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The self-beheading House of Saud

By Pepe Escobar

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Don't count on a female Saudi playwright writing a 21st century remix of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* starring a bunch of non-working class Saudi royals. But anger it is - from King Abdullah downwards; not only at the UN's "double standards" but especially - hush hush - at the infidel Obama administration.

This is the official Saudi explanation for spurning a much-coveted two-year term at the UN Security Council, only hours after its nomination.

No wonder the House of Saud's unprecedented self-beheading move was praised only by the usual minion suspects; petro-monarchies of the Gulf Counter-revolution Club, aka Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as well as Egypt, who now depends on Saudi money to pay its bills and barely survive.

Kuwait shared Riyadh's pain, enough to send "a message to the world". The UAE said the UN now had the "historical responsibility" to review its role. Bahrain - invaded by the Saudis in 2001 - stressed the "clear and courageous stand". Cairo said the whole thing was "brave".

How brave, indeed, to lobby Arab and Pacific nations for two years, and to spend a fortune training a dozen diplomats in New York for months just to say "no" when you get the prize. The House of Saud would have replaced Pakistan with a Pacific seat; Morocco stays until 2015, in an

African seat. As early as five months ago the Saudi seat was considered a done deal at the UN.

NSA-worthy torrents of bits have flowed speculating over the Saudi's alleged "reformist agenda" or "principled position" on R2P (the Responsibility to Protect doctrine), Palestine and turning the Middle East into a weapons-free zone.

To his credit, King Abdullah had advanced a plan for Palestine since 2002 based on a two-state solution and a return to the pre-1967 borders.

But there has been no follow-up pressure on Israel; on the contrary, Riyadh is allied with Tel Aviv on setting Syria on fire. That implies no effort to include nuclear power Israel in a weapons-free Middle East. As for the Saudi version of R2P, it only applies to a sectarian "protection" of Sunnis in Syria.

Apart from a few Middle Eastern spots, no one is seriously losing sleep over the adolescent Saudi move - which displays a curious notion of leverage, as in choosing a PR spin reinventing the corrupt petro-monarchy as the "principled" champions of a cause (UN reform) just as they might have a crack at trying to influence it from within.

That would have implied more scrutiny. For instance, this Monday the Human Rights Council, another UN institution, duly blasted Saudi Arabia on its sterling record of discrimination against women and sectarianism, following reports by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. As a member of the UN Security Council, the discrepancy between the medievalist reality inside Saudi Arabia and its lofty "reformist" agenda would be even more glaring.

I want my kafir fluid

A bottle of that precious kafir fluid, Chateau Petrus - much prized by itinerant Saudi princes in London - may be bet that the "dump the UN" decision came straight from the leading camel's mouth. And now that the House of Saud has decided to keep displaying its "influence" from the outside, nothing makes more sense than the resurfacing of Bandar Bush - who this summer was christened by King Abdullah as the man in charge of the Syrian jihad.

The perennial Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal had lunch with US Secretary of State John Kerry at the Prince's very private luxury digs in Paris this Monday. The mystery is which kafir fluid was consumed; no doubts though in the official, harmless spin; they agreed on a nuclear-free Iran, an end to the war in Syria and a "stable" Egypt. Before the Paris bash, during the weekend, Bandar Bush was already in his trademark full gear, openly announcing to European diplomats in Riyadh that he will buy his Syria-bound weapons somewhere else, will dissociate his scheme from the CIA, and will train "his" rebels with other players, mostly France and Jordan.

The Wall Street Journal has the story, which predictably has not surfaced in Arab media (90% of it controlled by different branches of the House of Saud).

Even more interesting is two other pieces of information leaked by diplomats. The House of

Saud wanted the US to provide them with targets to be hit inside Syria when Obama's kinetic whatever would start. Washington adamantly refused.

Better yet; Washington allegedly told Riyadh the US would not be able to defend the Shi'ite majority, oil-rich Eastern Province if the Tomahawks started flying over Syria. Imagine the horror show in Riyadh; after all, mob protection against petrodollars recycled/invested in the US economy is the basis of this dysfunctional marriage for nearly seven decades.

So that should lead us to the now much hyped "independent Saudi foreign policy posture" to be implemented in relation to Washington. Don't hold your breath.

As much as the House of Saud is completely paranoid regarding the Obama administration's latest moves, throwing a fit will not change the way the geopolitical winds are blowing. Iran's geopolitical ascent is inevitable. A Syrian solution is on the horizon. No one wants batshit crazy jihadis roaming free from Syria to Iraq to the wider Middle East.

The Saudi spin about creating "a new security arrangement for the Arab world" is a joke - as depicted by Saudi-financed shells such as this.

The bottom line is that an angry, fearful House of Saud does not have what it takes to confront benign protector Washington. Throwing a fit - as in crying to attract attention - is for geopolitical babies. Without the US - or "the West" - who's gonna run the Saudi energy industry? PhD-deprived camels? And who's gonna sell (and maintain) those savory weapons? Who's going to defend them for smashing the true spirit of the Arab Spring, across the GCC and beyond?

Perennial Foreign Minister Prince Saud is gravely ill. He will be replaced by a recently appointed deputy prime minister.

Guess who?

Prince Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah, the king's son. Instead of a "principled" stance against "double standards", the House of Saud move at the UN feels more like nepotism.