

“Regime-Changers” Report Card

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

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

Divide et impera – a strategy employed by empires since ancient times, and perfected by the British – has been the leitmotif of American foreign policy in the Middle East since the Bush administration’s “Arab Awakening” in Iraq and the [supposed success](#) of the “surge.”

I’ve written in this space about the playing of the [Sunni card](#) against what has always been the main target of the regime-changers, and that is Iran. I’ve also written about the “[atomization](#)” of the region as the operative goal of the Western alliance. The policy is a reenactment of the strategy [deployed](#) against the former Soviet Union. The idea is to smash up the nation-states in the region – whether it be in the central Asian former Soviet republics, or in the Middle East – splitting them into ever-smaller and more manageable pieces.

The neoconservative regime-changers’ were never shy about proclaiming their grandiose goal, which was to “[drain the swamp](#)” of the Middle East and achieve some fundamental “transformation,” presumably in a secular liberal-democratic direction. What this meant, in terms of real power relations, was redrawing the map of the Middle East. So, how’re they doing so far?

Listening to the neocons who still defend the Iraq war as a great “[success](#),” outsiders can only roll their eyes and wonder where the Kool-Aid dispenser is located. However, to those who understand neocon-speak – a dialect of the language spoken in [Bizarro World](#) – it all makes perfect “sense.”

Split up along ethnic and sub-regional lines, the “nation” of Iraq is a fiction: Kurdistan is de facto [independent](#), and the rest is up for grabs. Now the stage is set for the conflict between the contenders for regional hegemony: the US and its regional allies, including [the Saudis](#) and [Israel](#), versus Iran.

As they say, “Mission accomplished!”

When Egypt’s military rulers [arrested 19](#) employees of Western NGOs, including the son of US Secretary of Labor Ray LaHood, the accused were charged with trying to cause “chaos” in the streets and overthrow the state. Whatever the truth of these serious charges, this particular choice of words identifies US policy in the region to a tee. An account of our consistent meddling, since the midpoint of the second Bush administration, ought to be entitled “Operation Chaos,” because that is the result if not the intent. Since this is the court of public opinion, and not a court of law, the bar for proving intent is a bit lower. Given that, there is plenty of circumstantial evidence pointing to deliberate intent and not just incompetence on the part of Washington.

The Bush administration pioneered the playing of the Sunni card, coupling the great “success” of the surge with the Arab Awakening, so-called, in which we lured the Sunnis away from al-Qaeda. This was part of a larger strategy to build a counterforce to Iran’s [growing influence](#), stoking fear of a Shi’ite regional ascendancy to rally the Sunnis of the region against Tehran, the ultimate target.

The chief consequence of the Iraq war has been the abolition of Iraq as a nation: Kurdistan is [effectively independent](#), and the rest is up for grabs. In Syria, [Western-backed rebels](#) have taken a big chunk out the country, in a reenactment of the Libyan regime-change operation: [Libyan fighters](#) are now in Syria. This alliance with Islamists is a continuation of the strategy first inaugurated in Egypt, where the US [turned](#) on its longtime ally, Hosni Mubarak, and funded the “democratic” opposition. While Western-style liberals and the Al Jazeera network, funded by the government of Qatar, hailed the rebels of Tahrir Square, the real power of the “democratic” movement was in the hands of the Muslim Brotherhood.

One has to wade [all the way to the end](#) of a long and dreary *New York Times* piece on Mohammed Morsi’s victory to read about the press conference given by a coalition of liberal democratic and secular parties, which hailed the junta’s dissolution of parliament and accused the US of aiding the Brotherhood. Indeed, the National Democratic Institute has [openly admitted](#) giving some kind of assistance to Brotherhood candidates and electoral activities. One has to wonder about the extent and nature of this aid.

The [disqualification](#) of the original Brotherhood candidate, and the substitution of Morsi, a former [assistant professor](#) at Cal State Northridge, sets the stage for a post-Mubarak Egypt organized along Turkish lines. As in Turkey, the military will [step in](#) when the Islamists threaten to get out of hand, but will otherwise be allowed to rule as long as they don’t try to pursue an independent foreign policy or offend the [delicate](#) sensibilities of Western liberals too often.

While Egypt often seems to teeter on the brink of chaos, so far at least it has been controlled chaos – with most of the strings being pulled from Washington, D.C. Continuing a policy inherited from the Bush administration, the Obama administration is playing the Sunni card for all its worth, using its influence and resources to build “democratic” Islamist movements as a counterweight to both al Qaeda and the alleged Iranian threat.

The US government did the same thing during the cold war era, when the US [subsidized democratic socialists](#) in the labor unions and among the intelligentsia in order to challenge the hegemony of the Communists on the left. What this meant, in practice, was that plenty of ex-Trotskyites and professional turncoats enjoyed [lucrative careers](#), courtesy of the American taxpayers. In this particular case the line for the gravy-train is going to be extra long.

So, how are the regime-changers doing? Let’s see:

Iraq – [check!](#)

Libya – [check!](#)

Egypt – [check!](#)

Syria – [three-quarters](#) of a check!

That leaves only Iran, and parts of Lebanon, as yet unconquered. But don't worry – they're [working on it](#). Operation Chaos is right on schedule.

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