

The Passy Press

Letters to the Editor

From: Peter M. Barnet pmbarnet@undisclosed.com
To: Nick Gardiner enpg@thepassypress.com
Sent: Oct 4, 2015, at 2:26 PM,
Subject: Daniel M. Simpson Essay: Migration into Europe an American responsibility

Dear Sir,

Fine piece! I agree with him but the idea that Bush went into Iraq to get re-elected is a new thought. Not sure about that and we cannot discount that Assad's response to his uprising is also a major cause of the refugee crisis today. I have been thinking about the following for some time. It is related and I would love your reaction.

I believe American foreign policy has been shortsighted and feckless since the fall of the Soviet Union. We humiliated Russia with the expansion of NATO in the 1990s rather than integrate them into the West with a "Marshall Plan" (as Jim Baker claims he advocated). After 9/11 we went after Bin Laden in Afghanistan with international support but let him get away when General Franks sent locals to capture him rather than US Marines. This was an incomprehensible military decision unless the Bush administration did not want to capture him. A captured or killed Bin Laden would have likely ended American intervention in the Middle East; Bin Laden at large gave Bush free range to broaden US presence there.

I think Bush went into Iraq to "finish the job" his father failed to do in 1991. Bush 41 had turned down the neocons, Cheney and Wolfowitz when they advocated going to Baghdad after the US had thrown Hussein out of Kuwait. He lacked a UN mandate for it and feared the very quagmire his son created twelve years later. Bush 43 with the same team went in and broke an Iraq that with Saddam was the only bulwark against Iran. This uncorked the Sunni Shiite civil war, which underlies the region's chaos today and cost the US a massive loss in soft power as well as lives and money.

Obama has not succeeded where Bush failed. And his policy has lacked coherence. His failure to follow through on his Red Line to Assad when the latter crossed it further exacerbated the Syrian conflict, weakened the President and US credibility and convinced Putin he did not have to fear him. Crimea, Ukraine and now Russia in Syria are the result. Putin is perceived at home as the patriot who has ended the period of Russian humiliation. We are flirting with another cold war.

I believe the two headline events that bring us to the chaos and tragedy of today is the Invasion of Iraq in 2003 and Obama's failure to follow through on his Red Line to Assad. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, United States foreign policy has squandered the US's unprecedented influence as the world's only superpower. And we have done this to ourselves as global power shifts toward the East.

Perhaps it is time to get out of the Middle East. We do not understand it; we cannot change it and we no longer need Saudi oil. Staying only weakens us further. Russia lacks the means to do much there and will probably get caught in the quagmire, too. Politically, the only red line left to draw and enforce is the security of Israel.

Ambassador Simpson is right. The US needs a foreign policy. We do not have one.

Sincerely,

Peter

Peter Barnet has been an Associate Professor of Global Communications, at the American University of Paris and former EVP and Chief Client Officer at Young & Rubicon. He is resident of Paris and a graduate of Yale College.