

A Preference for Peace: Not the Same Thing as Support for the Bogeyman of the Week

I'm not ashamed to admit it: I'm a peacenik. I think war is a bad thing. I've seen it up close and personal as an infantryman, and I'd like to see less of it, preferably none at all, either up close or from a distance.

In part, this desire also makes me a "non-interventionist." That is, in a world with 195 "sovereign nations," it makes sense that the political officials in each one should mind his or her own state's business and not try to decide who gets to run the other 194, or how they should do so.

And this, in turn, leads to scolding claims that I am "soft on" politicians from states who happen to be at odds with the politicians from "my" country, the USA.

If I don't want a return to Cold War with what's left of the former Soviet Union, I'm Vladimir Putin's puppet.

If I don't support US sanctions on Iran, it must mean that I support whatever agenda my critic imputes to "Supreme Leader" Ali Khameni.

If I don't support the US invasion/occupation of Syria, I'm clearly a fan of president Bashar al-Assad.

If I don't think the US government should waste American treasure (and conceivably even American blood) trying to get Venezuelans to rally behind Juan Guaidó's "interim president" claim, it's obvious that I want Nicolas Maduro and the Chavistas left in charge.

Well, no, not at all. Not in any of those cases, nor in any of the other places around the world where American presidents, American Congresses, and American bureaucrats continuously try to seize control of the wheel from the people who, you know, live there.

Do I have opinions about politics in Russia, Iran, Syria, Venezuela, Libya ... or, heck, Germany, Greece, Israel, Japan, North and South Korea, and so on?

Yes, I do.

Do I think that it's the job of American taxpayers to finance, and if necessary American soldiers to compel, those foreign politicians to do the will of American politicians on pain of being replaced by new politicians who will?

No, I don't.

Not any more than I want Xi Jinping, Emmanuel Macron, or Justin Trudeau imposing their political will on my neighbors in my country.

Nor any more than I want my next-door neighbor barging into my house and ordering me to move the furniture around and serve spaghetti for dinner.

Yes, it can be made a lot more complicated than that, and some people insist on doing so.

But yes, it's really that simple.

I'm not a fan of the state as we know it, which has been defined since the 1648 Peace of Westphalia in terms of mutually recognized "borders" and "national sovereignty." That model is disintegrating, and I'm hopeful that it will give way to something better.

Until it does, there are far worse ideas than the notion that politicians should limit their claims of "sovereignty" to the spaces within their own "borders," leaving other people and other politicians to work out their own destinies.