

Why Obama Rejected Peace With Iran

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Global Research, October 25, 2014

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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How did Obama manage to botch U.S. foreign policy so stunningly? The promising speeches he gave in 2008 earned him the Nobel Peace Prize. But his inspiring words have since been buried in the rubble of Libya, Palestine, Iraq, and Syria. The region that once viewed Obama as a peace messiah now rejects him as a warmonger. And with every new foreign policy zigzag Obama only finds fresh “threats” while never managing to find the path to peace.

Obama would like peace in theory, but doing so requires he shake up his Middle East alliances. The U.S. stands pigeonholed in tightly-wound alliances with the most hated regimes in the world, sandwiched between the global pariah Israel and the brutal totalitarian dictatorship of Saudi Arabia. The other important U.S. ally is war-hungry expansionist Turkey, while the smaller U.S. allies are the remaining Gulf state monarchy dictatorships.

Allies like these make peace impossible. Obama recognizes that these friends restrict the ability of the U.S. to retain regional credibility. Consequently, there has been [much speculation](#) about a massive shift in U.S. alliances that hinges on peace with Iran, possibly supplemented by strengthening the alliance with Iraqi Kurds.

Americans and Iranians would celebrate a peace between nations, but this scenario now seems off the table. After “talking” peace with Iran for the first time in decades, Obama chose the warpath yet again.

This decision was [finalized recently](#) when the “ISIS deal” was struck between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, again cementing this ugly alliance. In exchange for Saudi Arabia attacking ISIS, the U.S. would commit to war against the Syrian government, which the Saudis want toppled to undermine their rival Iran. The Syrian rebels that Saudi Arabia agreed to train — with \$500 million from U.S. taxpayers — will be used against the Syrian government, not to fight ISIS. The U.S. allies in the region understand the war against the Syrian government as a first step to war against Iran. Even if a nuclear deal is struck between the U.S. and Iran the path to war will have been set.

Economics is a key reason that U.S. allies want Iran destroyed. Iran stands as a competitor for markets and investment throughout the region, and the destruction of Syria and Iran would open up new markets for the vulture-like U.S. allies. The economic [oil war](#) between Saudi Arabia and Iran has recently heated up, with Saudi Arabia selling oil at extra low prices to [put political pressure](#) on Iran. This, coupled with the ongoing “[economic war](#)” that Obama is waging, has the potential to weaken Iran via internal chaos, softening it up to possible invasion if the Syrian government falls.

Iran’s military is another reason the U.S. wants regime change. There are U.S. military bases scattered around the Middle East, though none in Iran, which has a powerful regional

military force that patrols the strategic Strait of Hormuz, jointly controlled by Iran and Oman. It's intolerable for the U.S. and Saudi Arabia that one fifth of the world's oil production must pass through this Iranian controlled area.

Iran's regional power is bolstered by its political and religious connections throughout the Middle East. Not only does Shia Muslim Iran exert automatic authority over Shia majority Iraq, but also over Shia Hezbollah and Shia-led Syria. This region-wide dynamic is often referred to as the "Shia Crescent." There also exist sizable oppressed Shia populations in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Yemen, and Turkey that act as intrinsic political thorns in the sides of these Sunni sectarian governments, giving Iran a powerful political base in each case.

For example, when Saudi Arabia recently announced a death sentence for a popular Shia cleric, Iran responded that there would be "[consequences](#)" if the sentence were carried out, thus re-enforcing Iran's self-portrayed position as "defender of the Shia."

In Yemen there already exists a [strong Shia insurgency](#) against the pro-U.S. Sunni government that is using al-Qaeda-linked fighters against the Shia; the results of the conflict will either empower Iran or weaken it.

These regional religious tensions have been exponentially deepened by the U.S.-led coalition against the Syrian government, which has relied on systematic Sunni Islamic sectarianism to attract jihadist fighters and a flood of Sunni Gulf state donations.

The Sunni fundamentalism in Syria — loosely based on the Saudi fundamentalist version of Islam — views Shia Muslims as heretics worthy of death. The executions of Shia in Syria have reverberated throughout the Middle East, acting as an implicit threat to Shia Iran while increasing tensions in the Shia populations of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and beyond. The regional Shia backlash against the Sunni fundamentalists have strengthened Iran's regional influence, one likely reason why Obama made the peace-killing deal with Saudi Arabia against ISIS and the Syrian government.

Saudi Arabia and Israel are adamant that the U.S. make no peace with Iran. Both sent strong messages after Obama's 2013 last minute decision not to bomb the Syrian government, and his brief flirtation with Iran. Saudi Arabia went as far as refusing a seat on the UN Security Council. Israel protested the decision too, after it had lobbied heavily in the U.S. Congress through AIPAC to ensure the bombing took place.

The Kurdish Question

Turkey has long assisted the U.S. in attempting to topple the Syrian government, and has recently been insisting on a U.S. enforced "no-fly zone" in northern Syria, which would be directed against the Syrian government, since ISIS has no air force. Turkey has no good intentions in Syria, and has long wanted to grab easy oil-rich land for itself; which happens to be where the Kurdish population in Syria resides.

The call to enforce a no-fly zone to "protect the Kurds" on Turkey's border, if achieved, will be similar to the no-fly zone in Libya — to create a "humanitarian corridor" — that was used instead to create a massive U.S.-led bombing campaign for regime change.

The Kurdish people face the same situation they've faced for hundreds of years: other nations have used the Kurds for their own self-interest. The Kurdish people want and deserve their own independent nation state, but they've been betrayed countless times in

the past and the situation now seems no different. Promises are made and arms given to the “good” pro-U.S. Iraqi Kurds, while across the border in Turkey another faction of Kurds are labeled terrorists and repressed by the government.

Recently, the Kurdish Syrian town on the border of Turkey was invaded by ISIS and militarily defended by the “bad Kurds” of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) an affiliate of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) who are based in Turkey. The Turkish military watched across the border as ISIS relentlessly attacked Kobani, while the Turks used military force to prevent Turkish Kurds from crossing the border into Syria to help defend the Kurdish city.

This reinforced perceptions that ISIS was, in part, a Turkish creation, since Turkey’s border has long been an uncontested point of entry for foreign jihadists to enter Syria. Turkey defended its actions by essentially equating the Kurdish PYD and PKK with ISIS, dismissing all of them as “[terrorists](#).” In Turkey, [Kurdish protests erupted](#) against the government’s actions and inactions in Kobani, leaving 40 dead. Protests also occurred in other Kurdish regions including Iran.

Turkey ultimately proved that it fears the Kurds more than ISIS, and further proved that negotiations with its domestic Kurdish population will never result in an independent Kurdistan on any inch of Turkish territory. Turkey will likewise be violently opposed to any creation of an independent Kurdish state in Iraq or Syria, since it would empower the Turkish Kurds while preventing Turkey from grabbing the oil-rich regions for itself.

This dynamic acts as an impossible barrier for the Obama administration to “re-balance” its Middle East alliances by using the Kurds. No nation with a sizable Kurdish population — Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Syria — will buy in to a possible U.S. policy of Kurdish statehood, since they would lose the oil-rich territory that the Kurds live on.

Not only would the U.S. lose regional allies by advocating Kurdish independence, but if such a state were to emerge, it would be a weak nation, since the Kurds are already divided into various factions, and thus not strong enough for the U.S. to rely on to achieve regional objectives.

Consequently, Obama feels compelled to continue down the same war-torn path as his predecessors. But Obama’s perspective is colored by his assumption that the United States must remain the regional power in an area thousands of miles from its border, and that U.S. corporations should dominate the oil, banking, weapons selling, and other markets in the region.

The U.S. is long past the point where it can claim that its Middle East goals are “peace, stability, and democracy,” especially after invading and destroying Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and now the dirty war against Syria. The oil, minerals, and other wealth that attracts the U.S. corporations that steer U.S. foreign policy prevent any real lasting peace to be achieved. The logic of corporate America is to crush the competitor by any means necessary.

Peace with Iran and Syria could be achieved if Obama told the world the truth about the above dynamics in the region, and treated Iran and Syria with the respect that an independent nation deserves, while working to curb the power of Israel and Saudi Arabia, who both depend on U.S. financial, military, and political support.

But instead Obama has dug in his heels and re-enforced alliances that demand the continuation of the Syrian war, and after that Iran. A war-shredded region remains on the bloody path to a potentially even wider war, while the billions of U.S. tax dollars funding this genocide will remain unusable for domestic projects like job creation and climate change reduction and preparedness. During this election season both Democrats and Republicans agree on continuing Middle East war.

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