



WHY AMERICA'S MILITARY MUST BE STRONG

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From when America's armed forces entered World War I in 1917 until today, the United States military has repeatedly made the difference between Civilization and Barbarism. It's no exaggeration to say that a militarily strong America is the one indispensable prerequisite for a peaceful and prosperous world. The witness of history, as well as our own common sense, bears testament to the fact that when America's armed forces are powerful, focused and feared, the globe is a better place than when she is weak, unprepared and vacillating.

In the past century alone there have been four great threats made to peace, democracy and freedom. Each of them have come from enemies that hate and fear what the United States stands for, as laid down in her Declaration of Independence, Constitution and Bill of Rights. Three of these have come from differing mutations of Fascism, and one from its totalitarian twin, Communism. In each case it has been the US military that has been a principal force protecting the Free World from the tyranny these threats have sought to impose.

The First World War sprung from Germany's bid for hegemony over Europe and was powered by a Prussian military machine that was proto-Fascist in its outlooks, ambitions and assumptions. When the discovery of the infamous Zimmerman Telegram revealed that Germany wanted to extend the War even into the American heartland, the Wilson Administration sent hundreds of thousands of young American recruits – nicknamed 'doughboys' – onto the battlefields of Europe, and tipped the balance in the Allies' favour.

25 years later, the American armed forces were again fighting against the second mutation of Fascist ideology – as espoused by Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. On battlefields as distant from America as tiny islands in the South Pacific, picturesque villages in Italy and desolate towns in Northern Africa as well as on the sea in the Atlantic and in the skies over Germany, the American armed forces made another invaluable contribution to victory.

Yet the fight for freedom wasn't over. Almost as soon as WWII ended a new threat arose, the Red Fascist version of totalitarianism – Soviet Communism. It soon cast its shadow over Eastern Europe as well as parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America. American military might, deployed intelligently and globally, played the key role in neutralizing and then ultimately bankrupting that terrible menace to the Free World. When victory in the Cold War in the late 1980s and early 1990s finally came under the presidencies of Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush, it was because the US armed forces were kept strong enough to deal with the ceaseless probing and provocations of the Soviet Union over nearly half a century.

Since 9/11 the world has been faced with yet another mutation of Fascism – fundamentalist Islamist terrorism. Taking on many of the features of earlier Fascist movements – hatred of

democracy and Christianity, a fanatical anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism, and a desire for utter uniformity – the Islamist terror movement has caused death and destruction wherever it has appeared. The Fascist bacillus has mutated yet again, but it is alive and well.

And yet again, the traditional antidote, the American military, has taken up the task. By taking on the forces of Terror in full-scale wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the US made it clear that it would not permit Fascism to triumph in our time, any more than earlier generations of Americans permitted it to in theirs.

All this has come at great cost – in lives and money. The cost of these precious lives, men and women, fighting for others freedom far from their OWN homes, can never be repaid. But the money – a defense budget that is by far the largest in the world – has been well spent. It has protected the honor, power and prestige of the USA, upon which the cause of freedom ultimately relies.

When the United States armed forces are weak – as they were before the Second World War, when America had only the 14th largest army in the world – the likes of Adolf Hitler are encouraged to make larger and larger demands.

When US armed forces are strong, however, even a superpower like the Soviet Union has to acknowledge its own internal contradictions and inability to overawe the West.

With China rearming massively and posing a growing threat to Western interests and values around the world, and the threat of Islamist fascism still upon us, it is well to learn the central lesson of the past half-century of human experience, which is that for her own sake and that of those who love freedom everywhere, the United States must be militarily pre-eminent.

I'm Andrew Roberts for Prager University.