Yugoslavia Is Not Like Grenada

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Jim Lehrer put the ultimate foreign policy question on the table during the second presidential debate when he ran through the list of eight military actions taken by the last three Presidents and asked the candidates to give a thumbs up or thumbs down. While Gore gave a thumbs down to Somalia, and Bush to Somalia and Haiti, no one pointed out the crucial difference between the Reagan and Bush actions in Grenada and Panama and the Clinton actions in Bosnia and Yugoslavia.
It's getting very tiresome the way so many of the media try to justify Bill Clinton's unconstitutional 78 days of bombing civilians in sovereign, faraway Yugoslavia by comparing what he did to Ronald Reagan's liberation of Grenada. The analogy is false from the get-go.

Reagan's liberation of Grenada, a small island on our own doorstep in the Western Hemisphere, was in furtherance of the Monroe Doctrine, which has been a fixed star in American foreign policy since December 2, 1823. The operative words of the Monroe Doctrine are these: "The political system of the allied powers is essentially different from that of America. We should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety."

The Monroe Doctrine thus defines its parameters for U.S. military action: "this hemisphere" and "dangerous to our peace and safety." Yugoslavia and Bosnia met neither test.

Another key word in the Monroe Doctrine is "system." It is not limited to military aggressions; it prohibits extending the "system" of foreign powers to the Western Hemisphere, recognizing the fundamental difference between our constitutional republic and Old World empires or dictatorships.

The Marquis de Lafayette immediately called the Monroe Doctrine "the best little bit of paper that God ever permitted any man to give the world." Throughout the 19th century, the Monroe Doctrine was successful in keeping Old World dictatorships out of our Hemisphere.

In 1823, the Monroe Doctrine was specifically directed at Imperial Russia when Czar Alexander was trying to colonize our Pacific coast. President James Monroe's courageous statement to preempt this extension of Russian influence was made at a time when America had no standing army and our navy had only five sailing ships.

But we had a proud sense of national identity and national security. Monroe's Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, stated, "There can, perhaps, be no better time for saying, frankly and explicitly, to the Russian government that the future peace of the world cannot be promoted by Russian settlements on any part of the American continent."

In the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the problem was Russia again, and the American people fully backed President John F. Kennedy in forcing Khrushchev to remove the Soviet Union's offensive missiles from Cuba. Unfortunately, Castro remained as a Soviet lackey and Khrushchev taunted us: "Now the remains of this Monroe Doctrine should best be buried, as every dead body is, so that it does not poison the air by its decay."

Proclaiming the death of the Monroe Doctrine was premature, as Mark Twain could have said. Successive U.S. Presidents haven't yet figured out how to cope with Castro, but Ronald Reagan certainly did act decisively to stop the next Russian violation.

In October 1983, the Soviet Union tried to make the island of Grenada function as a Soviet base with supplies from Cuba. The American people fully backed Reagan's use of U.S. troops to counter this threat in the Western Hemisphere.

Historians will probably look back on Ronald Reagan's rescue of Grenada in 1983 as the turning point in official American policy toward Communism, and maybe that's why the media pundits don't explain the Grenada incident for the benefit of today's audiences. Reagan simply saved us from the establishment of another Communist regime in the Western Hemisphere.

The U.S. State Department later published a selection from the 35,000 pounds of captured documents proving how the Soviet Union was planning to use Grenada as a base of operations and supplies. Grenada was becoming a major Soviet-aligned military fortress staffed with Soviet military personnel.

Grenada was being prepared as an air base for Soviet military jets, a port for Soviet vessels, and a base for exporting revolution. One document quoted a Soviet military chief as saying, "Nineteen years ago we had only Cuba. Now we have Cuba, Nicaragua and Grenada -- we are making progress."

The Monroe Doctrine is part of our history and our heritage and is essential to our national security. Presidents' actions in implementing it through two centuries have enjoyed as near unanimous popular support as is possible in a democracy.

Bill Clinton's actions in Yugoslavia were certainly not to defend U.S. "peace and safety." The purpose was defined by his Rhodes scholar buddy and NATO Supreme Commander of the Yugoslav bombing, General Wesley Clark, who declared on C-Span on September 26 that our goal is "to build a multi-ethnic, democratic society in Kosovo."