

The US Doesn't Want to be the "World's Policeman", but Its "Marshal"

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Trump drew the mockery of many when he said that the US doesn't want to be the "world's policeman", but what people don't realize is that cops handle small-time activities such as what in this context would be "peacekeeping", while what the President actually has in mind is a much grander mission of Great Power competition on such a larger scale that the best comparison is to that of America's federal marshals.

The internet collectively let off a loud laugh when Trump [said with a straight face](#) that the US doesn't want to be the "world's policeman", with many social media users instantly mocking him for [striking Syria](#) last month on the false flag basis that it supposedly violated international legal and humanitarian standards through the use of chemical weapons. What these people don't realize, however, is that Trump has something altogether differently in mind than what they think, and that the "[Kraken](#)" doesn't even conceive of his country's attack on Syria as a small-time "police" action but as something much grander and akin to using the country's federal marshals to complicate the large-scale activities of America's adversaries.

Background Concepts

For the non-American readers who may be unfamiliar with what the marshals are, they're the US' oldest law enforcement agency and are many levels higher than regular cops. Due to their federal nature, they operate across state lines and only in instances dealing with serious criminal offenders, unlike policemen who just have a limited geographic jurisdiction and sometimes have to seek the support of more competent judicial and quasi-military authorities (such as the FBI and SWAT teams). Trump is known for thinking big, and true to form, his statement about America not wanting to be the "world's policeman" is a case in point.

Being as savvy as he is of social media sentiment, he knew right away how this would be perceived, and that's partially why he phrased his statement the way that he did. Speaking next to the President of Nigeria, Trump hoped to imply that the presumed responsibilities of the "world's policeman" are those of so-called "peacekeeping" missions such as the disastrous one that took place in the early 1990s in Somalia. The American audience largely understands that to have been a "police operation" with no clear national security interests other than the ambiguous concept of "preserving a rules-based system" which means nothing to the average person.

Police vs. Marshals

That same objective, however, is what drives America's self-designation as the "world's

marshal”, but a unambiguous distinction needs to be made at this point between that role and the former one of the “world’s policeman”. The latter is thought by US decision makers and strategists to deal mostly in the “peacekeeping” realm of small-scale direct military engagement during or after civil wars (even those that are [American-provoked](#)) in “Global South” countries, while the former concerns acts of Great Power competition where the national interest is much more clearly defined and relatively (key word) understandable to many. Both, it should be said, also deal with the “preserving a rules-based system”, but in different ways.

The “world’s policeman”, per the second-mentioned word, operates at a more local level in enforcing US-defined rules and standards within any given country and all the way down to its literally local level such as when responding to ethnic violence within society. The “world’s marshal”, though, operates at a much grander scale in enforcing US-defined rules and standards that uphold the [fading American-led international system of unipolarity](#), thus making it more applicable in responding to multipolar Great Power challengers than non-state ethno-religious militias that fall within the competencies of the “world’s policeman”.

As proof that the US conceives of its mission according to the aforementioned “marshal” role, one need look no further than its [National Security Strategy](#) and [National Defense Strategy](#), both of which outline in the plainest of terms how the US aspires to “contain” Russia, China, and Iran. These policy-guiding documents also signal a strong shift away from the previous “policeman” role and towards this newfound but unstated “marshal” one in focusing more on Great Powers than non-state actors. Like it was earlier said, this also entails “preserving a rules-based system”, but on a much larger scale that will now be explained.

Rules, Rules, Rules

The “Washington Consensus” that took control of the world after the end of the Cold War was designed to indefinitely sustain unipolarity, meaning that every single “rule and standard” was supposed to uphold the US’ global dominance in one way or another. Accordingly, the US has a self-interest in preemptively stopping any prospective challengers to its hegemony (the so-called “[Wolfowitz Doctrine](#)”), which is why it’s now simultaneously at odds with Russia, China, and Iran for different reasons related to this fear and thus feels compelled to respond to them in its “marshal” capacity. On their own, none of them are profoundly shaking the US-led system, but their whole gestalt poses a much more serious systemic threat.

For example, Crimea’s historic reunification with Russia changed internationally recognized post-Soviet borders in Europe via a democratic referendum and secured Moscow’s naval base in the Black Sea, thus thwarting the US’ efforts to have “EuroMaidan” pave the way to future American control of what Westerners have derided as being a “Russian lake”. Similarly, China’s “9-dash line” in the South China Sea stakes out Beijing’s claim to this energy-rich waterway through which a large bulk of the global economy traverses, therefore preventing the US from taking full control of it and blackmailing the People’s Republic. As for Iran, the US has wanted to curb the Islamic Republic’s nuclear program in order to allow its “[Israeli](#)” ally to maintain its military dominance in the Mideast.

Each of these three abovementioned challenges to the US-dictated “rules and standards” of the post-Cold War world collectively combine to present a formidable multipolar push for

reforming the global system and diversifying its stakeholders to the extent that America would no longer be the sole unipolar hegemon. In addition, these three Great Powers are coming together through the Chinese-led One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity to fundamentally transform international economic networks and consequently facilitate the emergence of new political, military, and ultimately strategic models that altogether lead to global paradigmatic changes. US-initiated [Hybrid Wars](#) are being waged to forestall these developments, but they're thus far insufficient to fully stop this process.

Concluding Thoughts

That's why the US is expanding its role from the "world's policeman" to the "world's marshal" in assembling various "[Lead From Behind](#)" coalitions to assist with its "containment" measures on the state-to-state level, ergo why last month's Syrian strikes should be seen less as a "police" operation in responding to a false flag chemical weapons attack and more like the "marshal" one that it truly is in complicating the stabilizing efforts of two of the US' three Great Power challengers in this globally significant battlespace. Police operations aren't usually a big deal but it's always a major event whenever the marshals get involved, which is yet another observation in favor of reframing the Syrian strikes because of how they [confirmed the existence](#) of the New Cold War.

All told, the world should expect Trump to continue carrying out grand military and political actions as he embraces his country's newfound strategic role as its "marshal" in counteracting the multipolar advances of its Great Power adversaries. The US is thinking big, but its critics are still stuck in the same old paradigm of "smallness" in belittling it as "merely" being the "world's policeman" when in reality America itself has reconceptualized its strategic responsibilities on a much larger scale that regrettably appears to be beyond the comprehension of most observers. The sooner that people start taking Trump and his declarations seriously and maturely analyzing his words for what they really mean, then the sooner that the rest of the world will realize what America's new strategy is and begin thinking about the most effective ways to counter it.

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