

The Passy Press®

Founded by Benjamin Franklin - 1777
Passy, France

“You broke it, you bought it,”

Colin L. Powell, former U.S. Secretary of State, former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

MIGRATION INTO EUROPE IS AN AMERICAN RESPONSIBILITY

By Daniel H. Simpson

Everyone appears to see the ravaging wave of migrants flooding Europe from the Middle East and North Africa as a European problem.

It isn't. It's an American-caused problem. Working from the “Pottery Barn” principle, as stated by former Secretary of State and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin L. Powell, “You broke it, you bought it.” In the case of the tragic wave of migration into Europe, it is a direct result of reckless U.S. bombing and other assaults in the countries producing the aspiring European immigrants. These include Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and -- to come -- Yemen.

The home in Syria of the little boy found drowned on a Turkish beach was Kobane, a city we had bombed back into the Stone Age.

U.S. bombing of, or support of other countries' (including Saudi Arabia's and the United Arab Emirates') attacks on the refugee-producing countries has been directly instrumental in destroying their economies and societies so that they are now uninhabitable. That is why these thousands of people are on the run, undertaking their dangerous, painful journeys to find new lives elsewhere. Our bombing needs to simply stop.

Why we attack these places isn't altogether clear. Afghanistan was initially comprehensible. The Taliban and its hosting of al-Qaida, which attacked the United States homeland on Sept. 11, 2001, had to be dealt with. That was achieved by early 2002, but we are still in Afghanistan, bombing and killing with drones, still trying to govern the place by proxy.

Iraq we attacked in 2003, on “intelligence” regarding weapons of mass destruction and non-existent Saddam Hussein cooperation with al-Qaida that turned out to be false. President George W. Bush actually had us attack Iraq to get himself reelected president in 2004 as a “war president.” We're still there 12 years later. The situation in Iraq is still unfavorable to our interests, resistant to our “guidance.” It still also bleeds refugees, not to mention lending credibility to some of our truly nasty opponents, the Sunni-based Islamic State as example.

No one would argue that Libya's Muammar Gadhafi by 2011 was not a demented tyrant, but would anyone like to argue that the chaos in Libya now, permitting waves of human smugglers to launch rubber dinghies full of helpless migrants from its shores toward southern Europe, is better? That U.S. enterprise was the work of then Secretary of State Hillary R. Clinton, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power, National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice, nominated Agency for International Development Director Gayle Smith, and other ignorant U.S. geniuses working for President Barack Obama. The Congressional hearings on Benghazi are just silly; U.S. participation in the overthrow of organized government in Libya was serious business indeed. It never makes sense to get rid of one government if you don't have an idea of what will come next.

The Passy Press

U.S. involvement in Syria is unfocused. Our unquestioning support of the Kurds, in Iraq, Syria, and, by association, Turkey since the 1990s, risks stability, peace and the civil contract in Turkey, America's ally since its troops fought beside ours during the Korean War. Mr. Obama stated in 2011, based on what one can only imagine, that Syrian president Bashar al-Assad was finished. Mr. Assad seems to have missed the signal and is still around, even though his troops have lost much ground in Syria. The so-called moderate Syrian forces that the United States trained and armed have turned out to be what the North Koreans call South Korean forces, "armed puppet gangs."

In the meantime, Syrians continue to pour out of Syria toward Western Europe in tragic waves of human misery. The sense in which the Western Europeans are responsible for them -- as opposed to us -- is the degree to which they -- particularly the United Kingdom -- participate with us in pummeling Syria with bombs, making it uninhabitable.

It is likely that Yemen will soon have joined Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria as a major source of hopeless migrants pouring into Europe. Yemen is the poorest Arab state, with a population of 26 million. It is the scene of a three-cornered internal war among Sunni Muslims backed by Saudi Arabia, Sunni Muslims led by an earlier longtime president, and Shiite Houthi Muslims. The Saudis have been bombing the place since March, with American-provided F-15 fighter-bombers, which are almost certainly supported if not flown in some cases by Americans in Saudi Arabia. Al-Qaida is profiting from the internal Yemeni conflict. Why the United States is involved at all -- apart from having sold the Saudis the planes -- is unclear. Our responsibility for the carnage in Yemen is obvious.

What we are doing in the region overall is unfocused. It may be that we have wrecked some of these countries to attract attention away from the Israel-Palestine issue, to Israel's advantage. Some of it may have to do with American defense contractors -- big political campaign contributors, they -- wanting to sell arms to various customers in the Persian Gulf, most recently \$1 billion worth to Saudi Arabia. What is clear is that our military actions in the region have opened the floodgates to people finding that they can no longer live in their former, now ruined, nations and wanting to seek a better life elsewhere.

U.S. willingness to take just 10,000 of them in 2016 is shameful, given the extent of our responsibility for the conditions that produced the migration.

America needs to offer now to take at least 100,000 of them, putting a real dent in the problem facing Europe and the Middle East. The offer would be based on our 310 million population, our responsibility for the situation that exists, and American traditions of hospitality to people fleeing at risk. We also need a coherent foreign policy in the Middle East -- one currently missing in action, one that does not take bombing and drone attacks as its first choice.

Daniel H. Simpson is a 35-year career American diplomat who served as U.S. Ambassador to the Central African Republic, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, formerly Zaire, as well as in other African, European and Middle Eastern countries, is now an Associate Editor of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, and on its editorial board.

Copyright Daniel H. Simpson – 2015