

Op. Ed.
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HOW ABOUT A SECRETARY OF PEACE?

The world is waiting for the next phase of American leadership. Washington is in a vacuum. Communist expansion is no longer a threat, and the drunken excesses of neo-conservatism are in remission. It is the moment for a new American declaration of purpose.

Foreign policy announcements are nothing new for us. Our first was Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, a statement that not only signaled our intentions, but registered a long list of specifics to justify them. More recent doctrines have been far less detailed. After the first Declaration, the tenor of American policy pronouncements became less reasoned, more acquisitive, and were often just smoke screens for gunboat diplomacy.

In 1823, President James Monroe served notice on European powers that their imperial expansion would no longer be welcome in the Americas and that new attempts would be viewed as hostile acts.

President Theodore Roosevelt built on the Monroe Doctrine, citing it as justification for expanding American influence in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines. His excuse was a lame variation on the old White Man's Burden, saying that he was "uplifting" those peoples from further exploitation.

Since Jefferson's Declaration, the only American doctrine with a truly benevolent purpose was Harry Truman's policy in 1946. It began as a way to support Greece and Turkey in their resistance to Soviet overtures, but it quickly grew to be the Marshall Plan, which changed the world. Europe lay devastated after WW II, and the USSR was hot to annex it all. Some historians called the Truman Doctrine a plan to "contain communism", which made it sound more like a military action than an economic one. But it was American aid in the form of

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money, food and technology that made it work. The Marshall Plan helped Europe to re-build its industries, and it provided the framework for Germany to become the industrial engine that eventually sealed the fate of Soviet expansionism. Truman had added a new and beneficent spin to American foreign policy. Unlike the pronouncements by James Monroe and Teddy Roosevelt, the Truman Doctrine was not designed to further American real estate holdings. It was bigger than that.

It also dwarfs what is being called the George W. Bush doctrine, the military adventure against Afghanistan and Iraq that sprang from the 9/11 disaster. These moves were originally inspired by the neo-cons' Project for the New American Century in 1997, and bore an uncanny resemblance to Teddy Roosevelt's Big Stick play book.

But today, the neo-cons seem to be out of gas, as the world awaits our national elections and the next American policy decree.

It should be another big one. We have a unique opportunity to erase the errors of the most recent past, and re-dedicate ourselves to the humane principles of the founding fathers. America can take the moral lead again, and work for sweeping changes that will have global benefits. We can do it by creating a new arm of government -- nothing less than a new cabinet position to be called, the Secretary of Peace.

Peace is not merely the absence of war; it is a positive value that can be actively pursued. In the past, we've thought of peace merely as a pause between wars. If we are to create a world at peace, we should declare our intentions and provide the means to build that peace.

To take the lead, the U.S. must commission, enlist, fund and enable this pursuit. It will call for raising world consciousness and staging meetings of citizens of all nations at all levels, regardless of their previous history or suspected intentions.

At first glance, the purview of the Secretary of Peace might appear to overlap that of the State Department, but just as Homeland Security might conflict with Defense, and Commerce with Treasury, these Departments would be given specialized roles. The Secretary of Peace would be in the active mode of

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promoting peace conferences, disseminating peace incentive information, and securing agreements in coordination with other departments.

The bottom line would be a new, openly stated American mission; the dream we all wish for but have done so little to build --World Peace. It's an ideal and an opportunity whose time has come.

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