



## A Disaster Worse Than Libya

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Now that another presidential primary is over, can the media take a few minutes to insist that the candidates address some important issues like the crisis in Aleppo, Syria? Tens of thousands of Syrians are dying or fleeing the Russians and the Iranians, who have invaded the country. President Obama is doing nothing to save them.

The American people should be reminded that Obama lost Libya in a fiasco that cost the lives of four Americans. In that case, he intervened militarily and assisted in overthrowing the regime of Muammar Qaddafi, then pulled back when American facilities were attacked. Director of National Intelligence James Clapper says the country is now a haven for terrorists. President Obama is now losing Syria. Rebels opposed to the Bashar al-Assad regime don't have the weapons to fight Russian planes and tanks.

Veteran diplomat Dennis Ross is the latest observer to note that the policies of Barack Obama and Vladimir Putin seem to be the same. "Rather than being opposed to the Russian efforts, we look to be in league with them," he writes<sup>[1]</sup> in the Los Angeles Times.

What are those Russian efforts? Vladimir Putin is destroying the anti-Assad opposition forces and leaving the Islamic State largely untouched. In the end, Ross says, Putin intends "on changing the balance of power fundamentally on the ground and sending a message to Arab leaders. Namely: You may not like our support for Assad, but unlike the Americans we stand by our friends. If you want to deal with problems in Syria or in the region, you deal with us." That means that Sunni countries alarmed by Russian and Iranian aggression in Syria will realize they cannot depend on the United States for support and will cut deals for survival with Putin.

It appears that Russian intentions go far beyond saving the Assad regime and undermining U.S. influence in the region. It is fascinating to note that the far-left in the United States is gearing up for a major campaign to cut off U.S. assistance to Saudi Arabia. This initiative is led by United for Peace and Justice and Progressive Democrats of America. Nothing would please Putin more than for Saudi Arabia to collapse and for the Russian/Iranian alliance to take over the Arabian Peninsula.

These groups held a "conference call on the US-Saudi Alliance" on Tuesday night, where anti-Israel activist Medea Benjamin<sup>[2]</sup> of Code Pink described a series of events<sup>[3]</sup> designed to isolate

and weaken Saudi Arabia. Her involvement in this campaign is significant. She went to Iran in 2014 <sup>[4]</sup> to participate in a “New Horizon” conference, also dubbed “The 2nd Annual International Conference of Independent Thinkers & Film Makers.” One of the themes was that the 9/11 terrorist attacks were an inside job carried out by the U.S. and Israel. A Holocaust denier also spoke. The first such conference was held in September 2012 and featured Iran’s then-president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who had said that Israel should be “wiped off the map.”

As part of this new campaign, Code Pink has been protesting Saudi intervention in Yemen against Iranian proxies. A March 5-6 conference <sup>[5]</sup> is scheduled in Washington, D.C. to unite the left against Saudi Arabia and other Sunni Arab Muslim countries in the region. The conference is described as being held for people who would like to learn about the roots and spread of Islamic extremism, seek solutions to violence in the Middle East, support a U.S. foreign policy based on respect for human rights, and advocate against global weapons proliferation.

This sounds appealing until you grasp the fact that the organizers are doing the bidding of the Iranian regime.

The campaign co-sponsor, Progressive Democrats of America (PDA), says <sup>[6]</sup> it was founded in 2004 “to transform the Democratic Party and our country.” The advisory board <sup>[7]</sup> for the group includes Thom Hartmann, described just as a “media host,” who is in fact a paid employee of Putin’s Russia Today propaganda channel. Another board member is Tom Hayden, the “author and activist” who worked for a military victory for the communists in the Vietnam War. PDA has an action fund <sup>[8]</sup> that promotes Bernie Sanders for president.

Clearly, this anti-Saudi campaign is designed to accelerate Russian and Iranian hegemony in the region. The list of individuals and groups participating in the event is a reminder that the old pro-communist left never died and, in fact, has been resurrected to undermine U.S. policy in another region of the world.

In this case, however, as Dennis Ross and others are pointing out, Obama is abandoning traditional American allies, leaving the region open to more Russian-inspired conflict and expansion. It is safe to assume that Obama is secretly hoping that Medea Benjamin and her comrades succeed. They even have a senator <sup>[9]</sup> on Capitol Hill leading the charge. Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) has called for a U.S. arms cutoff to Saudi Arabia. This is great news for Iran, whose propaganda organ Press TV has highlighted the stand <sup>[10]</sup> against Saudi Arabia taken by this “influential US senator.” Murphy gave a speech <sup>[11]</sup> to the influential Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) outlining his anti-Saudi views. He says the Saudis support extremism.

He’s right, of course. No regime in the Middle East is completely clean. But it’s Iran and Syria that are on the State Department list <sup>[12]</sup> of state sponsors of terrorism. Saudi military intervention in Yemen is in response to Iran’s arming of Yemen’s Houthi rebels. It’s Russia and Iran that are now close to taking complete control of Syria and eliminating the anti-Assad rebel groups.

The situation in the Middle East could get much worse. Andrei Illarionov, a former adviser to Putin on economic issues and now a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, says <sup>[13]</sup> Putin may not even wait for the Sunni countries to come begging to Russia. He thinks Russia may be preparing for a military strike against Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Such a move would not only create more

instability in the Middle East, but send oil prices soaring, benefiting Russia. Russia would have more money to finance aggression in the Middle East and Europe, and the already weak U.S. economy and markets in the U.S. would probably crash, giving us a replay of the panic of 2008.

The “stand down” order at Benghazi resulted in four Americans dying, a U.S. withdrawal, and a failed state that is attracting various terrorist groups. It appears that another “stand down” order has been sent by the Obama administration in regard to the Russian/Iranian advance in Syria. In fact, U.S. policy is looking increasingly like a welcome mat for foreign aggression.

So what will Donald Trump do if Putin bombs the Saudi oil fields? What does Bernie Sanders propose to do about Iranian terrorism and Russian aggression?

Isn't this topic worth at least one question in the next debate?