

## CONFESSIONS OF A FENCE SITTER

Okay, I admit it. In the 2008 election, I could not decide between Hilary Clinton and Barack Obama. Ultimately, Bob Casey convinced me to support the man I considered too inexperienced and questionable to be President of the United States, Barack Obama. In the general election I was again torn. I love the experience and sincerity of John McCain but, like many other Americans, I was terrified about the abyss into which the American economy was clearly sliding.

I supported the President's stimulus package, although it was not as job creationist as it should have been. I thought the President lost his way on healthcare reform, aided by cynical Republicans who wanted to enrich the pharmaceutical and medical industries. "It's the economy, stupid" seems to have been forgotten, although clearly the administration has come to its senses on that score.

In foreign affairs, the administration has received high marks. We killed the man that eluded the Bush administration for years. We pulled out of the war in Iraq that the last administration got us into using misinformation and bad intelligence. No one seems to know what to do about Afghanistan, the sewer pit into which many empires have fallen.

One clear deficiency, however, is our temporizing with Syria. The small nation of Syria which lies north of Israel and just east of Lebanon has been one of the bad boys of international politics. President Assad and his father have slaughtered tens of thousands of their own people. They run a police state and have destabilized every American interest throughout the world. Syria has been the gun carrier for the anti-American regime in Iran. Syria is a darling of the Russians and the Chinese because they enjoy undermining American influence. Syria has occupied Lebanon, disrupting the traditional balance between Christians and Muslims. The Christians in Lebanon have been murdered, demoralized and rendered irrelevant like Christians in all Muslim nations. Nothing could be better for the selfish interest of the United State then to get rid of Assad and to neuter Syria. Syria is the link between the imperialist pretentions of Russia/China and the corrupt despots of the Muslim world. The United States unhesitatingly used NATO and Europe to oust Moammar Gadhafi from Libya. Our nation has never shrunk from gun boat diplomacy when its most serious self-interests are at stake.

Syria is imploding in a frenzy of a blood orgy. The crucial link between Iran on the one hand and the Russian/Chinese juggernaut on the other can finally be eliminated. It will not take any United States troops. All the United States has to do

is announce its support for the rebels and do what it can militarily and economically to aid the rebels. At a time when leadership is called for, the United States is stumbling terribly and missing a tremendous opportunity.

All the great leaders of this nation from George Washington onward understood the meaning of national self-interest. Thomas Jefferson, critical of Washington and Adams for international adventurism in supporting the English against the French, did not hesitate to fund a secret operation in North Africa in order to rid the Mediterranean of the Barbary pirates. Teddy Roosevelt was a hero for being a “rough rider” in Cuba, in order to give the boot on the butt to Spain. We chased France and other interfering intermeddlers out of the American southern hemisphere. In the War of 1812, we even tried to invade Canada.

Needless to say we need to pick our international fights carefully. Syria presents a golden opportunity to enhance the security of the United States and undermine the influence of those who salivate at our downfall. It is odd that we have cut Syria so much slack. We know that Syria has destroyed the Christian Muslim equilibrium in Lebanon. Syria has promulgated the murder of Lebanese Christian leaders. Syria has advocated and funded terrorism throughout the world. Syria has been the client state of Russia and China. There is no good that can come to the United States interests from **not** supporting the downfall of the terrorist regime in Syria.

The failure of the United States to support the rebels in Syria also undermines our only friend and the only Democracy the Middle East has ever known, Israel. Syria gleefully supports Hamas terrorists in Gaza and would like nothing more than to control the corrupt Fatah on the west bank of the Jordan River. Syria thirsts for weakening Jordan, one of the only Arab friends of the United States in the Middle East. Jordan, just to the east of Israel, has a peace treaty with the Jewish state and a virtually unguarded border. I have driven that entire border and saw not a single soldier on either side guarding it. Unfortunately Jordan is governed by Hashemites who are a minority in their own land. Jordan has no Democracy and its restive Palestinian majority could easily develop and access relationship with the Syrian/Iranian/Russian/Chinese trouble-makers.

If any of this sounds harsh, it is nothing more than the reality that is today’s world. Prior presidents, whom we call great, spoke up against similar outrages. Theodore Roosevelt at the beginning of the Twentieth Century assailed the Wilson regime and his own fellow Republican, William Howard Taft, alleging a weak foreign policy. The Turks were allowed to slaughter the Armenians. Theodore Roosevelt spoke up against that outrage. The man, for whom the teddy bear was named, saw

World War I coming and doubtless would have prevented it had he been president. Had Lincoln not stood up to those who wanted to divide our country, our nation would permanently have been split in two. Roosevelt dallied in preparing the United States for World War II until our nation was attacked at Pearl Harbor.

We can only thank the good Lord that the Israelis never gave back the Golan Heights to Syria after creating that buffer subsequent to the 1967 War of Jewish Survival. Had Israel listened to American administration and given that precious land back, the cut throats in Damascus would now be on the doorstep of Jerusalem. Recently I heard a “moderate” Syrian Muslim speaking on the issue of world peace. She refused to utter the name “Israel.” This was at an event commemorating 9/11 and she referred to “whomever attacked the World Trade Center” refusing to acknowledge that the catastrophe was caused by fundamentalist Islam. Keep in mind this is an American who participates in “dialog.”

The United States must speak up vociferously and forcefully against Syrian tyranny. It is time for the United States to demand the ousting of President Assad and to support the rebel cause with money and arms. This approach will serve the interests of the United States around the world and send an important message to our enemies both domestic and abroad.

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