



Bernie Sanders, Peace Candidate.

by Paul Surovell, *Chair*
South Mountain Peace Action

www.beaboutpeace.com paul4sure@aol.com twitter.com/paulsurovell

"No more wars!" Bernie Sanders said in Portland Oregon, after a small bird, who Bernie dubbed, "a dove of peace," landed on his podium. That spontaneous moment captured the essence of Bernie Sander's approach to war and peace – he is fundamentally antiwar.

VIDEO: <https://youtu.be/Jc2TVLoxsDA>

"We came, we saw, he died!" Hillary Clinton said, as she laughed and took credit for the killing of Libyan leader Muammar Quaddafi. That spontaneous moment captured the essence of Hillary Clinton's approach to war and peace -- she is fundamentally a hawk.

VIDEO: <https://youtu.be/Fgcd1ghag5Y>

In this essay, I've attempted to compare and contrast the views of Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton on war and peace in three major policy arenas: Syria, Israel/Palestine and Iran.

Representative Tulsi Gabbard, a member of the House Armed Services and Foreign Affairs committees, who resigned from the Democratic National Committee to endorse Bernie, wrote in part:

"We could vote for Clinton and continue to spend trillions of dollars on interventionist regime-change wars and so-called nation-building overseas. Or we could vote for Sanders, end these costly, counter-productive wars and use our precious taxpayer dollars to rebuild our own nation." (read Rep. Gabbard's full statement [here](#))

I believe that the information I have gathered below supports Tulsi Gabbard's statement. I believe her statement captures the primary choice facing voters and it expresses why I'm voting for Bernie Sanders.

BERNIE'S ANTIWAR HISTORY IN BRIEF

Bernie's strong opposition to the Vietnam war led him to apply for [conscientious objector](#) status in the 1960s (he was never drafted). As the mayor of Burlington, Vermont, Bernie initiated sister-city relationships with the cities of [Yaroslavl](#) in the USSR and [Puerto Cabenzas](#), Nicaragua. Bernie [visited](#) Nicaragua in 1985 and Cuba in 1989. As mayor, he spoke out against the Contra War in Nicaragua and the trade embargo against Cuba. As a member of Congress Bernie opposed both wars in Iraq and has consistently [argued for cuts](#) in military spending, including reductions in our nuclear arsenal. On November 10, 2015 Bernie was [one of three](#) Senators to vote against an increase in the military budget.

[For the record, on two occasions, Bernie Sanders voted for US military action abroad: in 1999 for President Clinton's bombing of Yugoslavia and in 2001 for President Bush's invasion of Afghanistan. I strongly disagreed with the first, I supported the second.]

BERNIE ON REGIME CHANGE

On November 19, 2016 at Georgetown University, Bernie outlined [his position](#) on regime change and unnecessary wars:

" . . . unilateral military action should be a last resort, not a first resort, and that ill-conceived military decisions, such as the invasion of Iraq, can wreak far-reaching devastation and destabilize entire regions for decades. It begins with the reflection that the failed policy decisions of the past – rushing to war, regime change in Iraq, or toppling Mossadegh in Iran in 1953, or Guatemalan President Árbenz in 1954, Brazilian President Goulart in 1964, Chilean President Allende in 1973. These are the sorts of policies do not work, do not make us safer, and must not be repeated."

HILLARY ON REGIME CHANGE

When questioned by Chris Matthews on [March 14, 2016](#) about whether she supported US involvement in the assassinations of Mossadegh, Allende, Lumumba and others, Hillary Clinton did not give a direct answer:

"In the vast majority of cases, the answer is no. But, you know, there's always these historical games you can play. If somebody could have assassinated Hitler before he took over Germany, would that have been a good thing or not?"

HILLARY'S SYRIA NO-FLY ZONE

Currently, Bernie, like President Obama, opposes the use of US military forces to overthrow the Assad government in Syria, but he supports the President's policy to use military force against ISIS. Bernie, like President Obama, opposes Hillary Clinton's call for a "no-fly zone" in Syria that could risk US military confrontation with Russia.

When asked during an [interview](#) on MSNBC whether as President she would shoot down a Russian jet if there were a no-fly zone, Hillary answered as follows:

"Well, that's a hypothetical that I think there are many steps you have to go through and decisions you have to make before you even get to that. NATO did have to warn the Russians because they were invading Turkish air space"

Hillary's proposal for a no-fly zone in Syria that could risk a US-Russian military confrontation in my opinion, is highly provocative. Her refusal to say that she would not shoot down Russian aircraft in that zone is, in my opinion, alarming.

SYRIAN CHEMICAL WEAPONS AND OBAMA'S REVERSAL

Another difference on Syria between Bernie and Hillary, is how they responded to President Obama's announcement in August 2013 that because of reported Syrian use of chemical weapons he was preparing to launch a military attack on Syria. Bernie spoke out [in opposition to](#) this planned attack.

And when President Obama reversed his plan for military action and announced an agreement with Russia to address the chemical weapons problem through the United Nations, Bernie expressed [his support](#).

HILLARY'S RESPONSE TO OBAMA'S DECISION NOT TO BOMB

In contrast to Bernie's support for Obama's decision to use diplomacy rather than bombing, Hillary responded, according to Jeffrey Goldberg in the Atlantic:

"Right after Obama's reversal, Hillary Clinton said privately, 'If you say you're going to strike, you have to strike. There's no choice.' "

Goldberg writes that Obama [responded](#) to similar criticism of his decision not to bomb as follows:

"dropping bombs on someone to prove that you're willing to drop bombs on someone is just about the worst reason to use force."

In the January 17, 2016 [debate](#) with Bernie Sanders, Hillary side-stepped a question on whether Obama's reversal was OK.

ISRAEL / PALESTINE: THE AIPAC SPEECHES

Bernie delivered a speech in Salt Lake City on March 21, 2016 which he sent in writing to the annual meeting of AIPAC (American-Israel Political Action Committee) in Washington DC. In the [speech](#), Bernie supported a two-state solution and the need to

withdraw Israeli settlements and address Palestinian concerns as well as Israeli security:

" . . . to be successful, we have to be a friend not only to Israel, but to the Palestinian people, where in Gaza, they suffer from an unemployment rate of 44 percent – the highest in the world – – and a poverty rate nearly equal to that."

The Star-Ledger of New Jersey published a lead [editorial](#) on March 25, 2016 comparing the Clinton and Sanders AIPAC speeches, titled, "On Israel, Hillary Panders and Bernie Shows Guts," the editorial said:

"Hillary Clinton spoke to thousands of supporters of Israel who gathered in Washington on Monday, and [failed to say even a single word about the military occupation](#) of the West Bank or the expansion of Jewish settlements there.

"That is the definition of pandering. That kind of flattery is not real friendship. It is the product of cold political calculation, an offer to ignore this fundamental injustice in return for political support. Palestinians have no political juice in America, so she was content to cast them aside, as are all the Republican candidates.

"On the same day, Bernie Sanders, the only Jewish candidate in the race, gave a speech that shows why so many people are Feeling the Bern: He told the truth as he saw it, come what may.

"This is what real friendship demands," he said. "If elected president, I will work tirelessly to advance the cause of peace as a partner and a friend to Israel. But to be successful we have to be a friend not only to Israel, but to the Palestinian people."

TALKING WITH IRAN

In the July 2007 Presidential debate Hillary called Barack Obama "irresponsible and frankly naive" when he said that he would meet with the leader of Iran without conditions.

Similarly, in her debate with Bernie on [January 17, 2016](#), Hillary called his suggestion that the US move "as aggressively as we can to normalize relations with Iran" as a "fundamental misunderstanding of what it takes to do the patient diplomacy that I have experience in."

Bernie's willingness to hold talks with adversaries characterizes his approach to foreign relations. Here's Bernie's [full statement](#) in the debate that Hillary criticized:

ANDREA MITCHELL:

"Thank you, Lester. Senator Sanders, the nuclear deal is now in force. Iran is getting billions of dollars. Several Americans who have been held are now gonna be heading home. The president said today is a good day. It's a good day for diplomacy. Is it time now to restore diplomatic relations for the first time since 1979, and actually reopen a U.S. embassy in Tehran?"

BERNIE SANDERS:

"I think what we have got to do is move as aggressively as we can to normalize relations—with Iran, understanding that Iran's behavior in so many ways is something that we disagree with. Their support for terrorism—the anti-American rhetoric that we're hearing from some of their leadership is something that is not acceptable.

"On the other hand, the fact that we managed to reach an agreement, something that I very strongly supported, that prevents Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, and that we did that without going to war, and that I believe we're seeing a thaw in our relationships with Iran is a very positive step. So if your question is, do I want to see that relationship become more positive in the future? Yes.

"Can I tell you that we should open an embassy in Tehran tomorrow? No, I don't think we should. But I think the goal has got to be, as we have done with Cuba, to move in warm relations with a very powerful and important country in this world."

So we are back to 2007 in Iran, except that now Hillary is lecturing Bernie Sanders instead of Barack Obama.

In 2007, one candidate, Barack Obama favored talks with Iran. The other, Hillary Clinton, opposed talks. In 2016, Bernie Sanders calls for talks with Iran, Hillary Clinton is opposed.

I think it's always a good policy to hold talks with one's adversaries.

And especially with Iran, when we have a chance to support a more moderate leadership, and we have the opportunity to build upon the monumental success of the Iran Nuclear Deal.

One of the main reasons why I supported Barack Obama for President in 2008 was his call for holding talks with Iran. I am supporting Bernie Sanders in 2016 for the same reason. We need to continue President Obama's leadership of giving priority to

diplomacy -- with Iran, with Syria and with Israel / Palestine. Bernie has demonstrated that he can be trusted to do that. Hillary has demonstrated that she cannot.

As former President Jimmy Carter [said this week](#):

"When Secretary Clinton was Secretary of State, she took very little action to bring about peace. It was only John Kerry's coming into office that reinitiated all these very important and crucial issues."