

Canadian and US Subterfuge in Syria and Iran: Conversations with Binoy Kampmark and Mahdi Nazemroaya

Global Research News Hour Episode 116 (includes transcript)

By [Michael Welch](#), [Dr. Binoy Kampmark](#), and [Mahdi Darius
Nazemroaya](#)

Global Research, October 10, 2015

Region: [Canada](#), [Middle East & North
Africa](#), [Russia and FSU](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [GLOBAL RESEARCH NEWS HOUR](#),
[US NATO War Agenda](#)

"Seldom, very seldom, does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised or a little mistaken."

-Jane Austen, 1775-1817, "Emma"

LISTEN TO THE SHOW



Length (59:11)

[Click to download the audio \(MP3 format\)](#)

On July 14, [an agreement was struck](#) in Vienna involving major powers which would see the implementation of provisions to restrict the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions against that Persian Gulf nation.

This agreement has proved controversial. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu blasted the deal, saying Iran would still be capable of developing a nuclear weapon while the lifted sanctions would empower Iran to continue to spread unrest in the region. [1] Meanwhile, Republicans in the US House of Representatives have expressed opposition to the deal and have been trying to sabotage it. [2]

Of particular note, is Canada's Conservative government, which has [chosen to balk at the agreement](#) arrived at by its traditional allies of Britain, France and the US. Indeed Harper's Conservatives have been remarkably hawkish in their foreign policy orientation. They continue to maintain hostility toward Iran and a militaristic approach toward ISIS/ISIL while campaigning for a fourth straight mandate in this year's national elections.

More recently, [Russia has joined the attacks](#) against not just ISIS/ISIL, but other terrorist groups threatening the sovereignty of Syria. Yet the West's response seems out of alignment with its usual line about 'fighting the terrorist threat.' Is the rhetoric of these Western leaders reflective of their actual motivations? Or does it mask another agenda?

In this week's Global Research News Hour, we attempt to ascertain the true purpose of these nations' policy gestures with two distinguished analysts.

Binoy Kampmark was a Commonwealth Scholar at Selwyn College in Cambridge and is currently a Senior Scholar at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia. In our first half hour, Mr. Kampmark tries to make sense of the Harper government's foreign policy, Russia's incentive to launch airstrikes within Syria, and the mirage that is 'humanitarian intervention.' (See transcript below.)

Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya is a sociologist, and award-winning author and geopolitical analyst. In the second half hour, Nazemroaya puts the Iranian nuclear accord in the context of the failing regime of economic sanctions, and articulates how it is being used as a weapon against Russia.

LISTEN TO THE SHOW



Length (59:11)

[Click to download the audio \(MP3 format\)](#)

The [Global Research News Hour](#) airs every Friday at 1pm CT on [CKUW 95.9FM](#) in Winnipeg. The programme is also podcast at [globalresearch.ca](#).

The show can be heard on the Progressive Radio Network at [prn.fm](#). Listen in every Monday at 3pm ET.

Community Radio Stations carrying the Global Research News Hour:

CFUV 101.9 FM in Victoria. Airing Sundays from 7-8am PT.

CHLY 101.7 FM in Nanaimo, B.C – Thursdays at 1pm PT

Boston College Radio [WZBC 90.3FM NEWTONS](#) during the Truth and Justice Radio Programming slot -Sundays at 7am ET.

[Port Perry Radio](#) in Port Perry, Ontario – Thursdays at 1pm ET

[Burnaby Radio Station CJSF out of Simon Fraser University](#). 90.1FM to most of Greater Vancouver, from Langley to Point Grey and from the North Shore to the US Border. It is also available on 93.9 FM cable in the communities of SFU, Burnaby, New Westminister, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Surrey and Delta, in British Columbia Canada. – Tune in every Saturday at 6am.

Notes:

1) <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/benjamin-netanyahu-blasts-iran-nuclear-deal-at-un-general-assembly>

2) James Arkin (Sept 11, 2015),

RealClearPolitics; http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2015/09/11/gop_continues_to_push_iran_d_eal_opposition_128057.html

Interview with Binoy Kampmark on Iran, ISIS, and Canadian Foreign Policy

Transcript

Global Research: Is there anything that you've noticed that concerns you specifically about the way Canada has been conducting itself on the world's stage?

Binoy Kampmark: Yes, I think one of the things that's very conspicuous is the remarkably hawkish warring agenda which Harper has embraced, and where that fits effectively, it works on a few levels. It's a kind of a demonization that is functioning on the policy platform, and so, it's the idea of seeing...it's the Islamist debate of course, it's the idea of how do you combat Islamic State and so forth, and what is happening in the conduct of that foreign policy is that it has had a dramatic impact on domestic policy and that is of course, C-24 I believe, the stripping of citizenship, you know, and that is dramatic. That is a remarkable instance.

It's not as dramatic as the British approach to this, which allows for the process of stripping British citizenship and making a person stateless, which is actually contrary to international law. C-24 does allow at least for at least dual nationals to retain one nationality but the implication of that in having Canadian citizenship stripped is that that person may well be deported, that person may well be expelled and of course the recipient country will then receive a convict of terrorism, and so effectively that results in an export of terrorism.

In a peculiar kind of way, Harper has created a sort of industry, anticipating an industry of sorts. And this undermining of citizenship has translated itself, broadly speaking, because of this emphasis, this mania, about expanding the war on Islamic State. I am not suggesting for a minute that Islamic State doesn't pose a threat in the region, but the Canadian indifference, this is Harper's indifference to understanding the implications of an extended bombing campaign, ineffectual I might add, this is one of the most bizarre things, you know, ISIS/ISIL/the Islamic state they are all actually doing rather well. Their economy and their base is being sustained constantly, notwithstanding the fact that they are being bombed.

So, there is this display of power which is not actually very effectual at all, but it has very significant impacts on domestic legislation, on the Security State and the implications certainly under Harper's time are significant for the emergence of a considerably heavily involved surveillance State that has...that views its citizens actually with suspicion at least except of course good Canadian stock and so forth.

GR: Now, there is also, in addition to, the war against ISIS you also have counties, Syria and Iran, which are seen as enemies. The governments therein, and of course, recently we have heard about how Russia has come to join the fight against ISIS and

that seems to be...their approach seems to be turning the leaders of the US, NATO folks off...

BK: Yes, they have certainly introduced a sizable spanner in the works and what they have done of course, and let's not fall for the general idea that the Russian approach is not to target Islamic State, necessarily, I know there are numerous media reports coming in suggesting that these particular positions are actually at FSA, Free Syria Army units, that supposedly the Russian Air Force is targeting. But, as Robert Fisk pointed out very recently, it's a very peculiar thing to say that in Holms for example, the area of Holms, there were actually FSA units, because supposedly according to the US own debriefing from the State Dept those CIA -trained units were not there. They were disbanded at that particular area, so, obviously it is a bit peculiar to suggest that they are there now suddenly, reascent. So that's one problem in this war of words and information, again we come back to the old story what is it that we need to look at? What is it we need to read and engage in?

But, the second thing too, of course is they have fundamentally different objectives on a certain level. Russia is interested in controlling the Islamic threat because it has the Chechnyan issue. Of course remember, if you look geographically at the Russian context Chechnya is South. It's not the Middle East it's the Southern East, it's the South, if you were, so relative to that quaint- the Middle East to Western powers- the Russian context views it differently. Geographically speaking, Iran and the Arab states focus in a very different league, a very different aspect of their strategy. But Chechnya looms large and there have been Chechen recruits for ISIS. There have been Chechen participants and a very notable Chechen leader has certainly figured in Islamic State. So that's that aspect to consider.

But the other, of course, problem here from the NATO and the US perspective is that the policy is of course also to shore up Assad. It's to give him better leg room in terms of the conflict, whereas the US-led approach with France with Britain has always made it clear that they want Assad to be removed. And Russia has made it clear that, no, Assad is doing a lot of the fighting, his forces are doing a lot of the fighting and we need to bolster his efforts.

But - and this is where again you can see the world views collide, you can see that there are very fundamentally different views about this - the US using that fabulously concocted notion of liberalism and liberal markets to tell and suggest that the Syrian leader, Bashar al-Assad, brutal yes, admittedly, that he has to go, but they have come up with this nonsense term called 'transitional government'.

We know what 'transitional governments' look like. They look like Libya, they look like Libya after Gaddafi, they look like Iraq after Saddam Hussein. So expect another instance of a repeat in Syria if that particular envisage plan takes place and it's what the Russians want to avoid.

GR: Yeah, and you just brought up Libya, and I think it's kind of important because I know that you wrote a paper about Libya, or contributed a paper on Libya about two years ago, and your appraisal of that whole -it was framed as a humanitarian intervention to protect the people from this brutal dictator -and I guess Syria would have been taking that same approach to protect the people of Syria and it doesn't

seem to be working too well, but if you could talk about how that intervention in Syria (Libya) has helped shape not only the dialogue but the reality that is on display given the current confrontation in Syria?

BK: Well yes, the whole concept of protecting the people is used all too conveniently, and it's used to distinguish for example French/UK/US efforts and a part of that coalition, as opposed to Assad he is always mentioned as using barrel bombs and there's been of course, the case of chemical weapons and a range of other weapons used.

But the reality is that there are so many sides in this conflict, so many sides have a stake in the Syrian conflict because it's in a sense, at the front line of a series of global events writ large, where you've got the role of Iran and Hezbollah. You've got the role of Russia and its interest, and you've got the US side of the equation and how it sees stability or instability in this particular case, and trying to maintain leverage and influence over a country that is also deemed an enemy of Israel.

So you have got a range of strategic factors that play into that and the people are just the chess pieces of the script writer. And yes, all sides are using the rhetoric of civilian deaths, and using this in a degree of protection. It's obvious that Assad is not particularly interested in protecting certain number of Syrians. The brutality of his armed forces is renowned, but by the same token, you can't exactly find sainted angels in the FSA, the Free Syria Army. The notion of a moderate Syrian opposition is of course quite absurd. How can one be moderate when heavily armed to the teeth and happy to also conduct one own little cleansing campaigns?

And added to that of course are different groupings with different...

GR: Like Al Nusra?

BK: ...yes, exactly Al Nusra, and even Al Nusra has disagreements at times with Al Qaeda, so you've got an Al Qaeda grouping and an Al Nusra grouping. And you've got the associated peculiarities of ISIL and so forth.

So what we have essentially are a range of groups that are promoting their agendas on Syrian soil and the Syrian people are of course, the ones to suffer from it and occasionally they are idealized in UN resolutions or they might be idealized in the context of humanitarian intervention but you can't have as I have mentioned before, you can't have humanitarian intervention at the end of a Tomahawk missile. It just does not work like that.

Humanitarian intervention is grotesquely euphemistic because it suggests a constructive notion when it's actually at the end of the day a warring destructive notion which we pad around essentially and Responsibility to Protect I am very critical of the doctrine even though it is very much the flavour in the human securities movement and very much has been the flavour of international, at least attempts to discuss international law reforms but the reality of it is that it is so often a cloak, a garb, a veil to justify realpolitik and genuine power interventions.

GR: Doing an end run around the principle of sovereignty of nations?

BK: Yes, exactly. What it does essentially is it attacks sovereignty via the back door,

just cloaks it under a different term.

GR: Yeah, I guess it's telling that the countries that are pushing for that- I mean Russia has been against that, they are trying to support that principle of sovereignty of nations...

BK: Yes, no of course, and again I do understand that this is diplomacy is a feast of hypocrisies, and I do understand that it can be perceived that the Russian approach here is (inaudible) noble regarding Ukraine and notions of sovereignty there. The principle still remains that critics of humanitarian intervention have a point in calling it, for example Brimont calls it a form of imperialism. Humanitarian imperialism. Because ultimately humanity is used as a trick, as a plague, and in that particular case it ends up with disastrous consequences because, the very people that are meant to be protected end up being injured, as we saw in cases like Libya, which is essentially being run now by a set of fiefdoms of various groupings and religious affiliations.

GR: I noticed that there was a nuclear deal that was struck and there has been some contention in the United States but, the president is essentially promoting this in principle, and interestingly enough, Canada has been particularly critical of Iran, they have been very guarded about the whole nuclear issue with Iran. What in your view guides Canada's approach to Iran? I mean they talk about it being a supporter of terrorism, but is that it? Or is there something more?

BK: No, I think it has to do with the obviously, well I say it's obvious because it seems to certainly conform to a pattern that I've seen in the context of a good number of members of Congress, certainly the GOP, and also in other countries where any country willing to listen to Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, who is the one spreading the line that such an agreement is dangerous, that you cannot have an agreement with Iran, because it follows from the premise that because it is it terrorist you cannot with them. And, this of course, is one of those self defeating, illusory measures that you don't negotiate with anyone you can just label a terrorist.

Iran has of course been - preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon is the primary concern but, it has been a primary concern for the countries involved in the agreement to begin with. Even though, I have always felt that this is a very dangerous process. I always thought it was deeply hypocritical for powers to get together, especially those who have it, and that's the problem with the Non Proliferation Treaty. The Non Proliferation Treaty, it has been argued, may have prevented more countries from going nuclear. That may be true.

But at its core, is a principle of bribery. Because at its core, the NPT is based on the principle that the countries that have nuclear weapons, well, we will eventually disband them, but not for now. And countries who don't have nuclear weapons, well you shouldn't have, and you don't have nuclear weapons and you will be in violation if you have nuclear weapons but, we will give you a concession, you can have cheap nuclear energy. So, that was the tradeoff. Now, the tradeoff has been totally misplaced, at least historically with Iran and Iran was trying to play on that so, quite legitimately, in the context of that.

But, the reality of it is that it's become so, almost like a hysterical idea, that if Iran

gets the weapon it will destabilize the region. There is a certain amount of truth in that. It's not even Israel itself. I mean Israel could be a significant problem having taken the stance that Iran is not going to be allowed to have a nuclear weapon, but the Saudis have also made it clear that in the event that Iran gets a nuclear weapon, and this is something the Israelis play on, and I want to add that the Israelis and the Saudis on this actually do see eye to eye, which is one of the curiosities that maybe your listeners may or may not be familiar with, the secret services of respective countries do have ties when dealing with Iran. Of course Saudi Arabia is the great enemy of Iran.

Historically, of course the Sunni/Shia divide is made very bleak there, where you've got the Shiites represented by Iran fundamentally so and of course, the Sunnis in the form of Saudi Arabia and there you see that replayed in Syria as well. So, the Saudis have also made it clear in fact, there were some rumors that went around last year that in the event that Iran was to obtain a nuclear weapon, they would try to seek Pakistani help in obtaining a Pakistani nuclear option. So, the nuclear weapons would be run by the Pakistanis but essentially they would be placed on Saudi soil. So, that was one of the rumors - well not entirely scotched to my satisfaction.

So, with all that said, and how does that come back and relate to the Canadian role? The Canadian role, I would say is linked to that by virtue of swallowing the Netanyahu line of security and certainly the US line, not necessarily from Obama, but certainly from the GOP line that particular line has been swallowed by Harper on this and he's almost wanting to make us, and again it's one of those things where smaller states want to sound louder and bigger than they are. So, he wants to make the impression that this is a fundamental point, take the lead against terrorism. But this is of course, a childish approach because you cannot have a security resolution in Syria without Iran. You cannot have a peaceful resolution in the Middle East if any of the crises happening there without Iran. And that is the fundamental point that somebody like Prime Minister Harper seems to be missing.

GR: Okay, well, I think another very important thing that needs to be raised, because you just brought up Saudi Arabia and their one of the biggest or Canada's biggest customers for arms is Saudi Arabia. So, I wonder what you make of that, especially given that the Canadian Prime Minister has been so robust in their opposition to terrorism and Saudi Arabia is a major sponsor of terrorism. So?

BK: Well, yes, you just have to see also the treatment of, for example, the Shia minority in Yemen and the Saudi approach to - not just supply the government response, but also to be involved - Saudi jets. Well jets supplied by countries like Canada, have been involved with strafing positions connected with the Shia minority.

There's been a blockade, it's been a vicious battle in fact, that's I think severely under reported. So, the broader sense of that is Saudi has a strange relationship with Western countries. And, that to large extent, it's got to do also with, its significance again, there is a natural resource issue. It is a commodities issue, it is oil, and they're still fundamentally very powerful. So there is that lingering issue.

But, the second thing too is that Saudi Arabia has been perceived as some kind of strategic balance in the area, so obviously there is the idea that it should keep tabs on things. Of course, it is a terrible human rights abuser, and it's very peculiar on

one hand to hold Iran to account on certain abuses but then not to hold Saudi Arabia.

I also found it a very rich remark made by Prime Minister Harper the other day on the issue of the latest deal with Saudi Arabia, in terms of selling more arms, and he would regard that as perfectly consistent to sell arms to Saudi Arabia, but no no, we are not going to do that with the Russians on that because they annexed Crimea, and they are sort of backing militants in the Donbass or in Ukraine.

So we have this typical Janus- faced approach of course, to foreign policy which is fundamental and seems to be the modus operandi of the Harper government and, I dare say he's not the only one, I do wonder whether his replacement, should he lose office, I just wonder if that's going to particularly change because that will be a strong statement to say, well, let us stop arms sales to Saudi Arabia because as you rightly pointed out, Saudi Arabia is a sponsor of various groups undermining and destabilizing regimes. Saudi Arabia is to be found everywhere in Syria.

GR: They're not exactly a Jeffersonian democracy.

BK: No, certainly not. They are not particularly interested in that, and in fact, and for your listens they might be interested in, from the security of their own computer if not their work space, look up the Saudi cables that were released recently by Wikileaks, and they give also a dramatic picture about Saudi foreign policy and look at exactly those sorts of things about what an otherwise very opaque, archaic state in many ways, with certain degrees of sophistication in peddling information for western consumption.

(End of interview.)

The original source of this article is Global Research

Copyright © [Michael Welch](#), [Dr. Binoy Kampmark](#), and [Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya](#), Global Research, 2015

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Michael Welch](#), [Dr. Binoy Kampmark](#), and [Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those

who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca