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How the Obama Administration Encouraged the Rise of Islamic State

By Nauman Sadiq
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Although, I admit that Donald Trump's recent remarks that Obama Administration willfully created the Islamic State were a bit facile, but it is an irrefutable fact that Obama Administration's policy of nurturing the Syrian militants against the Assad regime from August 2011 to August 2014 created the ideal circumstances which led to the creation of not just Islamic State but myriads of other Syrian militant groups which are just as fanatical and bloodthirsty as Islamic State.

It should be remembered here that the Libyan and Syrian crises originally began in early 2011 in the wake of the Arab Spring uprisings when the peaceful protests against the Qaddafi and Assad regimes turned militant. Moreover, it should also be kept in mind that the withdrawal of the United States' troops from Iraq, which has a highly porous border with Syria, took place in December 2011.

Furthermore, the Democratic presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton, served as the United States' Secretary of State from January 2009 to February 2013. Thus, for the initial year-and-a-half of the Syrian civil war, Hillary Clinton was serving as the Secretary of the State and the role that she played in toppling the regime in Libya and instigating the insurgency in Syria is not hidden from anybody's eyes.

Additionally, it is also a known fact that the Clintons have cultivated close ties with the Zionist lobbies in Washington and the American support for the proxy war in Syria is specifically about ensuring Israel's regional security as I shall explain in the ensuing paragraphs. However, it would be unfair to put the blame for the crisis in Syria squarely on the Democrats; the policy of nurturing militants against the regime has been pursued with bipartisan support. In fact, Senator John McCain, a Republican, played the same role in the Syrian civil war which Charlie Wilson played during the Soviet-Afghan war in the '80s. And Ambassador Robert Ford was the point man in the United States' embassy in Damascus.

More to the point, the United States' Defense Intelligence Agency's report [1] of 2012 that presaged the imminent rise of a Salafist principality in northeastern Syria was not overlooked it was deliberately suppressed; not just the report but that view in general that a civil war in Syria will give birth to the radical Islamists was forcefully stifled in the Washington's policy making circles under pressure from the Zionist lobbies.

The Obama Administration was fully aware of the consequences of its actions in Syria but it kept pursuing the policy of funding, training, arming and internationally legitimizing the so-called "Syrian Opposition" to weaken the Syrian regime and to neutralize the threat that its Lebanon-based proxy, Hezbollah, posed to Israel's regional security; a fact which the Israeli defense community realized for the first time during the 2006 Lebanon war during the course of which Hezbollah fired hundreds of rockets into northern Israel. Those were only unguided rockets but it was a wakeup call for Israel's defense community that what would happen if Iran passed the guided missile technology to Hezbollah whose area of operations lies very close to the northern borders of Israel?

Notwithstanding, how can the United States claim to fight a militant group which has been an obvious by-product [2] of the United States' policy in Syria? Let's settle on one issue first: there were two parties to the Syrian civil war initially, the Syrian regime and the Syrian opposition; which party did the US support since the beginning of the Syrian civil war in early 2011 to June 2014 until Islamic State overran Mosul?

Obviously, the United States supported the Syrian opposition; and what was the composition of the so-called "Syrian Opposition?" A small fraction of it was comprised of defected Syrian soldiers, which goes by the name of Free Syria Army, but a vast majority has been Sunni jihadists and armed tribesmen who were generously funded, trained and armed by the alliance of Western powers, Turkey, Jordan and the Gulf States.

Islamic State is nothing more than one of the numerous Syrian jihadist outfits, others being: al Nusra Front, Ahrar al-Sham, al-Tawhid brigade, Jaysh al Islam etc. The United States-led war against Islamic State is limited only to Islamic State while all other Sunni Arab jihadist groups are enjoying complete impunity, and the so-called "coalition against Islamic State" also includes the main patrons of Sunni Arab jihadists like Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Turkey and Jordan.

Regardless, many biased political commentators of the mainstream media deliberately try to muddle the reality in order to link the emergence of Islamic State to the ill-conceived invasion of

Iraq in 2003 by the Bush Administration. Their motive behind this chicanery is to absolve the Obama Administration's policy of supporting the Syrian opposition against the Assad regime since the beginning of the Syrian civil war until June 2014 when Islamic State overran Mosul and Obama Administration made a volte-face on its previous policy of indiscriminate support to the Syrian opposition and declared a war against a faction of Syrian opposition: that is, the Islamic State.

Moreover, such spin-doctors also try to find the roots of Islamic State in al-Qaeda in Iraq; however, the insurgency in Iraq died down after the "surge" of American troops in 2007. Al-Qaeda in Iraq became a defunct organization after the death of Abu Musab al Zarqawi and the subsequent surge of troops in Iraq. The re-eruption of insurgency in Iraq has been the spillover effect of nurturing militants in Syria against the Assad regime when Islamic State overran Fallujah and parts of Ramadi in January 2014 and subsequently captured Mosul in June 2014.

The borders between Syria and Iraq are highly porous and it's impossible to contain the flow of militants and arms between the two countries. The Obama Administration's policy of providing money, arms and training to the Syrian militants in the training camps located at the border regions of Turkey and Jordan was bound to backfire sooner or later.

Notwithstanding, in order to simplify the Syrian quagmire for the sake of readers, I would divide it into three separate and distinct zones of influence. Firstly, the northern and northwestern zone along the Syria-Turkey border, in and around Aleppo and Idlib, which is under the influence of Turkey and Qatar. Both of these countries share the ideology of Muslim Brotherhood and they provide money, training and arms to the Sunni Arab jihadist organizations like al-Tawhid Brigade and Ahrar al-Sham in the training camps located at the border regions of Turkey.

Secondly, the southern zone of influence along the Syria-Jordan border, in Daraa and Quneitra and as far away as Homs and Damascus. It is controlled by the Saudi-Jordanian camp and they provide money, weapons and training to the Salafist militant groups such as al-Nusra Front and the Southern Front of the so-called "moderate" Free Syria Army in Daraa and Quneitra, and Jaysh al-Islam in the suburbs of Damascus. Their military strategy is directed by a Military Operations Center (MOC) and training camps [3] located in the border regions of Jordan. Here let me clarify that this distinction is quite overlapping and heuristic at best, because al-Nusra's jihadists have taken part in battles as far away as Idlib and Aleppo.

And finally, the eastern zone of influence along the Syria-Iraq border, in al-Raqqa and Deir al-Zor, which has been controlled by a relatively maverick Iraq-based jihadist outfit, the Islamic State. Thus, leaving the Mediterranean coast and Syria's border with Lebanon, the Baathist and Shi'a-dominated Syrian regime has been surrounded from all three sides by the hostile Sunni forces: Turkey and Muslim Brotherhood in the north, Jordan and the Salafists of the Gulf Arab States in the south and the Sunni Arab-majority regions of Mosul and Anbar in Iraq in the east.

Sources

[1] United States' Defense Intelligence Agency's report of 2012.

[2] How Syrian Jihad spawned the Islamic State?

[3] Weapons flowing from Eastern Europe to Middle East