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Yes, Let's Allow the Syrian People To Decide for Themselves

By Ron Paul
April 3, 2017

Is common sense beginning to creep into US policy in the Middle East? Last week Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said that the longer-term status of Syrian President Assad would be “decided by the Syrian people.” The media reported this as a radical shift in US foreign policy, but isn’t this just stating what should be obvious? What gives any country the right to determine who rules someone else? Washington is currently paralyzed by evidence-free rumors that the Russians somehow influenced our elections, but no one blinks an eye when Washington declares that one or another foreign leader “must go.”

It’s only too bad that President Obama hadn’t followed this back in 2011 instead of declaring that Assad had to go and then arming rebel groups who ended up being allies with al-Qaeda. Imagine how many thousands of lives and billions of dollars would have been saved by following this policy in the first place. Imagine the millions of refugees who could still be in their homes, running their businesses, living their lives.

Will the Trump Administration actually follow through on Tillerson’s Syria policy statement? It is too early to tell. The President has illegally sent hundreds of US troops to fight on the ground in Syria. Current US positions in eastern Syria suggest that Washington may be looking to carve out parts of oil-rich areas of the country for some kind of future federation.

The White House followed up on Tillerson's comments by stating that getting rid of Assad was no longer a top priority for the US. This also sounds good. But does this mean that once the current top priority, destroying ISIS, is completed, Washington may return to its active measures to unseat the Syrian president? Neocons in Washington still insist that the rise of ISIS in Syria was due to President Assad, but in fact ISIS did not appear in Syria until the US began trying to overthrow Assad. They haven't given up on their desire to overthrow the Syrian government and they do have influence in this Administration.

If the Trump Administration is serious about letting the people of Syria decide their fate he needs to take concrete steps. Rather than sending in more troops to fight an ISIS already on its last legs, he must bring US troops home and prohibit the CIA from further destabilizing the country.

It would also be nice if Congress would wake up from its long slumber and start following the Constitution. The President (and his predecessors) have taken this country to war repeatedly without proper Constitutionally-required authority to do so. The president has reportedly decided not to even bother announcing where next he plans to send the troops. Congress can rein him in with very little effort by saying no money can be spent to deploy US troops to areas where they may encounter hostilities unless a state of war is declared.

By all means, we should let the Syrian people decide who will be their president, even if they choose someone we don't like. Syria was never a threat to the United States and the 2011 US intervention has destroyed the country. Interventionism has horrible consequences and no victories to show for itself. It is time for all the US troops to just march back home.