

Can Obama Level with the People?

Exclusive: Another terrorist outrage this one in Paris is spreading fear and fury across Europe. Which makes this a key moment for President Obama to finally level with the American people about how U.S. “allies” – such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar – have been aiding and abetting extremists, reports Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

The atrocities in Paris, killing more than 120 people, have brought forth the usual condemnations against terrorism and expressions of sympathy for the victims, but the larger question is whether this latest shock will finally force Western leaders to address the true root causes of the problem.

Will President Barack Obama and other leaders finally level with the American people and the world about what the underlying reasons for this madness are? Will Obama explain how U.S. “allies” in the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar, have been fueling this Sunni extremism for years? Will he dare recognize that Israeli repression of the Palestinians is a major contributing factor, too?

On a practical level, will Obama finally release those 28 pages from the congressional 9/11 report that addressed evidence of Saudi support for the hijackers who attacked New York and Washington in 2001?

Does he have the courage to explain how this scourge of Sunni terrorism can be traced back even further to the late 1970s when President Jimmy Carter started a small-scale covert operation in Afghanistan to destabilize a Moscow-backed secular regime in Kabul and that President Ronald Reagan then vastly expanded the program with the help of the Saudis, pouring in a total of \$1 billion a year and giving rise to Saudi militant Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda?

Can Obama be convinced that telling hard truths to the American people is not only vital to a democratic Republic in a philosophical way but can have the practical effect of creating crucial public support for rational policies? Will he realize that propaganda schemes or “strategic communications” may be clever short-term tricks to manipulate the American people but they are ultimately counterproductive and dangerous?

Will Obama finally take on Official Washington’s well-entrenched neoconservatives and their “liberal interventionist” junior varsity by challenging their innumerable false narratives? Will he pointedly blame the neocons and the liberal hawks, including those who run the editorial pages of

The Washington Post and The New York Times, for the disastrous Iraq War? Will he take on the “deep state” dug in at the big-name think tanks, not just at neocon havens like the American Enterprise Institute but at the center-left Brookings Institution?

Can the President muster the courage to ally himself with the American people, arming them with real information, so they can act like true citizens in a Republic rather than cattle being herded toward the slaughterhouse? Can he shake his own elitism or his fear of social ostracism to somehow become a true leader in his last year in office, rather than a timid follower of the prevailing “group think”?

Just because the “important people” have fancy credentials and went to the “right” schools, doesn’t mean that they have any monopoly on wisdom. Indeed, in my nearly four decades covering Official Washington, these “smart” folks have been wrong a lot more than they have been right. A leader of historic dimensions recognizes that reality and takes on the know-it-alls. In this case, a leader who enlists the American public by giving them reliable information could change this depressing dynamic.

If Obama could muster such courage and show trust in the people, he could bend the prevailing false narratives in the direction of truth and reality. On a practical level, he could help make the current Syrian peace talks succeed by stopping his endless repeating of the neocon/liberal-hawk mantra blaming President Bashar al-Assad for the entire mess and insisting that “Assad must go.” [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Hidden Origins of Syria’s Civil War.”](#)]

Twist Some Arms

Instead, Obama could twist the arms of his Saudi, Qatari and Turkish “friends” to get them to halt their financing and military support for Sunni jihadists associated with Al Qaeda and its various spin-offs, like the Islamic State and al-Nusra Front. And he could work cooperatively with Russian President Vladimir Putin to squeeze concessions out of both the Assad regime and the U.S.-financed “moderate” opposition so a unity government can begin to restore order in Syria and isolate the extremists.

Once some security is achieved, the Syrian people could hold elections to decide their own future and pick their own leaders. That should not be the business of either Obama or Putin.

As part of this effort, Obama could finally release the U.S. intelligence analyses on both jihadist funding and the circumstances surrounding the lethal sarin attack outside Damascus on Aug. 21, 2013, which the Obama administration

hastily blamed on Assad's regime although later evidence pointed toward a likely a provocation by Sunni extremists. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[The Collapsing Syria Sarin Case.](#)"]

To create crucial space for cooperating with Putin, Obama also could let the American people in on the reality about the Ukraine crisis in 2014, which was used by the neocons and liberal hawks to drive a wedge between Obama and Putin. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[What Neocons Want from Ukraine Crisis.](#)"]

U.S. intelligence analysts know a lot about key turning points in that conflict, including the Feb. 20, 2014 sniper attacks, which set the stage for ousting elected President Viktor Yanukovich two days later, and the July 17, 2014 shoot-down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, which was used to build an anti-Putin hysteria. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[MH-17: The Dog Still Not Barking.](#)"]

I'm told that these tragedies became propaganda weapons to deploy against Assad, Yanukovich and Putin rather than horrific crimes that deserved serious investigation and accountability. But whatever the ultimate conclusion about who is to blame for these crimes, why has Obama withheld from the American people what U.S. intelligence analysts know about those three incidents?

It was Obama, after all, who talked so much about "transparency" and trusting the American people as a candidate and during his first days in office. But since then, he has conformed to the elitist Orwellian approach of managing our perceptions rather than giving us the facts.

Yet, if Obama could get his cooperation with Putin back on track recognizing how useful it was in 2013 when Putin helped Obama get Assad to surrender all his chemical weapons and assisted in wresting important concessions from Iran about its nuclear program then the two powers could also weigh in on securing a peace agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians, another major irritant to peace in the region.

Indeed, it appears that the possibility of Obama and Putin working together to force the Israelis to make meaningful concessions for peace was a factor in the neocon determination to turn an eminently manageable political dispute in Ukraine over the pace of its integration into Europe without rending its ties to Russia into the dangerous frontlines of a new Cold War.

The neocons and liberal hawks outmaneuvered Obama who fell in line with the Putin-bashing, all the better to fit within Official Washington's in-crowd.

Thus, the Syrian crisis was left to fester with Obama acquiescing to neocon/liberal-hawk demands for arming and training "moderate" rebels although the President recognized that the idea was a "fantasy." He also resisted some of

the more extreme ideas, like an outright U.S. military invasion of Syria framed as a humanitarian “safe zone.”

But the Paris tragedy is another reminder that it is well past time for Obama to resurrect his helpful relationship with Putin and restore the teamwork that held such promise toward settling conflicts through negotiations, along the lines of the Iran nuclear deal.

If Obama were to choose that route which could be implemented through a combination of truth-telling to the American people and pragmatic big-power diplomacy with Russia he could at least start addressing the underlying causes of the violence tearing apart the Middle East and now spreading into Europe.

Or will Obama’s reaction to the Paris attacks be just more of the same more tough-guy talk about “resolve,” more “targeted” killings that slaughter many innocents as “collateral damage,” more tolerance of Saudi-Turkish-Qatari support for Sunni militants in Syria and elsewhere, more acceptance of hard-line Israeli repression of the Palestinians, more giving in to neocon/liberal-hawk demands for “regime change” in the neocons’ preferred list of countries?

If the history of the past seven years is any guide, there’s little doubt which direction President Obama will choose. He will go with Official Washington’s flow; he’ll worry about what the editorialists at the Post and Times might think of him; he’ll accommodate the neocons and liberal hawks who remain influential inside his own administration. In short, he’ll continue down the road toward destruction.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). You also can order Robert Parry’s trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America’s Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).
