



Is Rubio running for veep, or Globocop?

by [Gene Healy](#) *Columnist*
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Americans are burdened by a crushing debt load and an administration that can't keep its hands to itself at home or abroad. And so here comes Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., a leading contender for the GOP veep slot, to insist that "what happens all over the world is [America's] business."

In his much-hyped foreign policy speech at the Brookings Institution Wednesday, Rubio declared that "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." ("If true, we're all going to die," cracked the American Conservative's Michael Brendan Dougherty).

The excitable young senator called for up to two more wars in the Middle East (Syria and Iran), "enlargement of NATO" to more post-Soviet Republics ("Putin might talk tough, but he knows he is weak"), combatting AIDS in Africa and foreign aid for "agricultural initiatives" to establish "a healthier global community." Why choose between "guns and butter" when you can have both?

Rubio endorsed the foreign policy vision of Brookings' Robert Kagan, who insists that "if American power declines, this world order will decline with it." He unleashed a parade of horrors, including attacks on American allies, insecure trade routes and a rollback of democratic gains. As it happens, President Obama is a huge Kagan fan as well. As Rubio noted Wednesday, "on foreign policy, if you go far enough to the right, you wind up on the left."

But Kagan's vision is deeply flawed: our bloated defense budgets and outdated Cold War alliances mainly serve as foreign aid. They subsidize social spending by allies who are wealthy enough to defend themselves. Moreover, a militarized "forward strategy of freedom"

isn't a necessary condition for further expansion of liberal institutions worldwide. Indeed, it's as likely to hinder as it is to help.

At the outset of President Obama's Libyan adventure, Harvard's Stephen M. Walt warned at ForeignPolicy.com that "we are likely to be disappointed by the outcome" -- not because Gadhafi had a formidable military, but because democratization by gunpoint is a fool's errand.

Walt cited studies showing that military intervention by free countries "has only rarely played a role in democratization since 1945." Indeed, "when foreign interveners oust an existing ruler and impose a wholly new government (which is what we are trying to do in Libya), the likelihood of civil war more than triples."

Rubio's main complaint with our "kinetic military action" in Libya? It wasn't "kinetic" enough: "Many loyal supporters back home were highly critical of my decision to call for a more active U.S. role in Libya," he complained at Brookings.

True, Senator Rubio didn't say anything far off from what Governor Romney has offered in his campaign trail statements on foreign policy. But since Romney is (a) smart; (b) risk-averse; and (c) doesn't actually believe anything, it was always possible to hope he'd be sensible.

Alas, Rubio looks like a true neoconservative believer. And if you're looking for a veep who insists that George W. Bush "did a fantastic job as president" and wants to double down on the profligate interventionism of the last decade, Rubio's your man.

He closed the speech by quoting Tony Blair's 2003 address to the U.S. Congress. Paying the price and bearing the burden of defending others worldwide is "hard on America," Blair acknowledged, and somewhere "out in Nevada or Ohio or these places I've never been to," (but "always wanted to go"!) there's "a guy" asking 'why me, and why us, and why America?'

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It's a good question. Another good question is, "why Rubio?"

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