

How 'Regime Change' Wars Led to Korea Crisis

The U.S.-led aggressions against Iraq and Libya are two war crimes that keep on costing, with their grim examples of what happens to leaders who get rid of WMDs driving the scary showdown with North Korea, writes Robert Parry.

By [Robert Parry](#)

Global Research, June 14, 2018

[Consortiumnews](#) 4 September 2017

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

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [Military](#), [Military and WMD](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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in relation to the recent Kim-Trump summit, we republish this article on the denuclearization game of the United States by the late Robert Parry first published in September 2017.

It is a popular meme in the U.S. media to say that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is "crazy" as he undertakes to develop a nuclear bomb and a missile capacity to deliver it, but he is actually working from a cold logic dictated by the U.S. government's aggressive wars and lack of integrity.

Indeed, the current North Korea crisis, which could end up killing millions of people, can be viewed as a follow-on disaster to President George W. Bush's Iraq War and President Barack Obama's Libyan intervention. Those wars came after the leaders of Iraq and Libya had dismantled their dangerous weapons programs, leaving their countries virtually powerless when the U.S. government chose to invade.

In both cases, the U.S. government also exploited its power over global information to spread lies about the targeted regimes as justification for the invasions — and the world community failed to do anything to block the U.S. aggressions.

And, on a grim personal note, the two leaders, Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi, were then brutally murdered, Hussein by hanging and Gaddafi by a mob that first sodomized him with a knife.

So, the neoconservatives who promoted the Iraq invasion supposedly to protect the world from Iraq's alleged WMDs — and the liberal interventionists who pushed the Libya invasion based on false humanitarian claims — may now share in the horrific possibility that millions of people in North Korea, South Korea, Japan and maybe elsewhere could die from real WMDs launched by North Korea and/or by the United States.

Washington foreign policy "experts" who fault President Trump's erratic and bellicose approach toward this crisis may want to look in the mirror and consider how they contributed to the mess by ignoring the predictable consequences from the Iraq and Libya invasions.

Yes, I know, at the time it was so exciting to celebrate the Bush Doctrine of preemptive wars even over [a “one percent” suspicion](#) that a “rogue state” like Iraq might share WMDs with terrorists — or the Clinton Doctrine hailed by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s acolytes enamored by her [application of “smart power”](#) to achieve “regime change” in Libya.

However, as we now know, both wars were built upon lies. Iraq did [not possess WMD stockpiles](#) as the Bush administration claimed, and Libya was [not engaged in mass murder](#) of civilians in rebellious areas in the eastern part of the country as the Obama administration claimed.

Post-invasion investigations knocked down Bush’s WMD myth in Iraq, and a British parliamentary inquiry concluded that Western governments misrepresented the situation in eastern Libya where Gaddafi forces were targeting armed rebels but not indiscriminately killing civilians.

But those belated fact-finding missions were no comfort to either Saddam Hussein or Muammar Gaddafi, nor to their countries, which have seen mass slaughters resulting from the U.S.-sponsored invasions and today amount to failed states.

There also has been virtually no accountability for the war crimes committed by the Bush and Obama administrations. Bush and Obama both ended up serving two terms as President. None of Bush’s senior advisers were punished – and Hillary Clinton received the 2016 Democratic Party’s nomination for President.

As for the U.S. mainstream media, which behaved as boosters for both invasions, pretty much all of the journalistic war advocates have continued on with their glorious careers. To excuse their unprofessional behavior, some even have pushed revisionist lies, such as the popular but false claim that Saddam Hussein was to blame because he [pretended that he did have WMDs](#) – when the truth is that his government submitted a detailed 12,000-page report to the United Nations in December 2002 describing how the WMDs had been destroyed (though that accurate account was widely mocked and ultimately ignored).

Pervasive Dishonesty

The dishonesty that now pervades the U.S. government and the U.S. mainstream media represents another contributing factor to the North Korean crisis. What sensible person anywhere on the planet would trust U.S. assurances? Who would believe what the U.S. government says, except, of course, the U.S. mainstream media?



President George W. Bush in a flight suit after landing on the USS Abraham Lincoln to give his “Mission Accomplished” speech about the Iraq War on May 1, 2003.

Remember also that North Korea’s nuclear program had largely been mothballed before George W. Bush delivered his “axis of evil” speech in January 2002, which linked Iran and Iraq – then bitter enemies – with North Korea. After that, North Korea withdrew from earlier agreements on limiting its nuclear development and began serious work on a bomb.

Yet, while North Korea moved toward a form of mutual assured destruction, Iraq and Libya chose a different path.

In Iraq, to head off a threatened U.S.-led invasion, Hussein’s government sought to convince the international community that it had lived up to its commitments regarding the destruction of its WMD arsenal and programs. Besides the detailed declaration, Iraq gave U.N. weapons inspectors wide latitude to search on the ground.

But Bush cut short the inspection efforts in March 2003 and launched his “shock and awe” invasion, which led to the collapse of Hussein’s regime and the dictator’s eventual capture and hanging.

Gaddafi’s Gestures

In Libya, Gaddafi also sought to cooperate with international demands regarding WMDs. In late 2003, he announced that his country would eliminate its unconventional weapons programs, including a nascent nuclear project.

Gaddafi also sought to get Libya out from under economic sanctions by taking responsibility for the 1988 bombing of Pan Am 103 over Scotland, although he and his government continued to [deny carrying out the terror attack](#) that killed 270 people.

But these efforts to normalize Libya’s relations with the West failed to protect him or his country. In 2011 when Islamic militants staged an uprising around Benghazi, Gaddafi moved

to crush it, and Secretary of State Clinton eagerly joined with some European countries in seeking military intervention to destroy Gaddafi's regime.

The United Nations Security Council approved a plan for the humanitarian protection of civilians in and around Benghazi, but the Obama administration and its European allies exploited that opening to mount a full-scale "regime change" war.



Ousted Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi shortly before he was murdered on Oct. 20, 2011.

Prominent news personalities, such as MSNBC's Andrea Mitchell, cheered on the war with the claim that Gaddafi had American "blood on his hands" over the Pan Am 103 case because he had accepted responsibility. The fact that his government continued to deny actual guilt – and the international conviction of Libyan Abdelbaset al-Megrahi was a judicial travesty – was ignored. Almost no one in the West dared question the longtime groupthink of Libyan guilt.

By October 2011, Gaddafi had fled Tripoli and was captured by rebels in Sirte. He was tortured, sodomized with a knife and then executed. Clinton, whose aides felt she should claim credit for Gaddafi's overthrow as part of [a Clinton Doctrine](#), celebrated his murder with a laugh and a quip,

"We came; we saw; he died."

But Gaddafi's warnings about Islamist terrorists in Benghazi came back to haunt Clinton when on Sept. 11, 2012, militants attacked the U.S. consulate and CIA station there, killing Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other Americans.

The obsessive Republican investigation into the Benghazi attack failed to demonstrate many of the lurid claims about Clinton's negligence, but it did surface the fact that she had used a private server for her official State Department emails, which, in turn, led to an FBI investigation which severely damaged her 2016 presidential run.

Lessons Learned

Meanwhile, back in North Korea, the young dictator Kim Jong Un was taking all this history in. According to numerous sources, he concluded that his and North Korea's only safeguard would be a viable nuclear deterrent to stave off another U.S.-sponsored "regime change" war — with him meeting a similar fate as was dealt to Hussein and Gaddafi.

Since then, Kim and his advisers have made clear that the surrender of North Korea's small nuclear arsenal is off the table. They make the understandable point that the United States has shown bad faith in other cases in which leaders have given up their WMDs in compliance with international demands and then saw their countries invaded and faced grisly executions themselves.

Now, the world faces a predicament in which an inexperienced and intemperate President Trump confronts a crisis that his two predecessors helped to create and make worse. Trump has threatened "fire and fury" like the world has never seen, suggesting a nuclear strike on North Korea, which, in turn, has vowed to retaliate.

Millions of people on the Korean peninsula and Japan – and possibly elsewhere – could die in such a conflagration. The world's economy could be severely shaken, given Japan's and South Korea's industrial might and the size of their consumer markets.

If such a horror does come to pass, the U.S. government and the U.S. mainstream media will surely revert to their standard explanation that Kim was simply "crazy" and brought this destruction on himself. Trump's liberal critics also might attack Trump for bungling the diplomacy.

But the truth is that many of Washington's elite policymakers – both on the Republican and Democratic sides – will share in the blame. And so too should the U.S. mainstream media.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, [America's Stolen Narrative](#), either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).

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The Globalization of War: America's "Long War" against Humanity

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[Michel Chossudovsky](#) is an award-winning author, Professor of Economics, Founder and Director of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG)

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