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Lebanon Next in US War on Middle East?

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In-depth Report: IRAN: THE NEXT WAR?, THE WAR ON LEBANON

US politicians, policymakers and commentators insist that the United States military's involvement in Syria and Iraq is solely aimed at defeating militants from the self-titled Islamic State (IS). However, it is abundantly clear that before the Russian intervention in Syria in 2015, the United States was engaged in a proxy war against Damascus, not IS and that as the Russian intervention began rolling IS back and the organization clung to existence, Washington found itself revising its narrative around a new pretext to remain in the region, the "Iranian threat."

Geopolitical analysts have long-warned that regime change in Tehran was always America's ultimate goal and that the conflicts ignited across the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) was a means of reorganizing the Arab World into a united front against Tehran and its allies and in turn, against Moscow and Beijing.
More recent news articles like the Associated Press', "US pushes Saudi Arabia, Iraq on united front to counter Iran," would report that:

> U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Sunday promoted a Trump administration goal of uniting Saudi Arabia and Iraq in common cause to counter Iran's growing assertiveness in the Middle East.
>
> Tillerson participated in the inaugural meeting of the Saudi Arabia-Iraq Coordination Committee, along with Saudi King Salman and Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, telling the leaders that the event highlighted the improving ties between the longtime rivals and showed "the great potential" for further cooperation. He noted the August reopening of a major border crossing and the resumption of direct flights between Riyadh and Baghdad.

Attempts by the US to virtually seize control of Iraq's western Anbar governorate to provide a safe haven for militants now on the losing half of an emerging regional balance of power is an indicator that steps are already being taken toward what is in all intents and purposes an escalation, not a withdrawal from the Middle East by the US.

Riyadh's attempts to depict itself as undertaking socioeconomic reforms and its claimed intentions of abandoning its longstanding abuse of Islam through its politically-motivated Wahhabi interpretations appears to be little more than a means of assuaging fears of regional and global partners that Washington and Riyadh's dangerous game of using state-sponsored terrorism as a geopolitical tool has spiraled out of control costing all involved credibility and even stability.

War with Iran, Via Lebanon?

Additionally, the US seeks to pursue conflict along yet another familiar axis, through war between Israel and Lebanon and more specifically Hezbollah.

An editorial written by retired German General Klaus Dieter Naumann, former Chief of Staff of the Bundeswehr and former Chairman of the NATO Military Committee and General Richard Dannatt, former Chief of the General Staff of the British Army, titled, "A third Lebanon war looms: To stop it, US must curtail Iran, sanction Hezbollah," lays out the details of this looming conflict.

While the article portrays a "third Lebanon war" as inevitable, precipitated by Hezbollah and its sponsors in Tehran's aggression against Israel, careful reading and consideration of recent history exposes the editorial as an attempt to create the pretext upon which the US and its allies will provoke this war, not Hezbollah, and not Iran.

The article claims:

> Neither Iran nor Hezbollah have any remotely credible reason for their enmity of Israel today — yet they are engaged in an implacable campaign of deadly hatred animated by their version of radical Islam. Hezbollah additionally has to explain to the Lebanese population it claims to represent why it has been killing Muslims in Syria at a furious pace. The best way to close this credibility gap is to attack Israel. Both Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah's rhetoric, and his terrorist operatives' actions on the border with Israel confirm this.

Nowhere in the article is it noted Israel's participation in the Syrian conflict, its own state sponsorship of terrorism in neighboring Syria including militants from Jabhat Al Nusra, a US State Department and UK Home Office proscribed terrorist organization, Israel's contributions to US-Kurdish proxies in northern Syria and Iraq and multiple Israel provocations aimed at Iran itself, including the sabotaging of its infrastructure with the Stuxnet computer virus. All of these are more than credible reasons for Iran and Hezbollah's enmity of Israel.

And while the article attempts to portray Hezbollah and Iran as poised to strike Israel, it admits that it will be merely "capabilities" either possess that will prompt Israel to "take drastic action to protect its civilian population."

In other words, it will be a replay of the 2006 Israeli-Lebanon War in which a minor provocation was used by Tel Aviv to wage full scale war on Lebanon including aerial bombardment and a disastrous land invasion that ended in retreat before reaching the Litani River, its stated objective.

Beyond setting the stage for a potential repeat of the 2006 war, the article also suggests this artificial increase in tensions be accompanied by increased pressure on Hezbollah and Iran, pressure the US and its allies are already applying.

It should be noted that elsewhere, US policymakers have stated multiple times that before war with Iran can be pursued directly, both Syria and Hezbollah must be weakened first. A war with Lebanon thus could be a means to either directly lead into direct conflict with Tehran, or as a means of preparing for one in the near or intermediate future.

Immediate Peace and Stability vs. Constant and Perpetual War

What is clear is that the 2015 Russian intervention in Syria along with Iran's growing influence in the region has rolled back attempts by the US and its partners to reassert control over the Middle East they have sought since the Cold War. With a new multipolar coalition of emerging regional and global powers, US dreams of hegemony will be increasingly more difficult to achieve with no single "superpower" to topple in order to gain an upper hand.

For governments everywhere from Beruit to Amman and even Riyadh and its Persian Gulf neighbors, the choice of whether to go down this increasingly violent path in pursuit of increasingly distant hegemony Washington has promised them the spoils of, or to constructively embrace multipolarism by pursuing regional stability is fast approaching.

For the US, the threats it has used to coerce some of its more unwilling partners are quickly being dwarfed by the consequences of their complicity. Additionally, with nothing but perpetual war on the horizon as the "plan" to achieve US hegemony in the region, even if Washington succeeded, it will be only after its regional proxies endure years more of dangerous conflict. Nations like Saudi Arabia, mired in conflict in Yemen to the south while its proxies in Syria and Iraq are wiped off the battlefield, walks a dangerous tightrope other nations would be wise to avoid.

Lebanon has been a battlefield in the past the US has used as a vector toward greater regional conflict. Its ability or inability to create conflict there again, directly or through Israel, and that conflict's ability or inability to drag Iran, Syria and other players in directly, will determine the outlook for America's wider agenda in the region.

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