

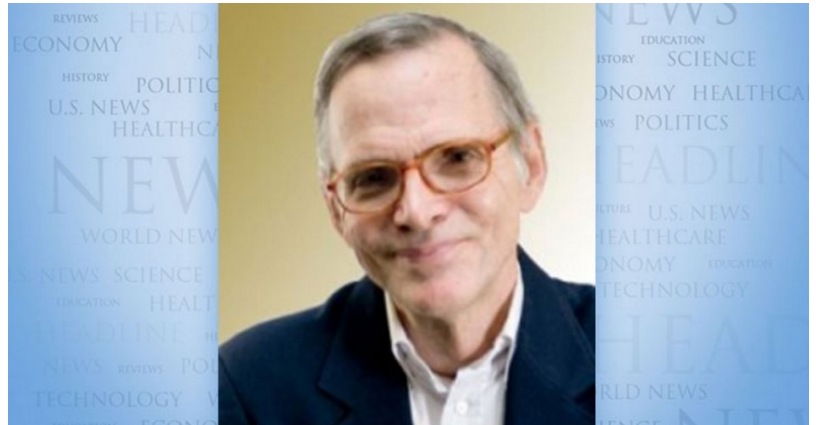


Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on April 30, 2012

Rubio embraces interventionist foreign policy

In the circular world of U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, you have to go further right to get to the left.

“I recently joked that today, in the U.S. Senate, on foreign policy, if you go far enough to the right, you wind up on the left,” the Florida Republican said in a widely publicized speech on foreign policy to the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. on April 25. Rubio, a freshman senator and a Tea Party favorite when he won election in 2010, is being talked about these days as a potential running mate for Mitt Romney in this year’s presidential election. And he made it abundantly clear that his views on America’s role in the world pose no threat to the interventionist foreign and military policies favored by the leaders of both political parties.



He began with high praise of Senator Joe Lieberman, who introduced Rubio to the audience, Lieberman was an early and ardent supporter of the invasion of Iraq, has warned against an accelerated withdrawal from Afghanistan and is a highly vocal supporter of a confrontation with Iraq, including military intervention if necessary, over that country’s alleged program for the development of nuclear weapons. The Connecticut Senator was the leading hawk among Senate Democrats before losing a primary and winning reelection as an independent in 2006. In his 24-year Senate career, he has supported military interventions in Grenada, Panama, Kosovo and Libya. He has called for arming the rebels in Syria’s civil war and has backed U.S. military actions in Yemen. To Rubio, he is a Senate colleague “whose statesmanship sets an example for the rest of us. He represents a view of America’s role in the world in the tradition of Democratic leaders from Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman through John F. Kennedy and [former Senator Henry] Scoop Jackson.”

Believing that conservatives favor a “robust and muscular foreign policy,” Rubio said he was surprised to discover when he arrived in the Senate last year that some of the traditional sides in the foreign policy debate had shifted. “On the one hand, I found liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans working together to advocate our withdrawal from Afghanistan, and staying out of Libya. On the other hand I found myself partnering with Democrats like Bob Menendez and Bob Casey on a more forceful foreign policy.” And the forceful foreign policy Rubio describes requires the United States to intervene — politically, economically and militarily — everywhere. He noted that some of his loyal supporters in his home state were critical of his decision to call for a more active U.S. role in Libya. But to those who say it’s time for America to start minding its own business and get its own economic house in order, Rubio has a ready answer.

“I always start by reminding people that what happens all over the world is our business,” he said.



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“Every aspect of lives is directly impacted by global events. The security of our cities is connected to the security of small hamlets in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia.” Just how our cities are made more secure by our soldiers fighting in those small hamlets halfway around the world Rubio didn’t say. But if anything that happens anywhere in the world is our business, then we will never run out of reasons to go to war.

“Our cost of living, the safety of our food and the value of the things we invent, make and sell are just a few example of everyday aspects of our lives that are directly related to events abroad and make it impossible for us to focus only on our issues here at home,” Rubio said. Yet, Rubio apparently believes decade-long, trillion-dollar wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have not reduced the cost of living — and he does not make clear how our food is made safer or the value of things invented and made here are more secure by virtue of bombs dropped in Pakistan or Yemen.

“If we start doing less, who will start doing more?” asked Rubio. Well, it might be that some of the countries where we continue to maintain U.S. military bases at a considerable cost to American taxpayers will begin doing more to provide for their own defense. Rubio warns of the growing strength and influence of China and asks if China would be “as benignly disposed to the political and economic aspirations of other nations as we are?” But China’s growing economic strength rests in part on the interest it collects on loans made to the United States to finance our ever-widening deficits. Does it make sense to continue to borrow money from China to fight wars we can’t afford to wage, while China concentrates on building its own economic and military power?

Rubio praises the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund as American-made institutions that spread “peace and prosperity” around the world. But entangling nations in one another’s affairs and diverting capital from free-market investments to subsidize government-run enterprises in far-off lands is a strange way to promote peace and prosperity. No one advocates that the United States disengage diplomatically from international affairs, but some have argued we can no longer afford to be both policing and supporting the world. The policy of using our military might to pursue what George W. Bush called a “global democratic revolution” has us involved in various levels of warfare in half a dozen or more countries.

“But in the long term,” Rubio said, “because governments that rule by the consent of the governed must be responsive to the material needs and demands of their people, they are less likely to engage in costly confrontations that harm their economies and deprive their people of the opportunity to improve their circumstances.” If that’s true, then it is time for America to follow the advice, “Physician, heal thyself.” We must not be ruled “by the consent of the governed,” since our government continues to engage in those “costly confrontations” that harm our economy, as reflected in the recent recession and the barely visible “recovery.”

Rubio rejects the vision of America espoused by John Quincy Adams, an America that “goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.” Instead, he recommends the policies urged on America by Brookings fellow and Council on Foreign Policy luminary Robert Kagan, another cheerleader for the Iraq War who continues to call for U.S. military intervention around the world. His book, *The World America Made* has been praised by Barack Obama, who incorporated its themes into this year’s State of the Union Address.

Perhaps Rubio believes conspicuously placing himself in the company of devout interventionists will increase his chances of being the Republican nominee for Vice President. But in making his journey



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from the right around to the left, he passed by a number of champions of a more genuinely conservative foreign policy, from Robert Taft, the Mr. Republican of the 1940s, to Rep. Ron Paul (R- Texas) and his son, Sen. Rand Paul (R-Kentucky) in the current Congress. Among the major contenders vying for the GOP presidential nomination this year, Ron Paul has been the only real critic of the interventionist foreign policy Romney has embraced. Writing in the *Telegraph* of the United Kingdom, Tim Stanley wrote:

Rubio's target is obvious: Ron Paul, Rand Paul, and those elements of the Tea Party Right that dissented on Libya. Given that it barely scraped 20 percent in most primaries, it's amazing how much the Paulite revolt seems to have upset the Republican establishment. In fact, Rubio's entire speech (and it's a long one) reads like a step-by-step rebuttal of the Paulite critique of neoconservative foreign policy - the belief that America has a moral duty and a strategic interest to promote global democracy.

His speech also underscores the fact that Republicans will offer no real alternative this fall to the foreign policy pursued by Obama, a policy that will bring not "global democracy," but more wars and chaos, while bleeding America dry.



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