

The Passy Press

Letters to the Editor

From: Sandy Cochran scochran@undisclosed.com
To: Nick Gardiner enpg@thepassypress.com
Date: October 7, 2015
Subject: “Ends/Ways/Means of ‘Mea Culpa’ or ‘Lead from Within’”

Dear Sir,

In his recent article, “Migration into Europe is an American Responsibility”, Daniel Simpson posits what at first appears to be an intriguing answer to a serious problem. However, a close analysis reveals a continuing flaw, including his, in the framing of US policy and strategy. He sets the stage for a long range U.S. solution to a nagging contemporary issue (ongoing turmoil in the Mid-East) by stating that it is based upon “American caused” problem, the misuse of airpower that caused the flood of regional immigrants. Consequently, Ambassador Simpson’s article might be better entitled “The Mea Culpa Solution”. In my view, more appropriately should be “Lead from Within.”

Yet, in all fairness, his proposed solution is not the first misuse of the standard four-part framework for planning and execution of strategy, Ends - the overall objective, the end-state; Ways - the plan or campaign to achieve that end-state; Means - the resources allocated and applied by the way; Risk - the compensation to anticipate any lack of proper balance of ends, ways, and means.

See the standard Ends/Ways/Means/Risk format as used at the National War College below:



Over the past two decades, I have used this simple four-part framework in my study and teaching of U.S. conflicts of the 20th and now the 21st Century - the two world wars, Korea, the Cold War, Vietnam, the two Iraqi conflicts, and the ongoing Afghanistan War - at the U.S. war colleges as well as various academic institutions. Complimented by personal participation in the Vietnam War and visits to the Iraqi and Afghanistan battlefields, my analysis and participation has validated the 20th Century ideal “U.S. Way of War” – that is to achieve the end-state through overwhelming resources. Dramatic evidence of this comes in the middle of the 20th Century (World War II) and its conclusion (The Cold War and The 1st Gulf War). Yet this does not hold up when compared to US badly flawed strategy using the four-part model revealing failure to match Means and Ways during Korea, Vietnam, the 2nd Iraq War and now Afghanistan conflicts.

This mishandling underwrites the thesis of Ambassador Simpson’s article, in his relationship between the Ways and the Means, that is, between the plan and campaign and the resources, to achieve the end-state, ceasefire and peace in the Middle East. The Means that he chooses to isolate – airpower - is, in truth, but one of many military and diplomatic factors available. And within his analysis, the Ways were applied differently in Iraq and Syria. In Iraq, it was an element of the Bush “our way or the highway” Way based upon overwhelming US military resources. In Syria and Libya, it was linked to the Obama “leading from the rear” through air power as opposed “boots on the ground” Way, presumably to avoid ground Risk.

Ambassador Simpson suggests a minor Way that ignores the issue at hand no doubt motivated by considerable less Risk and equally less influence. Essentially, it is a mea culpa - “we’re sorry for what we did but here is what we will do: admit more immigrants.” He walks away from the window of opportunity at hand to “lead from within”, that relies upon negotiation and discussion, inherent within a diplomatic and economic Way, rather than the military Way that is limited to ground or air power.

Interestingly, his Way does leads to one to consider “leading from the within” through a coalition with the requisite resources, one for which there are historical precedents - the U.S. successful experience in World War II with the British, particularly in the European Theater, where lack of material resources finally overcame the resource of time. A more contemporary successful example was the U.S. agreement with its regional allies during the 1st Gulf War when a strict and critical time-line of withdrawal was applied to the overwhelming resources available.

“Leading from within” has been tried but seems to have been forgotten in the post 9/11 era; yet it is certainly worth the Risk as an increasingly critical Way in the making and executing of 21st century policy. Again, the risk can only be mitigated with a long-term end-state aligned against applicable and relevant resources. Of course, the elephant in the negotiating room might ultimately force the U.S. into a strategy where Means is not the final arbitrator, but rather the Way or even adjustment of the Ends. While this is definitely not the 20th Century Way of war, it does suggest 21st Century Way of war.

This current window of opportunity cannot be lost with a pittance of “mea culpa” as not only is it not the answer but one that would, in fact, take years of effort to implement. Rather the Way is to involve regional as well as global actors in a coalition with the U.S. playing the role of leadership from within. As such, it would not be tied to overwhelming Means in general and follow a diplomatic, as opposed to military, Way ahead.

By applying former Secretary of State General Colin Powell logic that “you broke it, you own it”, Ambassador Simpson has apparently fallen into the trap of urging a step that fails to address

the long range end-state for the Middle East using imbedded standard Ends/Ways/Means/Risk analysis. Sadly both the authors of the “Pottery Barn” approach and that of “mea culpa” way are graduates of the National War College that preaches the four part framework as the center of its teaching!

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