

Beat: Politics

RUSSIA, SYRIA, ISIS, ELECTIONS, ABORTION

PASSIONATE VISIONS FOR AMERICA

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USPA NEWS - In a landscape cluttered with too many conferences airing too many clichés, yielding too little useful dialogue, the Atlantic's Washington Ideas Forum remains an exception. In its six year, the star studded program boldly addressed domestic and foreign policy nuggets from Russia to elections.

The ranks of attendees swelled by an A-list group of guests included Colin Powell, Mitt Romney, Jeh Johnson, Madeline Albright, Al Gore, Arnie Duncan, Penny Pritzker, David Rubenstein, and Jeff Weiner to name but a few.

Many guests weight in on President Obama's meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, addressing the issues in Syria. Russia announced Thursday that they will be begin airstrikes against anti-Assad rebels. Senator Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) was quick to point out that Russian President Vladimir Putin knows he will get no pushback for his actions, that there will be no price pay. Later Ben Rhodes, President Obama's Deputy National Security Advisor, addressing Russia's actions, stated : "We are expanding our footprint in the world, we have a big world out there with lots of interests such as Asia. We should not be so concerned about Russian bases as they have had bases there for a long time. He reiterated the administrations concern with President Assad as the initiator of the Syrian conflict by dropping barrel bombs.

While Russia claims that the airstrike will be focused combating ISIS Senator John McCain (R-AZ) countered the Russian claim, by saying that Russian airstrikes were not targeted at the Islamic militants, but rather the Free Syrian Army Senator McCain (sharply criticized President Obama's foreign policy and called Russia's use of force a "blatant in your face move" toward the United States. "This is a testimony to the lack of concern that Russia has to about America's reaction to their actions," McCain said at the event. "That's the only way you can interpret this." When asked about what he would have done if commander-in-chief, McCain said he would of followed the advice of General David Petraeus by arming the Free Syrian Army, establishing a buffer zone, stop the use of destructive barrel bombs by the Syrian Army and establishing contingent of American special operations forces on the ground.

Colin Powell, who served as Secretary of State and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called President Assad a pathological liar, not to be trusted, but warned us to be very careful before we go for his removal. He pointed out that when removing any leader prematurely, structure holding a society together might collapse . Powell is a great advocate of air power, but added that his "Powell Doctrine" was if you start out with something, make sure you have enough force for a decisive outcome.

Powell, whose family hails from Jamaica, defended the GOP as accepting and understanding of immigration while insisting that it's only a vocal and influential minority that is pushing forth a xenophobic agenda: " I think most Republicans understand that we need immigration, we are an immigrant nation [and that] it is in our best interest to do it. "If I was around Mr. Trump""Donald, who I know rather well""I would say, "You know, Don, let's see what happens""let's tell all the immigrants working in Trump hotels to stay home tomorrow."

Powell who endorsed President Barack Obama's candidacies in 2008 and 2012, declared he was still a "Republican," but not for the reasons many others are loyal to the GOP. He still supports some of the traditional planks of the Republican Party, but admitted he does have some differences. "In Virginia, you don't have to declare a party " but I'm still a Republican because I believe in a strong defense, because I believe in the entrepreneurial spirit that is so typical of the Republican Party in the past. But I'm having difficulty with the party now," he said. "I want to continue to be a Republican because it annoys them," Powell said laughing. In his view the party shifted too far to the right to be successful in major elections: " I think the party has shifted much further right than where the country is and it should be obvious to party leaders that they cannot keep saying and doing the things that they were doing and hope to be

successful in national-level election in the future, not just in 2016.”

Mitt Romney, the 2012 Republican Presidential candidate, who slammed President Obama on U.S.-Russia relations three years ago, said Obama's foreign policy "has been a disaster. Romney said the president could have dealt with this three years ago, but now the options are limited as he "paints himself into a corner and fails to act". Romney believes that the United States should do what ever it takes to destroy ISIS and that ultimately "we have to get rid of Assad." He views Russia's involvement in Syria as an effort to try and divert from their actions in Ukraine. "We have to stay by our word and be a world leader again." Asked about the elections, Romney said that he will support the 2016 Republican nominee but that he does not believe it will be Donald Trump. He called Trump's strategy on ISIS "absurd and dangerous. "I don't think that kind of proposal is likely to lead him to become our nominee," said Romney.

When former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright took the stage, she complimented former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who is now a candidate seeking the Democratic presidential nomination. She pointed out:

"I know her very well and admire her, and I think that she would be the best prepared to be president of anybody that we've had in a very, very long time" Albright said. "I think she is able to link that domestic and foreign policy given her own experiences, and one of the major things she did as Secretary of State was to restore America's reputation,". She continued: "You can't militarize democracy, and you can't invade countries for no reason, and so I think she really would be amazing."

When asked about Clinton's personal email server use to send classified information, Albright felt that her apologizing was sufficient. Jokingly she expressed gratitude that during her time in office the administration she didn't use email.

"I think that she has said that she made a mistake on the emails "" she has apologized for it," Albright said, "and I think that I am very lucky, because I went to college sometime between the invention of the iPad and the discovery of fire, and I didn't use email."

Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) focused on domestic issues. She declined to endorse any of the candidates instead she went on to slam Republicans for trying to shut down Planned Parenthood on the basis of anti-choice zealots the Center for Medical Progress' phony video smear campaign. She underlined her commitment to women's right to choose, saying, "Republicans say the first issue that we've got to discuss, the number one thing, everything else can go forward on the budget or we can cut, everything else, the first thing we've to do is defund Planned Parenthood. That means defunding healthcare for women," she said. When I talk about 1955, I'm talking about a world when women died. I'm talking about a world when women committed suicide rather than go forward with a pregnancy they could not handle. And what the Republicans are saying is that they want to go back. And I want to make sure we are not going back. Not now, not ever."

The hope for renewal of American strength was evident on both sides of the isle. This is an idea based on the premises that the world is at its safest when America is at its strongest. When America's armed forces and intelligence professionals, aided by our civilian diplomatic and foreign assistance programs, are able to send a strong message without firing a shot, the result is more peace, not more conflict.

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