

May 1, 2014

The collapse of the president's foreign policy is reaching critical mass. The head of the Council of Foreign Relations, and even Maureen Dowd have seen enough. But, we will start with our regulars first. Here's [Jonathan Tobin](#) posting on the man who has learned nothing.

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*History will judge the rights and wrongs of the Iraq debate and right now it looks as if those who wished to stay out have the better argument—though that is as much the result of Obama's failure to follow up on the victories won in the 2007 surge than the inherent fault of the original plan. But being right on Iraq, if indeed he really was correct, tells us nothing about what the best course of action is on Syria, Iran, or Ukraine. It should be remembered that George W. Bush re-evaluated his Iraq strategy after 2006 and his course correction enabled him to hand off a conflict to Obama that had been largely won.*

*Obama remains forever locked in a time warp labeled 2008. Making a blunder is one thing but, as the president has demonstrated, not having the grace or the wit to recognize that you've made a mistake is far worse. Based on today's performance and the certain prospects of future humiliations at the hands of Putin, Assad, and Iran's ayatollahs, Barack Obama will go down in history as the president who learned nothing.*

**Craig Pirrong** is next.

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*Speaking of the last issue. Kerry was quoted making a remark saying that if it continues on its present course, Israel will turn into an apartheid state. He made these remarks in front of Russians. Who duly leaked them.*

*Why would he say anything with any Russian in earshot, especially in the aftermath of the “f\*ck the EU” leak fiasco?*

*With such clueless morons in charge, no wonder US credibility and influence is imploding. But if you challenge Obama on the implosion, he explodes.*

*This is where we are, and it is not a good place to be.*

**Jennifer Rubin** calls it the "worst foreign policy team ever". And she was just talking about barry, hagel, and kerry. Don't forget ben rhodes and susan rice.

*We've made the point that President Obama, like any president, is ultimately responsible for his foreign policy. This is especially true in this administration because virtually all policy-making (or policy-avoidance) is centered in the Oval Office. But this does not mean the president's advisers are immune from criticism. To the contrary, the Obama national security team is arguably the worst in history.*

*Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel is widely disparaged on the Hill and by national security insiders. His statement in his confirmation hearing that he wouldn't be making policy turns out to be true.*

*Then there is Secretary of State John F. Kerry, who previously suggested an intifada would occur and the boycott movement would intensify if Israel did not make peace. He has struck again, suggesting Israel would become an "apartheid state" if it didn't make peace. This outrageous comment was flawed in two respects. ...*

**Paul Mirengoff** posts on the "apartheid" comment.

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*But Kerry craved attention when he returned from Vietnam and he still thirsts for it. Above all, I believe, he wants that Nobel Peace Prize. As he feels it slipping away, his rhetoric becomes increasingly desperate.*

*But maybe I'm wrong. Maybe his utterances are simply the product of a third-rate intellect.*

Now **Richard Haass** of the Council of Foreign Relations.

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*Middle East. What has been missing is the commitment and discipline to implement this change in policy. ...*

*... The default U.S. policy option in the Middle East seems to be regime change, consisting of repeated calls for authoritarian leaders to leave power. First it was [Hosni Mubarak](#) in Egypt, then Moammar Gadhafi in Libya, followed by Bashar Assad in Syria.*

*Yet history shows that ousting leaders can be difficult, and even when it is not, it can be extremely hard to bring about a stable, alternative authority that is better for American preferences. The result is that the U.S. often finds itself with an uncomfortable choice: Either it must back off its declared goals, which makes America look weak and encourages widespread defiance, or it has to make good on its aims, which requires enormous investments in blood, treasure and time.*

*The Obama administration has largely opted for the former, i.e., feckless approach. The most egregious case is Syria, where the president and others declared that "Assad must go" only to do little to bring about his departure. Military support of opposition elements judged to be acceptable has been minimal. Worse, President Obama avoided using force in the wake of clear chemical-weapons use by the Syrian government, a decision that raised doubts far and wide about American dependability and damaged what little confidence and potential the non-jihadist opposition possessed. ..*

Finally, [Maureen Dowd](#) tells him to stop whining.

*... An American president should never say, as you did Monday in Manila when you got frustrated in a press conference with the Philippine president: "You hit singles; you hit doubles. Every once in a while, we may be able to hit a home run."*

*Especially now that we have this scary World War III vibe with the Russians, we expect the president, especially one who ran as Babe Ruth, to hit home runs.*

*In the immortal words of Earl Weaver, the Hall of Famer who managed the Baltimore Orioles: "The key to winning baseball games is pitching, fundamentals, and three-run homers." A singles hitter doesn't scare anybody.*

*It doesn't feel like leadership. It doesn't feel like you're in command of your world.*

*How can we accept these reduced expectations and truculent passivity from the man who offered himself up as the moral beacon of the world, even before he was elected?*

*As [Leon Wieseltier](#) wrote in the latest [New Republic](#), oppressed and threatened swaths of the world are jittery and despairing "because the United States seems no longer reliable in emergencies, which it prefers to meet with meals ready to eat."*

*The Times's [Mark Landler](#), who traveled with the president on his Asia trip, [reported that Obama](#) will try to regain the offensive, including a graduation address at West Point putting his foreign policy in context.*

*Mr. President, don't you know that we're speeched out? It's not what we need right now.*

*You should take a lesson from Adam Silver, a nerdy technocrat who, in his first big encounter with a crazed tyrant, managed to make the job of N.B.A. commissioner seem much more powerful than that of president of the United States.*

*Silver took the gutsy move of banning cretinous Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling for life, after many people speculated that there was little the N.B.A. chief could do except cave. But Silver realized that even if Sterling tries to fight him in court (and wins) he will look good because he stood up for what was right. ...*

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## Contentions

### The President Who Has Learned Nothing

by Jonathan S. Tobin

[In his remarks at a press conference today](#) in the Philippines, President Obama more or less acknowledged that his strategy for restraining Russian aggression isn't going to work. When pressed on a second round of minimal sanctions that do little to punish the regime of Vladimir Putin, let alone impact the Russian economy, the president didn't promise much in the way of success. "We don't know yet if it's going to work," he admitted. Given that [there is no example in history of such a limited sanctions campaign](#) with no threat of force on the table, nor tangible plans to bolster Ukraine's ability to defend itself, ever working, he did well to lower expectations. But rather than own up to his impotence, the president lashed out at those who have been urging a more vigorous effort to help the Ukrainians, including the shipment of arms and reinforcing the American presence in those NATO nations that were once part of the tsarist/Soviet empire that Putin seeks to reassemble.

As far as the president is concerned, anyone who might have been wrong about the wisdom of invading Iraq should just shut up about using force or anything more than the charade of resistance to Russian ambitions he has employed or in doing something about the ongoing human-rights catastrophe in Syria. A lengthy and somewhat whiney diatribe about Syria and Russia policy culminated in this extraordinary statement:

The point is that for some reason many who were proponents of what I consider to be a disastrous decision to go into Iraq haven't really learned the lesson of the last decade, and they keep on just playing the same note over and over again.

Whether Obama was [referring specifically to former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice](#), who expressed a desire for a more robust response to Russia, or just neoconservatives in general, who have been lamenting his "lead from behind" approach to foreign policy, wasn't immediately clear. But the president's sensitivity about his failures in Syria and Russia and anger at the chutzpah of his critics in pointing out just how disastrous his conduct of foreign policy has been was apparent. But though he may pride himself on having opposed the conflict in Iraq—the issue that helped gain him the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008—history did not stop on January 2009. In the sixth year of his presidency with a lengthy resume of foreign-policy failure, the best Obama can do

is to attempt to re-litigate Iraq. While Iraq war advocates have largely acknowledged their mistakes, Obama isn't willing to even acknowledge his, let alone learn from them.

The president argues that the use of force by the West in Syria would do nothing now to solve the problems created by a bloody three-year-old civil war. He even claims his retreat on Syria that effectively guaranteed the survival of the Assad regime and handed control over the issue of chemical weapons to Putin had solved the problem even though it appears to have done nothing of the kind. He went on to claim that he had "mobilized the international community" and that as a result of his heroic leadership, "Russia has never been more isolated."

Do people actually think that somehow us sending some additional arms into Ukraine could potentially deter the Russian army? Or are we more likely to deter them by applying the sort of international pressure, diplomatic pressure, and economic pressure that we're applying?

The answer to the latter question is so obvious that it is troubling that the president even posed it. We don't know whether Putin, who was sufficiently uncertain of a Western response in 2004 and 2005 during Ukraine's Orange Revolution to refrain from attacking the former Russian possession, would think twice if the West sent more arms and aid to Kiev. But we do know that Putin is laughing up his sleeve at the ineffectual response that Obama has put forward in the wake of his seizure of Ukraine. Having seen what he could get away with there, he's now further testing Ukraine and the West with provocations along its eastern border. The result is that after the collapse of Obama's resolve on Syria, the surrender to Iran's demands in the nuclear negotiations, and the humiliation in Eastern Europe, America's standing in the world has never been lower.

President Obama arrived in the White House in 2009 determined not to repeat his predecessor's mistakes. But as with every general who sought to win the next war with the winning strategies employed in the last one, he has now a record of colossal miscalculations of his own to defend.

History will judge the rights and wrongs of the Iraq debate and right now it looks as if those who wished to stay out have the better argument—though that is as much the result of Obama's failure to follow up on the victories won in the 2007 surge than the inherent fault of the original plan. But being right on Iraq, if indeed he really was correct, tells us nothing about what the best course of action is on Syria, Iran, or Ukraine. It should be remembered that George W. Bush re-evaluated his Iraq strategy after 2006 and his course correction enabled him to hand off a conflict to Obama that had been largely won.

Obama remains forever locked in a time warp labeled 2008. Making a blunder is one thing but, as the president has demonstrated, not having the grace or the wit to recognize that you've made a mistake is far worse. Based on today's performance and the certain prospects of future humiliations at the hands of Putin, Assad, and Iran's ayatollahs, Barack Obama will go down in history as the president who learned nothing.

## Streetwise Professor

### Punch Line to the Geneva Joke

by Craig Pirrong

The day that Geneva was announced, I ridiculed the idea that the OSCE (**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**) would be able to enforce any deal to withdraw anti-Kiev forces from government buildings, check points, etc. The seizure of an OSCE delegation in Slaviansk by the Russians/Russian tools, and the subsequent public display of the European members of this team, proves that ridicule was more than justified. It is the punchline to the joke that is Geneva.

Despite the seizure and humiliation of a group of European military personnel carrying diplomatic passports, the Euros are still shrinking from doing anything that might risk offending Vlad. Because he might turn off their precious gas. Or maybe Siemens won't get as much business.

[The NYT reports that the administration is shrinking right along with them, not wanting to embarrass the poor dears by imposing punitive sanctions.](#)

Speaking of jokes, here is Obama's standup routine:

"The notion that for us to go forward with sectoral sanctions on our own without the Europeans would be the most effective deterrent to Mr. Putin, I think, is factually wrong," Mr. Obama told reporters in Asia, where he is traveling. "We're going to be in a stronger position to deter Mr. Putin when he sees that the world is unified." He added: "For example, say we're not going to allow certain arms sales to Russia — just to take an example — but every European defense contractor backfills what we do, then it's not very effective."

Sorry. The world unified in pusillanimity is hardly a deterrent to Putin. The US and a few stalwart allies acting on their own in a robust way would be much more effective.

[Obama totally lost it in Asia in response to a question by Fox News's Ed Henry:](#)

"As you end this trip, I don't think I have to remind you there have been a lot of unflattering portraits of your foreign policy right now," Henry said. "And rather than get into all the details or red lines, excedera, I'd like to give you a chance to lay out what your vision is more than five years into office, what you think the Obama doctrine is in terms of what your guiding principle is on all of these crises, and how you answer those critics who say they think the doctrine is weakness."

"Well, Ed, I doubt that I'm going to have time to lay out my entire foreign policy doctrine," the President responded, adding "And there are actually some complimentary pieces as well about my foreign policy, but I'm not sure you ran them."

The President then went on to attack those criticisms, point by point, noting that "Typically, criticism of our foreign policy has been directed at the failure to use military force," and asking "why is it that everybody is so eager to use military force after we've just gone through a decade of war at enormous costs to our troops and to our budget? And what is it exactly that these critics think would have been accomplished?"

“My job as Commander-in-Chief is to deploy military force as a last resort, and to deploy it wisely,” he continued. “And, frankly, most of the foreign policy commentators that have questioned our policies would go headlong into a bunch of military adventures that the American people had no interest in participating in and would not advance our core security interests.”

On Syria, the President pointed out that his critics “say, no, no, no, we don’t mean sending in troops,” and asked “Well, what do you mean?”

“Well, you should be assisting the opposition — well, we’re assisting the opposition,” President Obama said, then asked “What else do you mean? Well, perhaps you should have taken a strike in Syria to get chemical weapons out of Syria. Well, it turns out we’re getting chemical weapons out of Syria without having initiated a strike. So what else are you talking about? And at that point it kind of trails off.”

On Ukraine, the President asked of those critics, “What else should we be doing? Well, we shouldn’t be putting troops in, the critics will say. That’s not what we mean. Well, okay, what are you saying? Well, we should be arming the Ukrainians more. Do people actually think that somehow us sending some additional arms into Ukraine could potentially deter the Russian army? Or are we more likely to deter them by applying the sort of international pressure, diplomatic pressure and economic pressure that we’re applying?”

“The point is that for some reason many who were proponents of what I consider to be a disastrous decision to go into Iraq haven’t really learned the lesson of the last decade, and they keep on just playing the same note over and over again,” the President said. “Why? I don’t know.”

Appalling. Proof that Obama is the thinnest skinned president ever. And his response has the opposite effect of what he intended: it lends credence to the criticism. It is also classic Obama. Dishonest and partisan. Blaming his political opponents or his long-departed predecessors for his failures. Total war against an army of straw men.

No one is seriously arguing for military involvement in Ukraine. But they-we, for I am included-are arguing for far more robust economic measures. Funny Obama totally ignores that. He knocks down arguments no one makes and ignores the ones they do.

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Why would he say anything with any Russian in earshot, especially in the aftermath of the “f\*ck the EU” leak fiasco?

With such clueless morons in charge, no wonder US credibility and influence is imploding. But if you challenge Obama on the implosion, he explodes.

This is where we are, and it is not a good place to be.

## Right Turn

### The worst foreign policy team ever?

by Jennifer Rubin

We've made the point that President Obama, like any president, is ultimately responsible for his foreign policy. This is especially true in this administration because virtually all policy-making (or policy-avoidance) is centered in the Oval Office. But this does not mean the president's advisers are immune from criticism. To the contrary, the Obama national security team is arguably the worst in history.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel is widely disparaged on the Hill and by [national security insiders](#). His statement in his confirmation hearing that he wouldn't be making policy turns out to be true.

Then there is Secretary of State John F. Kerry, who previously suggested an intifada would occur and the boycott movement would intensify if Israel did not make peace. He has struck again, suggesting [Israel would become an "apartheid state" if it didn't make peace](#). This outrageous comment was flawed in two respects.

First, who is in the way of peace here? The Palestinian Authority walked away from the table and is now (again) in league with Hamas. [Calls for the U.S. to cut off aid](#) to the PA as required by law are increasing once again. Several lawmakers raised the subject last week; today [Sen. Rand Paul \(R-Ky.\) joined them](#). How then can Israel "make peace" when confronted with a terrorist unity government? Perhaps Kerry should stop insulting and threatening the Jewish state and start working on penalties for the PA. The PA not only left talks and is trying to gain recognition unilaterally via international organizations, but it also chose the unity government over the peace process

In fact, cutting off aid to the PA is not wise given its anti-terrorism cooperation with Israel. A knowledgeable former U.S. official tells Right Turn: "Abbas will say Hamas is not in the government because he'll have a non-party government of technocrats. But those will be fellow-travelers, including some selected by Hamas. We should say we will cut off American aid to any entity — any ministry, for example — headed by an individual who is not committed to the three Quartet principles: recognition of Israel, renunciation of violence, and respect for all previously signed agreements," he explained. "That way we will at least be insisting that all Palestinian officials must be pledged to peace."

Moreover, the accusation that Israel now or ever has been akin to South Africa is belied by the facts. Suggesting that Israel operates a system of racist segregation and repression of blacks in South Africa is the sort of language regularly used by Israel's enemies to delegitimize Israel. In condemning the comment, the Anti-Defamation League released a statement: "It is startling and deeply disappointing that a diplomat so knowledgeable and experienced about democratic Israel chose to use such an inaccurate and incendiary term. We appreciate Mr. Kerry's deep concern for



Israel and his desires to ensure that it have a future of peace and security. Even if he used the repugnant language of Israel's adversaries and accusers to express concern for Israel's future, it was undiplomatic, unwise and unfair. Such references are not seen as expressions of friendship and support."

More vociferously, the conservative Emergency Committee for Israel declared:

Secretary Kerry's musings on the Jewish state's dire future have become a regular feature of his public remarks. His latest prediction follows other statements in recent months that have in effect threatened Israel — never the Palestinians — with a list of disasters should his diplomatic efforts fail: violence, isolation, delegitimization, boycotts — and now "apartheid."

It is no longer enough for the White House to clean up after the messes John Kerry has made. It is time for John Kerry to step down as Secretary of State, or for President Obama to fire him. And it would go a long way toward repairing the damage Kerry has done if his predecessor as Secretary of State, who is the likely Democratic Party nominee for president, explained why this kind of rhetoric had no place in her State Department and why it will have no place in her presidential campaign.

Taking a more restrained position, the Republican Jewish Coalition dubbed Kerry's remarks "inflammatory and inaccurate and called on the president to clarify whether the comment reflected U.S. Policy. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee called the comment "offensive and inappropriate" and reminded the administration that Israel is a democracy and includes Arabs in the Knesset and on its highest court.

It is unlikely that Obama, who mused that the United States might not be able to defend Israel if it didn't make peace, will can Kerry. Obama rarely fires anyone. Unfortunately, he also prefers to surround himself with third-rate advisers who make his foreign policy even less coherent than it already is.

## **Power Line** **[John Kerry escalates his anti-Israel rhetoric](#)** by Paul Mirengoff

First, John Kerry invoked the "B" word against Israel. He [warned](#) the Jewish State of dire economic consequences from a boycott if it didn't reach an accord with the Palestinians.

Now, Kerry has invoked the "A" word. He [claims](#) that Israel risks becoming "an apartheid state" in the absence of a peace deal,

Both comments, of course, drew sharp criticism. And in both cases Secretary Foghorn's response was the same: to fall back on his record of pro-Israel votes in the U.S. Senate. But those votes, which were standard among Senators, do not entitle him to provide aid and comfort to those who want to boycott Israel or to tar it with the "apartheid" slander.

Nor do they immunize Kerry from criticism when he provides such aid and comfort. Yesterday, Kerry [said](#), “I will not allow my commitment to Israel to be questioned by anyone, particularly for partisan, political purposes.”

Just how Mr. Pompous intends to disallow questions about his commitment to Israel is unclear. What is clear is that the questions being raised aren’t a matter of partisan politics.

Some of the criticism of Kerry comes from Republican partisans like Ted Cruz, and thank God for it. But Kerry was also taken to task by the non-partisan Anti-Defamation League through its estimable national director Abe Foxman; by the National Jewish Democratic Council, which expressed its “deep disappointment;” and by [Democratic partisans](#) like Senators Barbara Boxer and Mike Begich.

Kerry has always been prone to over-the-top expression and imagery. If he hadn’t compared American servicemen in Vietnam to “the Army of Genghis Khan,” he might have been elected president.

But Kerry craved attention when he returned from Vietnam and he still thirsts for it. Above all, I believe, he wants that Nobel Peace Prize. As he feels it slipping away, his rhetoric becomes increasingly desperate.

But maybe I’m wrong. Maybe his utterances are simply the product of a third-rate intellect.

**WSJ**

### [A Foreign Policy Flirting With Chaos](#)

***The most egregious case of fecklessness has been on Syria. Doubts about American dependability were raised far and wide.***

by Richard N. Haass

American foreign policy is in troubling disarray. The result is unwelcome news for the world, which largely depends upon the United States to promote order in the absence of any other country able and willing to do so. And it is bad for the U.S., which cannot insulate itself from the world.

The concept that should inform American foreign policy is one that the Obama administration proposed in its first term: the pivot or rebalancing toward Asia, with decreasing emphasis on the Middle East. What has been missing is the commitment and discipline to implement this change in policy. President Obama's four-country Asian tour in recent days was a start, but it hardly made up for years of paying little heed to his own professed foreign-policy goals.

This judgment may appear odd—at first glance the Obama administration does seem to have been moving away from the Middle East. U.S. combat forces are no longer in Iraq, and the number of U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan (now below 40,000) will soon be 10,000 or fewer. Yet the administration continues to articulate ambitious political goals in the region. The default U.S. policy option in the Middle East seems to be regime change, consisting of repeated calls for authoritarian leaders to leave power. First it was [Hosni Mubarak](#) in Egypt, then Moammar Gadhafi in Libya, followed by Bashar Assad in Syria.

Yet history shows that ousting leaders can be difficult, and even when it is not, it can be extremely hard to bring about a stable, alternative authority that is better for American preferences. The result is that the U.S. often finds itself with an uncomfortable choice: Either it must back off its declared goals, which makes America look weak and encourages widespread defiance, or it has to make good on its aims, which requires enormous investments in blood, treasure and time.

The Obama administration has largely opted for the former, i.e., feckless approach. The most egregious case is Syria, where the president and others declared that "Assad must go" only to do little to bring about his departure. Military support of opposition elements judged to be acceptable has been minimal. Worse, President Obama avoided using force in the wake of clear chemical-weapons use by the Syrian government, a decision that raised doubts far and wide about American dependability and damaged what little confidence and potential the non-jihadist opposition possessed. It is only a matter of time before the U.S. will likely have to swallow the bitter pill of tolerating Assad while supporting acceptable opposition elements against the jihadists.

Meanwhile, large areas of Libya are increasingly out of government control and under the authority of militias and terrorists. Egypt is polarized and characterized by mounting violence. Much the same is true in Iraq, now the second-most-turbulent country in the region, where the U.S. finds itself with little influence despite a costly decade of occupation. Terrorists now have more of a foothold in the region than ever before.

None of this should be read as a call for the U.S. to do more to oust regimes, much less occupy countries in the name of nation-building. There is a good deal of evidence, including Chile, Mexico, the Philippines and South Korea, that gradual and peaceful reform of authoritarian systems is less expensive by every measure and more likely to result in an open society, as well as less likely to result in disruption and death.

The Obama administration's extraordinary commitment to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is also difficult to justify. Even before the recent breakdown in talks, the dispute didn't appear ripe for resolution. And it must be acknowledged that the Israeli-Palestinian dispute no longer occupies center stage in the Middle East. The emergence of a separate Palestinian state wouldn't affect the troubling events in Syria, Egypt or Iraq.

The one vital undertaking in the Middle East that the Obama administration has pursued energetically is negotiating with Iran to place a ceiling on its nuclear capacity and potential. The administration deserves praise for ratcheting up sanctions against Iran—Tehran's interest in a nuclear deal has increased as a result. The challenge will be to come up with an agreement that is enough for Iran and not too much for us and for Israel.

These diplomatic endeavors take time. A secretary of state can only do so much; time spent in Jerusalem and Geneva is time not spent in Tokyo and Beijing. And there is much that could be done in Asia. Regular consultations are warranted with the principal powers of the region, including China, Japan and South Korea. Crisis prevention and crisis management need to figure prominently in a region characterized by growing nationalism and rivalry and few diplomatic channels or institutions. So, too, does planning for a transition to a unified Korean Peninsula. Long-promised increases in the U.S. air and naval presence in the region need to become a reality.

The U.S. must also increase its involvement with Europe. American inattention, combined with Ukraine's own political dysfunction and the European Union's bungling, set the stage for Russian

expansion into Crimea. Shaping Russian behavior will require targeted sanctions, greater allocation of economic resources to Ukraine, a willingness to export meaningful amounts of oil and natural gas, and a renewed commitment to NATO's military readiness.

The administration also needs to focus on the strength and resilience of the U.S. economy and society. This is not an alternative to national security but a central part of it. The energy boom is a major positive, but also needed are comprehensive immigration reform, infrastructure modernization, free trade and a willingness to tackle entitlements. Absent such efforts, economic growth won't be as great as it ought to be. The opportunity will also be lost to do something about U.S. debt before it explodes, driven by surging Medicare and Social Security costs and higher interest rates.

The challenge for the Obama administration is not just to ensure American strength and continued internationalism in the face of growing isolationist sentiment. It is also a case of sending the right message to others. We are witnessing an accelerated movement toward a post-American world where governments make decisions and take actions with reduced regard for U.S. preferences. Such a world promises to be even messier, and less palatable for U.S. interests, than it is today.

*Mr. Haass is president of the Council on Foreign Relations*

## **NY Times**

### **Is Barry Whiffing?**

by Maureen Dowd

WASHINGTON — Stop whining, Mr. President.

And stop whiffing.

Don't whinge off the record with columnists and definitely don't do it at a press conference with another world leader. It is disorienting to everybody, here at home and around the world.

I empathize with you about being thin-skinned. When you hate being criticized, it's hard to take a giant steaming plate of "you stink" every day, coming from all sides. But you convey the sense that any difference on substance is *lèse-majesté*.

You simply proclaim what you believe as though you know it to be absolutely true, hoping we recognize the truth of it, and, if we don't, then we've disappointed you again.

Even some of the chatterers who used to be in your corner now make derogatory remarks about your manhood. And that, I know, really gets under your skin because you think they just don't get your style of coolly keeping your cards to yourself while you play the long game. Besides, how short memories are. You were the Ice Man who ordered up the operation that killed Osama bin Laden.

I also appreciate the fact that it's harder for you than it was for J.F.K., W. and all those other pols who had their rich daddies and their rich daddies' rich friends to buy anything they needed and

connect them up and smooth the way for them. That gives them a certain nonchalance in the face of opprobrium and difficulty, a luxury that those who propel themselves to the top on their own don't have.

We understand that it's frustrating. You're dealing with some really evil guys and some really nutty pols, and the problems roiling the world now are brutally hard. As the Republican strategist Mike Murphy says, it's not like the campaign because you have "bigger problems than a will.i.am song can fix."

But that being said, you are the American president. And the American president should not perpetually use the word "eventually." And he should not set a tone of resignation with references to this being a relay race and say he's willing to take "a quarter of a loaf or half a loaf," and muse that things may not come "to full fruition on your timetable."

An American president should never say, [as you did to the New Yorker editor, David Remnick](#), about presidents through history: "We're part of a long-running story. We just try to get our paragraph right."

Mr. President, I am just trying to get my paragraph right. You need to think bigger.

An American president should never say, as you did Monday in Manila when you got frustrated in a press conference with the Philippine president: "You hit singles; you hit doubles. Every once in a while, we may be able to hit a home run."

Especially now that we have this scary World War III vibe with the Russians, we expect the president, especially one who ran as Babe Ruth, to hit home runs.

In the immortal words of Earl Weaver, the Hall of Famer who managed the Baltimore Orioles: "The key to winning baseball games is pitching, fundamentals, and three-run homers." A singles hitter doesn't scare anybody.

It doesn't feel like leadership. It doesn't feel like you're in command of your world.

How can we accept these reduced expectations and truculent passivity from the man who offered himself up as the moral beacon of the world, even before he was elected?

[As Leon Wieseltier wrote in the latest New Republic](#), oppressed and threatened swaths of the world are jittery and despairing "because the United States seems no longer reliable in emergencies, which it prefers to meet with meals ready to eat."

The Times's Mark Landler, who traveled with the president on his Asia trip, [reported that Obama](#) will try to regain the offensive, including a graduation address at West Point putting his foreign policy in context.

Mr. President, don't you know that we're speeched out? It's not what we need right now.

You should take a lesson from Adam Silver, a nerdy technocrat who, in his first big encounter with a crazed tyrant, managed to make the job of N.B.A. commissioner seem much more powerful than that of president of the United States.

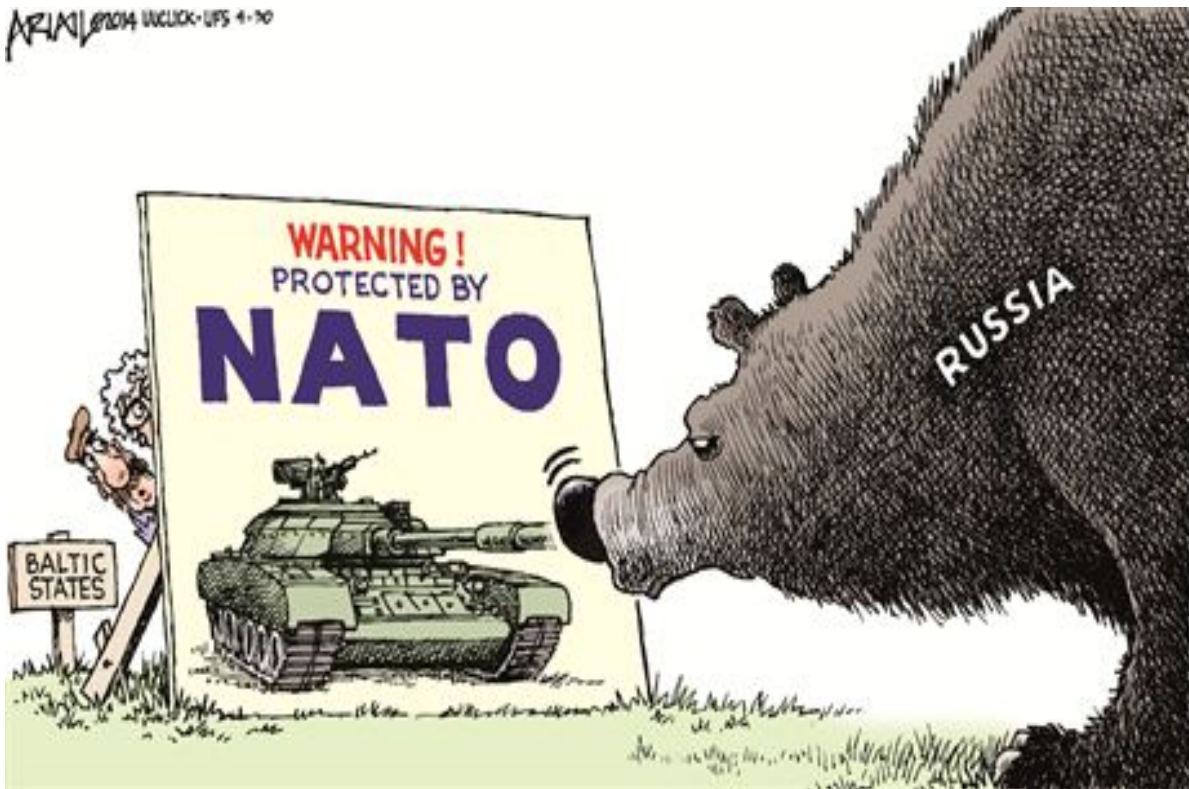
Silver took the gutsy move of banning cretinous Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling for life, after many people speculated that there was little the N.B.A. chief could do except cave. But Silver realized that even if Sterling tries to fight him in court (and wins) he will look good because he stood up for what was right.

Once you liked to have the stage to yourself, Mr. President, to have the aura of the lone man in the arena, not sharing the spotlight with others.

But now when captured alone in a picture, you seem disconnected and adrift.

What happened to crushing it and swinging for the fences? Where have you gone, Babe Ruth?







**Some people say I'm stupid.  
Really?  
Here's how "stupid" I am:**

I was hired by over 69 million voters who didn't even do a routine background check on me. I'm doing a lousy, stinking job, with a record number of people out of work. I gave guns to Mexican drug gangs, I kill innocent people all over the world with drone strikes, and I decide which laws I'm going to enforce and which ones I won't. I've doubled the deficit. I've ruined our health care system. And yet I still stand an excellent chance of being re-hired.  
That's how stupid I am.

And we sent him back. How stupid is our country?

