

To New York Times, ‘Full Range of Views’ on War Is Pretty Narrow

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A foreign policy dinner had ‘a full range of views,’ according to the New York Times—featuring hawks from both major political parties.

Obama hosted a dinner of foreign policy insiders on Monday to talk about his plan to attack Islamic State fighters. The New York Times ([9/9/14](#)) reported this was “an effort to win over elite opinion,” adding:

The guestlist, which included national security advisers to three former presidents from both parties, represented a full range of views about the risks of returning to Iraq.

So what does a “full range of views” look like to the New York Times? Powerful people who worked for Republicans *and* Democrats.

The Times’ [Mark Landler](#) ran down the list:

Two of the guests—[Stephen J. Hadley](#) and [Richard N. Haass](#)—worked for the George W. Bush administration and have direct experience with the Iraq War and its chaotic aftermath.

Theirs would certainly count as “direct experience.”

The discussion included Sandy Berger and [Zbigniew Brzezinski](#), who both advised Democratic presidents; former Obama officials Tom Donilon, Michele Flournoy and CIA deputy director [Michael Morell](#); and former Clinton adviser Strobe Talbott and Democratic hawk [Jane Harman](#).

If the idea was to hear a “full range” of ideas, you might want to add—or subtract—a few names.

Judging by the stories that emerged after the dinner, things went well for the Obama camp. Here’s Washington Post columnist [David Ignatius](#) ([9/9/14](#)):

“We have to do it,” says Zbigniew Brzezinski, a former national security adviser and the dean of a group of strategists who met with Obama on Monday night.

And back to the New York Times ([9/10/14](#)), which reports that “several participants” said that Obama “presented a comprehensive plan that included military, diplomatic and ideological components.” The Times also reported that Harman said that “she and other participants told Mr. Obama that he could order military action in Syria without fear of helping Mr. Assad, since ISIS was occupying ungoverned territory that his forces were unlikely to reconquer.”

So Obama was able to “win over” a group of elites who were likely to agree with him anyway.

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