



## Rolling over for no reason

Until this week, I hadn't heard of Kim Darroch, the recently resigned British Ambassador to the United States. He seems to be an honourable man and he has resigned on the basis that he can no longer do his job, or possibly for personal reasons: his life might have been hellish, under a new scrutiny.

I understand why he offered his resignation. But unless it was that latter reason (i.e. to protect him on a personal level), I do not understand why his resignation was accepted. For Darroch did nothing wrong.

There are times in international relations when 'not backing down' has horrendous consequences, when it ratchets up a tension that will lead to war; in those circumstances, there are times when, tempting though it is to go for a fight, following through on this is likely to lead to violence.

This isn't one of those times. Would it really matter much if for a few weeks, the ambassador's drinks parties had only a limited attendance? Would it really matter if the 'soft' influence of an ambassador was diluted for a few weeks or months?

To accept Darroch's resignation is simply giving way to a bully just because the person is a bully, and it carries a very short term political gain.

More broadly, what it brings into relief is the difference between showing strength and showing aggression.

It seems to me that all you needed to do to show strength in this circumstance was just to back your man.

It wouldn't indicate aggression of any kind; in no way, would it be a violent response. It would simply be a sign of not backing down.

Jesus was someone who embodied strength and not aggression. In more modern times, Martin Luther King was an example of a person of deep strength, who espoused non-violent resistance to an oppressor.

Now Donald Trump is not an oppressor; he's merely a grown-up toddler. But the principles that Luther King put forward remain the same: you stand up for yourself, and refuse to back down despite those in power telling you to give up and that you're wrong.

There is a time and a place for a show of strength. All too often, a 'show of strength' is a false code for heedlessly upping the ante and behaving in a war-like manner. Countless wars, like Vietnam and Iraq, have been entered into by Western countries on the grounds of 'not backing down'. They have been wrong.

Here we have an example where not backing down could be done entirely peacefully. And yet we (by which I mean the British) didn't do it. We chose to kowtow. Shame on us.