

SAUDIS HOLDING THEIR BREATH UNTIL WE DELIVER MIDEAST HEGEMONY

Congressional Republicans are not the only ones who like to throw very public temper tantrums. The Saudis have decided not to address the UN General Assembly today to show their displeasure about developments in Syria and Iran.

This follows the Saudi threat to increase its support of the liver-eating terrorists trying to supplant Bashar al-Assad.

Saudi Arabia wants “intensification of political, economic and military support to the Syrian opposition.... to change the balance of powers on the ground” in Syria, Prince Saud said in his remarks to the Friends of Syria group, a coalition of Western and Gulf Arab countries and Turkey that supports the Syria opposition against Mr. Assad. The state-run Saudi Press Agency carried a transcript of his remarks.

[snip]

Saudis now feel that the Obama administration is disregarding Saudi concerns over Iran and Syria, and will respond accordingly in ignoring “U.S. interests, U.S. wishes, U.S. issues” in Syria, said Mustafa Alani, a veteran Saudi security analyst with the Geneva-based Gulf Research Center.

“They are going to be upset—we can live with that,” Mr. Alani said Sunday of the Obama administration. “We are learning from our enemies now how to treat the United States.”

[snip]

Saudi unhappiness didn't mean that the kingdom would start supporting terrorist groups, Mr. Alani stressed. Saudi Arabia, like the U.S., has been targeted by al Qaeda, a group born of U.S. and Saudi support for fighters against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

However, the U.S. is more conservative than the Gulf countries in what it considers terrorist groups in Syria. The U.S. has declared Syrian rebel group Jabhat al-Nusra to be a terrorist organization, while many in the Gulf consider the rebel faction to be a legitimate, predominantly Syrian fighting force against Mr. Assad.

All this risks proving allegations Vlad Putin made correct – that the Saudis were willing to use terrorists to accomplish their goals in Syria (and, Putin further claimed Bandar bin Sultan had threatened, in Russia).

But I suspect the Saudis fear something greater: that warming relations with Iran might create a rival swing producer, the role that has served as the basis for outsized Saudi influence since we ditched the Shah in the 1970s. With the Euro region in such dire straights, the Saudis are less able to ditch the Dollar for another currency. And while the Saudis have a window during which US peace efforts in Iran might blowback against the US, after that time, I suspect, they worry not that Shias will take over their own oil fields, but that the US will be less dependent on the Saudis. It doesn't help them that the most viable challenge to US power, the BRICS, want Iran to come back online themselves.

We shall see. We shall particularly see if the Saudis no longer hide their efforts to back groups we consider terrorists.