

Fighting vs. Funding Terrorism: America's Ironic "Two-Faced" War on Terror

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Rarely ever does hypocrisy align so succinctly as it does within the pages of American policy and media coverage. US policy think tank, the Brookings Institution, recently provided an extreme example of this in a paper titled, "[A convenient terrorism threat](#)," penned by Daniel Byman.

The paper starts by claiming:

Not all countries that suffer from terrorism are innocent victims doing their best to fight back. Many governments, including several important U.S. allies, simultaneously fight and encourage the terrorist groups on their soil. President George W. Bush famously asked governments world-wide after 9/11 whether they were with us or with the terrorists; these rulers answer, "Yes."

Some governments—including at times Russia, Egypt, Turkey, and Pakistan among others—hope to have it both ways. They use the presence of terrorists to win sympathy abroad and discredit peaceful foes at home, even while fighting back vigorously enough to look plausible but not forcefully enough to solve the problem. This two-faced approach holds considerable appeal for some governments, but it hugely complicates U.S. counterterrorism efforts—and the U.S. shouldn't just live with it.

Byman then begins labelling various nations; Somalia as a "basket-case," Iran as a "straightforward state sponsors of terrorism" and attempts to frame Russia's struggle against terrorism in Chechnya as somehow disingenuous or politically motivated.

Byman also attempts to claim Syrian President Bashar Al Assad intentionally released terrorists from prison to help escalate violence around the country and justify a violent crackdown, this despite reports from Western journalists as early as 2007 revealing US intentions to use these very terrorists to overthrow the governments of Syria and Iran specifically, [the New Yorker would reveal](#).

The US is as Much a Sponsor of Terrorism in Reality as Byman Claims Others are in Fiction

But worse than Byman's intentional mischaracterisations and lies of omission regarding US allies like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Israel's overt, global-spanning sponsorship of terrorism, is the fact that not only is the US itself engaged in sponsoring terrorism as it poses as fighting against it globally, the Brookings Institution and Byman have specifically and publicly called for the funding, training and arming of designated foreign terrorist groups in pursuit of self-serving geopolitical objectives.

Indeed, Daniel Byman is one of several signatories of the 2009 Brookings Institution report, [“Which Path to Persia? Options for a New American Strategy toward Iran.”](#)

The report not only reveals the blueprints of using supposedly “peaceful” and “democratic” protests as cover for violent, US sponsored subversion (as was precisely done in Syria beginning in 2011), it specifically lists a US State Department-designated foreign terrorist organisation as a potential US proxy in violently rising up against, and eventually overthrowing the government in Tehran.

The report would explicitly state (our emphasis):

Perhaps the most prominent (and certainly the most controversial) opposition group that has attracted attention as a potential U.S. proxy is the NCRI (National Council of Resistance of Iran), the political movement established by the MEK (Mujahedin-e Khalq). Critics believe the group to be undemocratic and unpopular, and indeed anti-American.

In contrast, the group’s champions contend that the movement’s long-standing opposition to the Iranian regime and record of successful attacks on and intelligence-gathering operations against the regime make it worthy of U.S. support. They also argue that the group is no longer anti-American and question the merit of earlier accusations. Raymond Tanter, one of the group’s supporters in the United States, contends that the MEK and the NCRI are allies for regime change in Tehran and also act as a useful proxy for gathering intelligence. The MEK’s greatest intelligence coup was the provision of intelligence in 2002 that led to the discovery of a secret site in Iran for enriching uranium.

The report then admits MEK’s status as a designated foreign terrorist organisation and that it has targeted and killed both American officers and civilians in the past (our emphasis):

Despite its defenders’ claims, the MEK remains on the U.S. government list of foreign terrorist organizations. In the 1970s, the group killed three U.S. officers and three civilian contractors in Iran. During the 1979-1980 hostage crisis, the group praised the decision to take America hostages and Elaine Sciolino reported that while group leaders publicly condemned the 9/11 attacks, within the group celebrations were widespread.

The Brookings Institution also admits in its report that undoubtedly MEK continues to carry out undeniable terrorist activity against political and civilian targets within Iran, and notes that if MEK is to be successfully used as a US proxy against Iran, it would need to be delisted as a foreign terrorist organisation (our emphasis):

Undeniably, the group has conducted terrorist attacks—often excused by the MEK’s advocates because they are directed against the Iranian government. For example, in 1981, the group bombed the headquarters of the Islamic Republic Party, which was then the clerical leadership’s main political organization, killing an estimated 70 senior officials. More recently, the group has claimed credit for over a dozen mortar attacks, assassinations, and other assaults on Iranian civilian and military targets between 1998 and 2001. At the very least, to work more closely with the group (at least in an overt manner), Washington would need to remove it from the list of foreign terrorist organizations.

And eventually, that is precisely what was done. MEK would be delisted by the US State Department in 2012, announced in a US State Department statement titled, "[Delisting of the Mujahedin-e Khalq](#)," which noted:

With today's actions, the Department does not overlook or forget the MEK's past acts of terrorism, including its involvement in the killing of U.S. citizens in Iran in the 1970s and an attack on U.S. soil in 1992.

The Department also has serious concerns about the MEK as an organization, particularly with regard to allegations of abuse committed against its own members. The Secretary's decision today took into account the MEK's public renunciation of violence, the absence of confirmed acts of terrorism by the MEK for more than a decade, and their cooperation in the peaceful closure of Camp Ashraf, their historic paramilitary base.

MEK's inability to conduct violence in the decade preceding the US State Department's decision was not because of an ideological commitment to nonviolence, but a matter of strategic limitations placed on the terrorist organisation by Iraqi and Iranian security forces who were determined to liquidate it and who forcibly disarmed the group.

And even if the 2012 US State Department decision was based on an alleged decade of nonviolence, the policymakers at the Brookings Institution who signed their names to "Which Path to Persia?" including Daniel Byman, certainly did not apply the same criteria in suggesting its use as an armed proxy.

In all likelihood, had Iraq and Iran not successfully cornered and disarmed the group, it would be fighting America's proxy war against Tehran on both sides of the Iran-Iraq border. MEK fighters would be carrying out US-backed armed violence against Iran and Iraq side-by-side other US-backed terrorist groups operating across the region as part of America's current proxy war against Syria, Russia and Iran.

Daniel Byman of the Brookings Institution's latest paper even at face value is disingenuous, full of intentional mischaracterisations meant to direct attention away from the US and its closest allies' own sponsorship of terrorism amid a very much feigned "War on Terror." Understanding that Byman quite literally signed his name to a policy paper promoting the arming and backing of a US State Department designated foreign terrorist organisation makes his recent paper all that more outrageous.

What is also as troubling as it is ironic, is that Byman not only signed his name to calls for arming a listed terrorist organisation, he was also a staff member of the 9/11 Commission, [according to his Georgetown University biography](#). A man involved in sorting out a terrorist attack who is also advocating closer cooperation with listed terrorist organisations is truly disturbing.

The political and ethical bankruptcy of American foreign policy can be traced back to its policy establishment, populated by unprincipled hypocrites like Byman and co-signatories of Brookings' "Which Path to Persia?" The US certainly cannot convince other nations to abandon an alleged "two-faced" policy of promoting and fighting terrorism simultaneously when it stands as a global leader in this very practise.

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