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Bandow's False Flag Budget Debate

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Doug Bandow of the libertarian Cato Institute has [called](#) for large, if unspecified, cuts in defense spending in *Forbes* magazine. He starts his argument "The U.S. government is effectively bankrupt. The deficit this year will run \$1.5 trillion.....Only cutting government's responsibilities can restore a fiscal balance. Every program must be reassessed. The U.S. can't afford to be an endless soup line for every interest group which hires a lobbyist." National security, however, is the first responsibility of the government. It is not the invention of lobbyists, nor the cause of the budget deficit.

Even as the U.S. military was "surging" in Iraq, the deficit was falling. Between the start of the Iraq War in 2003 and 2007, the last year before the financial crash, the budget deficit decreased from \$377.6 billion down to \$160.7 billion. The trillion dollar deficits since 2008 have been the result of the recession, with tax revenues down and domestic spending up. Indeed, the deficit is nearly double the entire amount of the defense budget including operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Any serious effort to balance the budget must look at the cause of the deficit, not simply serve as cover for another agenda such as disarmament. Bandow is an isolationist. His argument is about foreign policy, not fiscal policy. He writes,

While defense-unlike so many domestic programs-is a core federal responsibility, the government's duty is to defend America, not the rest of the world.

In essence, military spending is the price of one's foreign policy. Do less around the world, and you need fewer air wings, carrier groups, and armored divisions. And conventional forces are what cost the most.

U.S. ground forces have been severely stretched in the relatively small wars in the Middle East. This is due to the large cuts made after the Cold War, when the size of the military was reduced 40 percent by the end of the Clinton administration. Yet, Bandow complains we still have a Cold War posture even though "the Soviet Union has collapsed, Maoist China has been transformed, and pro-communist Third World dictatorships have been discarded in history's dustbin."

History, however, has not come to an end. China has been transformed into a much more powerful nation than it was under Mao. Its Communist leaders speak openly about overthrowing American "hegemony" and its military is expanding with weapons designed to attack (and defeat) American forces. And Third World dictatorships still exist, some Marxist like North Korea and Venezuela, and some Islamist like Iran, looking to be expansionist regional powers. And Russia is reasserting itself under veterans of the old Soviet regime, aligning with China and the rogue states.

It is not these foreign threats that bother Bandow, the American Empire is his foe. Bandow writes frequently for *Antiwar.com* which [describes](#) itself as "devoted to the cause of non-interventionism and is read by libertarians, pacifists, leftists, greens, and independents alike, as well as many on the Right who agree with our opposition to imperialism." As Barack Obama took office in January, 2009, Bandow [wrote](#) an *Antiwar.com* column proclaiming,

The end of the Bush administration is an undoubted plus for America and the rest of the world. But without a change in policy, the benefit is likely to be more atmospheric than substantive.

It is time for a serious debate over foreign policy. Should the U.S. continue to act as the globe's dominatrix, irrespective of cost and risk? Should Washington continue to sacrifice domestic prosperity, liberty, and security

in order to impose its will around the world?

In a 2007 piece for Antiwar.com, Bandow [proclaimed](#) that the GOP is the "Party of War" and "the conservative movement stands for wars of choice, and particularly humanitarian warmongering." With Republicans and conservatives in the ascendency again, Bandow knows he cannot win his case for isolationism on its merits. The notion that the U.S. has no interests, or faces no threats, outside its borders has never been true at any time in the history of the Republic. So he is trying to substitute the budget debate for the foreign policy debate.

If America can be disarmed, discussing when and where the U.S. acts in the world becomes irrelevant; the nation will not be able to act no matter what the circumstances or the dangers may be. Game over.

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