



Nikki Haley Continues Hallowed Tradition of the Arrogant, Clueless American Diplomat

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January 9, 2018

As governor of South Carolina, Nikki Haley didn't have much need to worry about foreign policy. For reasons unknown, other than perhaps her Indian heritage, President Donald Trump tapped her to be America's UN ambassador. She has performed to perfection, modeling the hubris and lack of awareness which consistently characterize U.S. foreign policy.

What makes America different from other nations when it comes to foreign policy is the certainty that it is the right, indeed duty, of Americans to run the world. That means telling everyone everywhere what they should do. Not just internationally. But in their own nations.

U.S. officials believe they know how other societies should organize their governments. Who foreign peoples should elect. What economic policies other nations should implement. What social practices foreigners should encourage and suppress.

There is precedent for Washington as all-seeing and all-knowing. A sparrow cannot "fall to the ground apart from the will of" God, Jesus explained. So too, it appears, in America's view such an event is impossible apart from U.S. approval.

Washington officials rarely are so blunt, but their rhetoric is routinely suffused with arrogance. The concept of American exceptionalism, for instance. The country's founding was unique and the U.S. has played an extraordinary role in international affairs. But that reality does not sanctify policies which often have been brutal, selfish, incompetent, perverse, or immoral. Sometimes America's actions share all of those characteristics simultaneously—such as aiding the royal Saudi dictatorship as it slaughters civilians in Yemen in an attempt to restore a puppet regime next door.

In recent history Madeleine Albright, both as UN ambassador and Secretary of State, perhaps came closest to personifying the clueless American diplomat. As Washington made a hash of the Balkans and Middle East, she explained that "we stand tall. We see further than other countries in the future." The U.S. of course was "the indispensable nation." Which presumably is why she felt entitled to announce that "we think the price is worth it" when asked about the reported death of a half million Iraqi children as a result of sanctions.

And, of course, there was her extraordinary exchange with Colin Powell, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, when she asked: "what's the point of having this superb military you're

always talking about if we can't use it?" Presumably she had no family members at risk as she planned global crusades with other people's lives.

Albright's are large pumps to fill but Haley appears to be well on her way to doing so. In a position that theoretically emphasizes diplomacy the latter has been cheerleading for war with North Korea. Never mind that a nuke or two landing on Seoul and Tokyo would make for a very bad day for millions of people. No doubt she will cheerfully put a positive spin on the disaster if the administration decides to fight Armageddon in Northeast Asia.

Haley has brilliantly played the sycophantic spokeswoman for the Saudi royals. Riyadh intervened in the unending Yemeni civil war and in doing so has killed thousands of civilians, imposed a starvation blockade, and stood by as famine and cholera have swept what was already one of the poorest nations on earth. All of this has been done with U.S. support: supplying munitions, refueling aircraft, and aiding targeting.

But when the Yemenis returned fire with a missile Haley summoned her best sanctimonious demeanor and denounced Iran for allegedly making this outrageous, shocking attack possible. Apparently the Saudi sense of entitlement goes so far as to believe that Saudi Arabia's victims aren't even supposed to shoot back. And Riyadh's American lackeys are supposed to handle global PR for the kingdom.

Yet Haley's finest hubristic moment may have come with the president's decision to move America's embassy to Jerusalem. Of course, Israel treats that city as its capital. But Jerusalem is no average city: it is the holiest place for Jews and Christians, third holiest for Muslims, and the most emotional point of dispute between Israelis and Palestinians. Indeed, since conquering East Jerusalem in the 1967 war the Israeli government has been working assiduously to squeeze Palestinians out of the city.

Congress' approval back in 1995 of legislation mandating that the State Department move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem was politics at its most cynical. Members in the newly Republican Congress postured as great friends of Israel while adding a waiver which they expected presidents to employ. Everyone did until Donald Trump. At least his decision ostentatiously gave the lie to the claim that Washington can play honest broker in promoting a Middle East peace. No sentient Palestinian could have believed so for years, but the president finally made it official.

That Haley kept a straight face while explaining how Washington could upset the status quo, outrage Palestinians, undercut Arab allies, and anger Muslims while simultaneously bringing peace, harmony, and calm to the Mideast was to be expected. Why, "we can see the peace process really come together," she declared without a hint of irony. But her finest moment—almost Churchillian in significance—was when she responded to criticism of the president's decision, including by *the other 14 members of the UN Security Council*.

On Fox News (where else!?) she declared: "We have the right to do whatever we want in terms of where we put our embassies." As for foreign criticism, "We don't need other countries telling us what's right and wrong."

Of course.

What can be more obvious? Other governments have no right to make decisions about their own countries. And they certainly need to be told what's right and wrong, at least by Washington—any and every subject, day and night, in sunshine, rain, and snow. But another element of American exceptionalism is the fact that the U.S. is exempt from the rules which it applies to other nations. Washington gets to lecture. But no one gets to tell Americans what they should do.

The sad irony is that the U.S. would have greater credibility if it better practiced what it preached, and didn't attempt social engineering abroad which has routinely failed at home. Especially nice would be a bit more humility and self-awareness by Washington's representatives. But Nikki Haley seems determined to continue as a disciple of the Madeleine Albright school of all-knowing, all-seeing, all-saying diplomacy. As such, Haley is unlikely to fool anyone other than herself. And foreigners will continue to see the U.S. plainer than many Americans.

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