

Making The World A More Dangerous Place

US foreign policy at work

by Chris Martenson

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Without any doubt, the Middle East has been a very long-simmering region of violent religious and tribal enmity.

In that regard, perhaps today is no different than 1,000 years ago. **But given the importance of the remaining oil in the Middle East to the next 20 years of global economic health, the violence and chaos seen there recently is hugely important to the entire world.**

But it's also equally without doubt that the US and NATO are inflaming the situation by provoking conflicts and supplying military weapons and training to various extremist groups -- therefore deserving much of the blame for the current tensions, despair and mayhem happening in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Libya.

Forget anything you might read about "brutal dictators" that need to go or the importance of "democracy" to the region. That's dumbed-down pablum for the masses and has literally nothing to do with the motivations of the (clinically insane) external power brokers actually driving the events on the ground and crafting the narrative that is faithfully scribed and re-told by the media. **In fact, disturbingly often, the scribed narrative is exactly opposite of the truth.**

On The Path To War

If a wider war breaks out between the US/NATO and either Russia and/or China, then massive systemic shocks will result to the economy, oil prices, and the global financial system.

Some comfort themselves with the belief that such a war would not be in the interest of the true powers that now drive the politics of most countries. Others worry that chaotic systems and events sometimes have a life of their own, regardless of what 'the powers that be' may want. We have entered such a time.

While predicting the outbreak of war is not my intent here, I do want you to be appraised of the risks. We all should note that the elevated tensions across the globe are as good a reason as any to get our houses in order. As we reinforce often here at Peak Prosperity: when it comes to such preparations, we vastly prefer to be an entire year early than a single day late.

Good planning begins with good intelligence. But sadly, if you feel relatively well-informed because you read a lot of newspapers or watch a lot of news, you may be among the most misinformed of them all.

Certainly, the events in the Middle East over the past decade have been almost impossible to analyze or understand from a logical perspective.

But the pattern has been clear enough: a rough justification of the need for military force is raised by the US administration and, within weeks, money and war material are mobilized to do exactly that. Libya, Iraq, and Syria are recent examples of such.

However, none of this is any surprise to those paying attention. **General Wesley Clark warned about the US's military objectives in the Middle East back in 2007 in an interview with Democracy Now!** It's difficult to read this transcript without concluding that the US was going to manufacture whatever justifications it needed in order to carry out a larger strategy that, inexplicably to rational observers, seemed intent on inflaming and toppling governments across the Middle East -- a monstrous war crime by any historical standard:

„About ten days after 9/11, I went through the Pentagon and I saw Secretary Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz. I went downstairs just to say hello to some of the people on the Joint Staff who used to work for me, and one of the generals called me in. He said, “Sir, you’ve got to come in and talk to me a second.” I said, “Well, you’re too busy.” He said, “No, no.” He says, “We’ve made the decision we’re going to war with Iraq.”

This was on or about the 20th of September. I said, “**We’re going to war with Iraq? Why?**” He said, “**I don’t know.**” He said, “**I guess they don’t know what else to do.**” So I said, “Well, did they find some information connecting Saddam to al-Qaeda?” He said, “No, no.” He says, “There’s nothing new that way. **They just made the decision to go to war with Iraq.**” He said, “I guess it’s like we don’t know what to do about terrorists, **but we’ve got a good military and we can take down governments.**” And he said, “I guess if the only tool you have is a hammer, every problem has to look like a nail.”

So I came back to see him a few weeks later, and **by that time we were bombing in Afghanistan**. I said, “Are we still going to war with Iraq?” And he said, “Oh, it’s worse than that.” He reached over on his desk. He picked up a piece of paper. And he said, “I just got this down from upstairs” — meaning the Secretary of Defense’s office — “today.” And he said, “**This is a memo that describes how we’re going to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran.**” I said, “Is it classified?” He said, “Yes, sir.” I said, “Well, don’t show it to me.” And I saw him a year or so ago, and I said, “You remember that?” He said, “Sir, I didn’t show you that memo! I didn’t show it to you!”

Sources

Retired Gen. Wesley Clark reveals a very interesting conversation he had with a fellow officer at the Pentagon ten days after 9/11. YouTube Video, 21.03.2012 - 02:12 min, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8FhZnFZ6TY>

“We’re going to take out 7 countries in 5 years: Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan & Iran..” - Gen. Wesley Clark Weighs Presidential Bid: "I Think About It Every Day", DEMOCRACY NOW, March 02, 2007 – *Transcript*: http://www.democracynow.org/2007/3/2/gen_wesley_clark_weighs_presidential_bid

Complete Video (48:59 min) **General Wesley Clark speaks to Democracy Now!**
(March 2, 2007) – URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXA1IRVV4Qc>

Seven countries in five years.

Poking The Bear – Part IV

Actually, I don't know how many times the US has poked the bear (Russia) over the past two years, so I thought I'd use "Part IV" to get the point across. It might be a much higher number.

First there was Ukraine, where the US and other western parties conspired to overthrow the sitting elected government and putting in place the current crop of ultra-nationalist thugs and Nazi sympathizers that now infest the halls of power in Kiev. The situation there is an unfortunate mess, one the West fomented.

Naturally the West was none too pleased when Russia, quite predictably, responded and sought to protect the roughly 8 million Russian speaking citizens living in eastern Ukraine with military support. Money and military aid and the ubiquitous US "advisors" flooded in to help the Kiev militarily dominate eastern Ukraine – ironic, as a few of Ukraine's current leaders were caught on tape saying they'd prefer to nuke the region in an ethnic cleansing.

Then, when the people of Crimea voted to rejoin Russia (perhaps you would, too, if your "elected" leaders dreamed of nuking you), the US reacted as if this were some kind of foul play. That's a strange sort of needle to thread for a country that prides itself of on "spreading democracy" (even by force, if necessary). You'd think that people voting and exercising their free rights would top of the list of acceptable things to the US -- but unless the election outcome is exactly in alignment with US wishes, that's just not the case.

Similarly, an almost comical (were it not so serious) attempt to malign Russia was made by the US State Department this week. In the aftermath of the US's own bombing of the Afghan hospital in Kunduz, this charge was leveled against Russia:

U.S. believes Russian bombing in Syria hit hospital: State Department

Oct 29, 2015

The United States has "operational information" that leads U.S. officials to believe Russian military aircraft hit a hospital while carrying out bombing raids in Syria, the State Department said on Thursday.

Since the start of the Russian bombing campaign on Sept. 30, various reports from media and civilian groups have charged that Russian warplanes have hit hospitals with their air strikes.

Asked at a briefing whether the United States had evidence that Russian bombing had hit Syrian hospitals, State Department spokesman John Kirby said, **"Yes, we've seen some information that would lead us to believe that Russian military aircraft did hit a hospital.**

"We have seen some press reporting to that end, we have seen some Syrian civil society groups say that," Kirby said.

"I would tell you that we have other operational information that leads us to believe that Russian targeting has not only not been focused on ISIL (Islamic State) but has, in fact, caused collateral damage and some civilian casualties, to include some civil infrastructure."

Source: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/29/us-mideast-crisis-russia-hospital-idUSKCN0SN2TC20151029>

Um.... "some press reporting" and "other operational information?" Good grief, that's lame. Is that all the State Department has? How about some pictures? Ballistics evidence? Satellite photos? Anything??

Watching this RTTV reporter trying to get something credible out of a State Department spokesperson on the matter is simply cringe-worthy:

see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEhv6J0gFHo>

The video is also notable for the arrogance on display. Assertions are useless without evidence, and in this age of satellites and drones, evidence of a destroyed hospital should be remarkably easy to come by. Yet not only did the State Department not share any such evidence, it went on to further claim that Russia had been targeting civilian infrastructure, which was another awkward charge for to lob given the news of the week prior:

Warplanes of US-led alliance attack power plant in Aleppo

Oct 18, 2015

A military source told SANA that warplanes of the Washington alliance violated Syrian airspace and attacked civilian infrastructure in Mare'a, Tal Sha'er, and al-Bab in Aleppo countryside on Sunday.

The source added that the warplanes attacked the biggest electric power plant that feeds Aleppo city, which resulted in cutting off power from most neighborhoods in Aleppo city.

This transgression comes only 8 days after two F-16 warplanes belonging to the alliance targeted two power plants in al-Radwaniye area east of Aleppo city, cutting off power from the area. *Source:* <http://sana.sy/en/?p=58236>

I've seen this information presented in various sources and nobody has denied it yet. But neither have I seen pictures, so perhaps this is disinformation too...though [Putin is on record as saying](#) "On Sunday, the American aviation bombed out an electrical power plant and a transformer in Aleppo. Why have they done this? Whom have they punished there? What's the point? Nobody knows,"

Given that charge, you'd think at least a denial from the US was in order. But none has been made. If the allegation is true, though, then it fits a larger pattern of the US criticizing other countries for doing the very same things it does.

Even more seriously, back in June the US rattled its sabers by announcing this:

U.S. Is Poised to Put Heavy Weaponry in Eastern Europe

Jun 13, 2105

RIGA, Latvia — In a significant move to deter possible Russian aggression in Europe, the Pentagon is poised to store battle tanks, infantry fighting vehicles and other heavy weapons for as many as 5,000 American troops in several Baltic and Eastern European countries, American and allied officials say.

The proposal, if approved, would represent the **first time since the end of the Cold War** that the United States has stationed heavy military equipment in the newer NATO member nations in Eastern Europe that had once been part of the Soviet sphere of influence. Russia's annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine have caused alarm and prompted new military planning in NATO capitals. *Source:*

https://myaccount.nytimes.com/auth/login?URI=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nytimes.com%2F2015%2F06%2F14%2Fworld%2Furope%2Fus-poised-to-put-heavy-weaponry-in-east-europe.html%3F_r%3D2

These moves are indicative of worsening relations with Russia. They show an over-reliance on military options and a woeful lack of diplomatic outreach, at least any that are being reported in the news. Of course, the risk of all this being interpreted by Russia as 'overtly hostile' is pretty much 100%.

“The Enemy Of My Enemy Is My Friend”

If you are having similarly hard time trying to understand the US's policy in the Middle East, you're not alone. The shifting alliances in play there are really hard to keep track of.

Turkey has been aiding the so-called Syrian rebels (more on those rebels in a minute) but maintaining its long-standing hatred of the Kurdish people. The US has been arming the Kurds and Syrian rebels while maintaining a mutual relationship with Turkey.

Iraq has been struggling with ISIS and accepting help from Iran to deal with them. This puts the US and Iran on the same side of the battle, if you believe that the US is actually trying to stop ISIS rather than covertly helping it. Why would it possibly help ISIS? Because ISIS is battling Assad's government in Syria.

Crazy, huh?

Now, let's talk about those so-called “Syrian rebels.” The term "rebels" implies that these are Syrians fighting their own government. That's significantly untrue. Consider this:

20,000 Foreign Fighters Flock to Syria, Iraq to Join Terrorists

Feb 10, 2015

WASHINGTON -- Foreign fighters are streaming into Syria and Iraq in unprecedented numbers to join the Islamic State or Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or other extremist groups, including at least 3,400 from Western nations among 20,000 from around the world, U.S. intelligence officials say in an updated estimate of a top terrorism concern.

Nick Rasmussen, chief of the National Counterterrorism Center, said the rate of foreign fighter travel to Syria is without precedent, far exceeding the rate of foreigners who went to wage jihad in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen or Somalia at any other point in the past 20 years.

Source: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/ap-20000-foreign-fighters-flock-to-syria-iraq-to-join-terrorists/>

There are dozens of reports indicating that the US, through the CIA and other outfits, has been responsible for a big part of both recruiting and training these foreign fighters, who draw from such nations as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Chechnya and Qatar (among many others).

In short, anyone and everyone who could be used to topple the government of Syria is being drafted.

I knew how ridiculous the claim of “Syrian rebels” was when I saw this picture showing the prominent ISIS leader Shishani, a well-known Chechen who was reportedly trained and backed by the US while in Chechnya.



ISIS Commander Abu Omar al-Shishani celebrates after his joint FSA/ISIS operation at Menagh Airbase in the summer of 2013. (Photo circulated in jihadi social media)

(Source ... 08.11.2015, 11:00 a.m., URL not available, Martin Zeis)

But sharp eyes will also easily pick out the fact that he's surrounded by people clearly not of Syrian origin. In fact, it looks more like a UN diversity conference than a Syrian rebel group.

For the sake of appropriate context, imagine if China were funding "rebels" to attack and fight inside the US, and that these "rebels" were sourced from Mexico, Nicaragua, Argentina, and Peru.

These images and reports clearly show the pattern in play: the US and Turkey have been funneling vast amounts of arms, money and training to so-called opposition groups that, in many cases, consist of mercenaries and jihadists from a very wide range of different countries. Therefore, the US has directly supported and incubated some of the most brutal terror organization on the face of the planet -- a list including ISIS and the Al Nusra front, both of which are well-documented for having committed horrible civilian atrocities.

That this happened was not exactly news to those inside the beltway. A secret 2012 Pentagon report, since uncovered, detailed exactly this dynamic and predicted the rise of ISIS:

Pentagon report predicted West's support for Islamist rebels would create ISIS

May 22, 2105

A declassified secret US government document [a US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) document then classified as "secret," dated 12th August 2012] obtained by the conservative public interest law firm, Judicial Watch, shows that **Western governments deliberately allied with al-Qaeda and other Islamist extremist groups to topple Syrian dictator Bashir al-Assad.**

The document reveals that in coordination with the Gulf states and Turkey, the West intentionally sponsored violent Islamist groups to destabilize Assad, and that these "supporting powers" desired the emergence of a "Salafist Principality" in Syria to "isolate the Syrian regime."

According to the newly declassified US document, the Pentagon foresaw the likely rise of the 'Islamic State' as a direct consequence of this strategy, and warned that it could destabilize Iraq.

The 7-page DIA document states that al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), the precursor to the 'Islamic State in Iraq,' (ISI) which became the 'Islamic State in Iraq and Syria,' "supported the Syrian opposition from the beginning, both ideologically and through the media."

The formerly secret Pentagon report notes that **the "rise of the insurgency in Syria" has increasingly taken a "sectarian direction," attracting diverse support from Sunni "religious and tribal powers" across the region.**

(*Source:* <https://medium.com/insurge-intelligence/secret-pentagon-report-reveals-west-saw-isis-as-strategic-asset-b99ad7a29092>)

Well, of course the Defense department knew that arming and funding violent jihadists was going to lead to some crazy sectarian unpleasantness. How could they not? 14 years in Afghanistan and Iraq taught them plenty about the region and its sectarian dynamics.

But make no mistake: the US worked hard to attract regional jihadists to Syria to fight their war for them. That was not an oddity to be curiously noted, but a feature of the program. Why? Because there was not enough legitimate internal Syrian opposition to Assad to get the job done. An angry mob had to be recruited.

Said another way: Syria's bloody civil unrest is not entirely the result of a natural social uprising, but was fostered with a great deal of external meddling.

Why This Is Worth Our Full Attention

Tensions are as high as they've been in decades. Neo-con hotheads with a track record of shooting first and not caring to ask questions later are still driving US foreign policy. Russia is signaling that it has had enough of American intervention that destabilizes volatile parts of the world. China is flexing its muscles as well.

This is all happening while global economic system is not nearly as robust as advertised. And history shows that nations always react more aggressively during leaner times.

With so many sensitive flash points that the West has its fingers in these days, the risk of one or more of them erupting into a full-scale war between the major world powers is not dismissible. And given the huge cost should that come to pass, it makes all the sense in the world to take precautionary measures in advance.

In Part 2: How Things May Well Get Ugly Quickly we zero in on the largest risks to monitor and the likely range of forms of retribution the US could face (from financial and cyber war to a full-blown shooting war) should the situation worsen.

We're not trying to drum up fears that war is imminent. But what we are saying is that the risk is substantial enough, and the potential cost high enough, that it's worth making some pre-cautionary preparations at this time.

Click here to read Part 2 of this report (free executive summary, enrollment required for full access)