hand to our long-time partners, to rebuild from scratch the necessary agreements to secure a safe and abundant future going forward.

Let's get started.