

Michael Rubin on Dealing with Putin: “Bomb Assad; Arm Ukraine”



Russian Soldiers

Dr. Michael Rubin, Resident Scholar at the Washington, DC, American Enterprise Institute will be one of our guests on the Lisa Benson Show, Sunday, October 4th. He is the author of [*Dancing with the Devil: the Perils of Engaging with Rogue Regimes*](#). We published both a [review](#) of *Dancing with the Devils* and an [interview](#) with Rubin in the March 2014 *New English Review*. The introduction to our interview noted:

We met Rubin in 2005 when he returned to Yale to discuss his experience as a former Pentagon official on Iran and Iraq who also served as a political advisor to the Provisional Coalition Authority. He spoke about the emergence of the nuclear Iran threat under the “reformist” regime in Tehran led by Ayatollah Khatami. See Rubin’s background and blog at the AEI website, [here](#) and [here](#). Our interview with Rubin ranged across an array of prevailing issues. Among these are the Iranian nuclear and ICBM threat and Putin’s great game of one sided politics in the Middle East and Eastern Europe. He also addressed Pakistan’s tolerance of terrorism and the lack of US support for the Kurds in both Iraq and Syria. He criticized the folly of the Administration’s support of Turkey under Premier Erdogan and the folly of its lead in the Final Status negotiations with the Palestinians imperiling Israel’s security.

As regards Putin and his current demarche to the

Administration in Syria this exchange with Rubin from our interview illustrates how clear-eyed was his response:

Gordon: How dangerous to American interests is Russian President Putin's great game strategy in the Middle East?

Rubin: Very. The problem is that Americans tend to see diplomacy as a means to compromise, a win-win solution. However, Putin sees international relations as a zero-sum game in which for Russia to win, everyone else must lose. When Neville Chamberlain goes up against Machiavelli, Machiavelli wins.

Rubin published in *Commentary Magazine* on October 2, 2015 some prescriptions on how to deal with Putin, "[Bomb Assad; Arm Ukraine](#)". Doubtless President Obama would aver, given his White House press conference yesterday.

Note what Obama said in response to a question from CBS Chief White House Correspondent Major Garrett regarding his former Secretary of State and Democrat presidential hopeful, Hillary's Clinton's change of heart on Syria in this *Breitbart News* [report](#):

President Obama found himself in a bit of a conundrum after he denounced critics of his Syria policy as being full of "mumbo jumbo" and "half-baked ideas."

In response, CBS reporter Major Garrett questioned Obama whether Hillary Clinton's proposal to enforce a no-fly zone in Syria was a half-baked idea.

"Hillary Clinton is not half-baked in terms of her approach to these problems," Obama said carefully,

reminding reporters she served in his administration as Secretary of State.

But Obama pointed out that Clinton's rhetoric on Syria is merely campaign rhetoric.

"I also think that there's a difference between running for president and being president," he said carefully, pointing out that he was having specific discussions with his military advisors about the right way forward in Syria.

"If and when she's president, then she'll make those judgments and she's been there enough that she knows that, you know, these are tough calls," he said.

Clinton broke with the White House on Syria, calling for a "no-fly zone" in Syria to protect Syrian citizens in an interview with a