

Clearing the Fog of War Around Syria

Review of Stephen Gowan's Book, Washington's Long War on Syria

By [Jooneed Khan](#)

Global Research, May 20, 2017

[rabble.ca](#) 18 May 2017

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Terrorism](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

The roots of a 21st-century tragedy

With his just-released book Washington's Long War on Syria, Stephen Gowans blows away the twisted layers of disinformation and war propaganda around Syria, and exposes the great 21st-century tragedy in that West-Asian country in all its stark reality: a long war of aggression waged by the U.S.-NATO empire against a secular and pluralist Arab republic that, like Iraq and Libya, thwarted its hegemonic, capitalist interests, and resisted Israeli, Saudi and other theocratic and anti-democratic players in the region.

The international political reporter and analyst that I am, nearly 40 years with Montreal daily *La Presse* and three months of 2003 spent in Iraq, ploughed with frustration through the 105 pages of the stage-setting introduction and first two chapters, eager and hungry for the Ottawa-born author to get down to brass tacks and the nitty-gritty — which he does with quiet but unswerving fact-based confidence and clarity in Chapters 3 and 4.

Lighting the flame of imperialist war

The single determining factor for the confusion, hand-wringing, hair-splitting and division over the Syrian tragedy is based in events that took place mid-March 2011 in the small southern town of Daraa, on the border with Jordan, with a mainly Sunni population of 100,000.

"Daraa: The spark that lit the Syrian flame," wrote CNN's Joe Sterling, one year later. Daraa has also been called "The cradle of the revolution."



Quoting diligently from mainstream U.S. media and official U.S. sources, Gowans (picture on the right) demonstrates that what happened in Daraa on March 17, 2011 and afterward was no "popular uprising," but an orchestrated provocation by armed Islamist jihadists, old foes of the secular Baathist regime in Syria, aided by jihadists trained in Jordan by U.S.-NATO powers and their conservative Arab monarchist vassals, and abetted by U.S.-NATO propaganda for war on Syria. The "Syrian flame" that was lit in Daraa was not the flame of revolution — because the regime was popular, as was well reported at the time by the same Western mainstream media. It was the flame of imperialist war for regime change — with jihadists and the so-called Free Syria Army (FSA) functioning as proxies.

Quoting abundantly from *Time*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Democracy*

Now! and the *Independent*, Gowans shows more than he argues that the Daraa demonstrators were jihadists agitating for a sectarian Sunni Islamic State; that they were armed and “violent from the beginning,” as recognized early on by the U.S. government but “obfuscated” later on; and that the “uprising” had no popular support whatsoever. It was not even a “popular uprising,” as the anti-Assad narrative goes, that was “hijacked” by armed jihadists; it was a planned provocation from the start — using the anecdote of a handful of youths, killed by some accounts, jailed in other versions, for painting anti-Assad graffiti on a wall.

Against the backdrop of the so-called Arab Spring under way in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, a Facebook page created in January 2011 announced a “Day of Rage” in Syria for early February, which fizzled out as participants called instead for Libya’s Muammar Gaddafi to step down in the face of a rising NATO/jihadist onslaught against him. The Daraa agitators burned down the local Baath Party HQ, the governor’s office and a cellphone company. But the story about the graffiti painters, said Assad, was “a fallacious narrative...only propaganda.” Assad responded to the Daraa protesters by announcing a series of reforms they were demanding — but to no avail, since what they and their backers really wanted was regime change and nothing else.

Roots of a long war

✖ The “long war” on Syria is not only the one that’s been going on ever since — longer than the Second World War — as Syrians are killed and injured, turned into refugees and internally displaced in the millions, and as their country is destroyed. Gowans sets the start of the long war in the ’50s, as the U.S., deepening the Cold War against the USSR, tried to globalize NATO: it founded CENTO in 1955 (the Baghdad Pact) with Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and the U.K. Syria, a republic, was not yet Baathist, but had a growing Arab nationalist and anti-Zionist component, opting for stronger ties with the USSR — like India, which had joined the Non-Aligned Movement the previous year. CENTO soon collapsed as Iraq overthrew the monarchy in 1958, espousing Arab nationalism and socialism. Syria had its own Baathist Revolution in 1963 and Iraq adopted Baathism in 1968.

As early as 1957, U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower and British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan had plotted the assassination of topmost Baathist and Communist figures in the Syrian government. The plan was entrusted to Kermit Roosevelt, the CIA’s Middle East chief, who in 1953 had engineered the overthrow of Iran’s elected prime minister, Mohammed Mosaddeq, for nationalizing Iran’s oil.

“Roosevelt planned to create internal uprisings in Syria, enlisting the aid of the country’s Muslim Brotherhood,” writes Gowans, adding, “[h]e also plotted to create and arm paramilitary groups to wage a civil war within the country.” The U.S.-U.K. axis could not bring over Iraq and Jordan, so the plan went dormant, but “the features of Roosevelt’s plan would show up later in the Syria 2011 uprising,” he notes.

From Kermit Roosevelt to General Wesley Clark’s revelation of the post-9/11 Pentagon memo about “taking out seven countries of the Middle East in five years,” to Paul Bremer’s systematic “de-Baathification” of Iraq after the 2003 occupation, and to the empire’s mantra since 2011 that “Assad must go,” runs the uninterrupted line of “Washington’s long war on Syria” — a varied economic, diplomatic and propaganda war before it became nakedly

military — and now pitting NATO and vassals against the Russia-China double veto at the UN, and Russia's active military and diplomatic role in the Astana peace process for Syria with the involvement of regional powers Iran and Turkey.

Gowans's book was launched in Montreal this month by Baraka Books Publisher Robin Philpot at a well-attended public function moderated by Université de Montréal Professor Samir Saul. He stressed that the empire's war on Syria was a perilous prelude to an ultimate war against Russia itself. This book is an indispensable contribution that dissipates the proverbial "fog of war" around Syria — and brings clarity and understanding to the U.S.-NATO empire's historically unceasing and sustained project for a war of aggression on one Arab country that has always resisted its will.

Jooneed J. Khan is a journalist and human rights activist based in Montreal.

The original source of this article is rabble.ca
Copyright © [Jooneed Khan](http://jooneedkhan.com), rabble.ca, 2017

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Jooneed Khan](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca