

The Syrian Tragedy: Western Foreign Policy and its 'Useful Idiots'

By [Adeyinka Makinde](#)

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[Adeyinka Makinde](#) 23 October 2016

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Recent media focus on the humanitarian crisis in the Syrian city of Aleppo has revealed the government promoted propagandistic methods of the Western mainstream media, which shorn of context and rich in bias uncritically accepts the narrative presented by politicians and attempts to shape public opinion to suit the needs of a war agenda.

An opinion piece in the UK Daily Mail by the historian Dominic Sandbrook which accused the leader of the British opposition Labour Party of ideological Left-inspired anti-American sentiment and lack of patriotism is part and parcel of the attempt to pathologize and demonize those who are critical of the West's role in fomenting and sustaining the Syrian conflict.

The disingenuous media blitzkrieg on Aleppo is designed to justify military intervention on the part of the United States starting with the declaration of a 'No Fly Zone', which as the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has plainly stated "will lead to war with Russia." If such a catastrophic event were to ensue, it will not be the fault of the supposedly Putin-worshipping Left, but of the hubris of American post-Cold War foreign policy and the 'useful idiots' in the Western press who have promoted American militarism.

It was Vladimir Lenin who is claimed to have coined the phrase 'useful idiot'. By useful idiot, Lenin is supposed to have been referring to those who did the bidding for the cause of Bolshevism in its propaganda war with the western capitalist nations. The term continued to be used as one to label those in the West who acted as mouthpieces for the Soviet Union by representing it as democratic when it was in fact repressive and as reasonable where its critics found it to be an inflexible monolith.

While there is no evidence that Lenin actually uttered these words, its usage in relation to those who backed policies perceived as being directly or indirectly favourable to the Soviet Union and its system has been contemporarily revived in relation to those who speak in ways which that are perceived as being supportive of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation, whose leader Vladimir Putin is also claimed to be subject to a species of personality cult often referred to as 'Putin Worship.'

A recent article in the Daily Mail written by the historian Dominic Sandbrook entitled, ["Putin's useful idiots: Warped, deluded, ignorant. Corbyn's support for Russia shames his party and his country"](#), utilized this angle in attacking Jeremy Corbyn, the opposition party leader in the United Kingdom Parliament, over over his rejection of British foreign secretary,

Boris Johnson's calls for people to demonstrate outside the Russian Embassy in London. Sandbrook, who describes Russian bombardment of the Syrian city of Aleppo as "one of the defining atrocities of our time", likens the fate of the city to that of Guernica, the Basque town which in 1937 was subjected to heavy and indiscriminate bombing by the Luftwaffe during the Spanish Civil War.

Corbyn's official spokesman, Seumas Milne's response to Johnson, that the real tragedy was that Aleppo is "diverting attention" from the true villains in Syria; namely Britain and the United States, drew the ire of Sandbrook who accused Corbyn and Milne of exhibiting a characteristic of the "hard left" which is naturally inclined to anti-American sentiment and that is unabashedly unpatriotic and idealistic to the point of foolhardiness.

But whatever the merits of the criticism meted out against the ideological foibles of the political Left, Sandbrook's disavowal of Western responsibility for the condition in which Syria is presently in is erroneous. What is more his piece, which is totally devoid of the true context of the Syrian conflict, smacks of being a propaganda-laden piece that is calculated to drum up public support for United States and NATO intervention in a tragedy which was the brainchild of the Western powers and their allies in the Middle East.

It is useful to begin by addressing the origins of the war in Syria. This cannot fail to take into account the unjustified invasion of Saddam Hussein's Iraq by a coalition of forces led by the United States, a feat which was accomplished with the wholesale connivance and support of Britain. This event and the subsequent occupation created the circumstances for the radicalisation of large elements of the Sunni population. The genesis of what has come to be known as the Islamic State starts in Iraq with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian jihadist who pledged allegiance to Osama Bin Laden and formed al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), a militia which became a major force in the anti-American insurgency. A direct line can be traced from the formation of AQI in 2004 to the April 2013 inauguration of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which is also known by the shorter form of Islamic State (IS). Both the al-Qaeda affiliated Jabhat al Nusra and IS duly became embroiled in the insurrection against Bashar al Assad in Syria which commenced in 2011.

The Syrian conflict has complex origins which were rooted in genuine grievances against the Baathist government which has dominated Syria for decades. And the heavy-handed response by state enforcers to genuine protests when the idea of an 'Arab Spring' was gaining momentum did not show the Assad government in a good light. However, the present situation of warfare and carnage is not the result of a natural and progressive germination of a popular insurrection. Rather, it is one which has been sponsored by outside powers who have imported Islamist mercenaries to overthrow the secular government led by Bashar al Assad; the 'Arab Spring' presenting a convenient cover for the swamping of Syria with an assortment of Islamist death squads and militias.

It is against international law to overthrow the governments of foreign states and this criminal enterprise is directed by the United States which is aided by Britain and France, its major allies in North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). Other allies such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are also heavily complicit in the Syrian tragedy.

The evidence is incontrovertible.

Speaking on the French Parliamentary TV network station LCP in June of 2013, the former French foreign minister [Roland Dumas](#) asserted that the Syrian War was "prepared,

conceived and organized” at least two years in advance of what became an insurgency. He learnt of the project after been approached by British officials who informed him that they were preparing a project involving infiltrating Syria with rebel fighters.

Other prominent political figures have acknowledged that the United States was aware of the fact that funding for jihadist groups such as IS and al Nusra has come from Saudi, Qatari and other patrons from the Gulf states. Recently leaked email correspondence between Hillary Clinton and John Podesta, her current campaign chairman, confirms this. In one from 2014, Clinton writes that “...we need to use our diplomatic and more traditional intelligence assets to bring pressure on the governments of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which are providing clandestine financial and logistic support to ISIL and other radical Sunni groups in the region.”

In fact, an earlier leak of a US State department cable that was sent under her name in December of 2009, stated that “Saudi Arabia remains a critical financial support base for al-Qaeda, the Taliban, LeT (Lashkar-e-Taiba in Pakistan).”

Again at a speech at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University in October of 2014, US Vice President [Joe Biden](#) also let slip the following about American allies in the Middle East such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia:

They were so determined to take down Assad...that they poured hundreds of millions of dollars (and) thousands of tonnes of weapons to anyone who would fight against Assad except that those who were being supplied were al Nusra and al Qaeda and extremist elements of jihadis who were pouring in from other parts of the world.

The role of the Turkish Army High Command in providing rebels with training camps and allowing them to infiltrate Syria via several parts of its porous border became common knowledge as did the Turks role in nourishing and sustaining IS by buying oil produced from wells seized by the insurgents in territories previously governed by the Assad government.

Confirmation of this state of affairs has also come from the highest echelons of the United States military. [General Martin Dempsey](#), then the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was speaking before the Senate Armed Services Committee in September 2014 when he asked whether he knew of “any major Arab ally who embraces ISIL”. He responded by saying, “I know major Arab allies who fund them”. This was echoed by Wesley Clark, a retired US army general and a former supreme commander of NATO, who told CNN in February 2015 that “ISIS got started through funding from our friends and allies.”

But there is evidence that the United States was not merely turning a blind eye towards the support given to jihadists by its Middle Eastern allies. It actively promoted it. Retired Lieutenant General Michael Flynn, the former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) admitted in an interview with al Jazeera that support for a jihadist insurgency in Syria appeared to have been a wilful decision on the part of the American government. Indeed, in March of 2013, both the British Daily Telegraph and [New York Times](#) reported on the purchase and transfer of arms from Zagreb, Croatia to Turkey and Jordan for the use of Syrian rebels. These massive airlifts were coordinated by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) with the costs of purchase being borne by the Saudis.

There is confirmation of this transaction as having benefited radical Islamist militias. A report issued in 2014 by Conflict Armament Research was able to forensically pinpoint the

origins of weapons recovered from Islamic State fighters in the battlefields of Syria via the serial numbers of anti-tank pieces which linked them to the aforementioned joint CIA/Saudi program.

Another compelling piece of evidence ascertaining what must be the existence of a series of [‘rat lines’](#) is that which relates to the British MI6’s cooperation with the CIA in 2012 over the transfer to Syrian rebels of stockpiles of munitions of the fallen army of Colonel Gaddafi.

While General Flynn told al Jazeera that the intelligence the DIA provided to the White House warned that “the Salafists, the Muslim Brotherhood and al Qaeda in Iraq are the major forces driving the insurgency in Syria”, the Pentagon’s role in enabling the insurgency is almost certainly part of a conscious application of long term planning.

In 2008, the RAND Corporation published a Pentagon-funded report describing the “long war”, a reference to an enduring conflict which the United States and its armed forces would be engaged in over the control of resources in the Middle East.

Entitled [Unfolding the Future of the Long War: Motivations, Prospects and Implications for the U.S. Army](#), the report explicitly refers to the need for fomenting conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims as a means through which the interests of the West could be served:

Divide and rule focuses on exploiting fault lines between the various Salafi-jihadist groups to turn them against each other and dissipate their energy on internal conflicts. This strategy relies heavily on covert action, information operations (IO), unconventional warfare and support to indigenous security forces...the United States and its local allies could use the nationalists jihadists to launch proxy IO campaigns to discredit the transnational jihadists in the eyes of the local populace...US leaders could also choose to capitalize on the ‘sustained Shia-Sunni conflict’ trajectory by taking the side of the conservative Sunni regimes against Shi’ite empowerment movements in against the Muslim world...possibly supporting authoritative Sunni governments against a continually hostile Iran.

The references to a “hostile Iran” as well as to sustaining a Shia-Sunni conflict acknowledge an established plank of American and Western policy which seeks to destroy the growing influence of the ‘Shia Crescent’; an alliance that stretches from Iran to Lebanon through Syria. A confluence of interests aiming to nullify this alliance is found among America’s allies in the region. The Israelis wish to destroy Syria in order to disrupt the flow of arms to Hezbollah in Lebanon, the only military force in the Arab world willing and capable of taking on the Israeli armed forces. The Saudis are desirous of overthrowing the minority Alawite government of Syria in order to establish Sunni hegemony, while the Turks, as with the Saudis and Qatar, were upset at Assad’s rejection of an oil pipeline deal that would link the Gulf with Western Europe via Turkey.

The specific recruitment of jihadis to undertake this task is no accident according to General Wesley Clark. “If you want somebody who will fight to the death against Hezbollah, you don’t put out a recruiting poster and say, ‘Sign up for us, we’re going to make a better world.’ You go after zealots and you go after these religious fundamentalists. That’s who fights Hezbollah.”

The credibility of the contention that groups such as IS and al Nusra are enabling the fulfilment of the Western agenda in the Middle East was significantly bolstered by the declassification of a DIA document from August 2012 which stated that the existence of an

Islamic State in the eastern part of Syria was desired to effect the West's policies in the region. A key aspect of the document, which was circulated to various US government agencies including the State Department, the CIA and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), reads as follows:

The West, Gulf countries, and Turkey (which) support the (Syrian) opposition...There is the possibility of establishing a declared or undeclared Salafist principality in eastern Syria (Hasaka and Der Zor) and this is exactly what the supporting powers to the opposition want, in order to isolate the Syrian regime...

It is important to note that far from designating the burgeoning Islamic State militia as an enemy, the document envisioned it as a strategic asset.

The role of Israel as a major influence on this policy cannot be underestimated. As Roland Dumas said:

In the region (i.e. the Middle East), it is important to know that this Syrian regime has a very anti-Israeli stance...and I have this from the former Israeli prime minister who told me "we'll try to get on with our neighbours, but those who don't agree with us will be destroyed."

The centrality of Israel to this conflict and Western backing of it is clear to all who acknowledge the powerful role of the Israel lobby in the United States, Britain and France and the effect on their respective foreign policies in the Middle East. It still holds true for those who prefer to view Israel as a 'client state' of the West in the Middle East. After all, as Vice President Biden has noted, "If there weren't an Israel we'd have to invent one." Israel is to Biden "a strategic necessity".

The attitude of Israel to the Assad government was clearly enunciated by Michael Oren in September of 2013 as he stepped down from his role as ambassador to the United States. The Jerusalem Post quoted him thus:

The greatest danger to Israel is by the strategic arc that extends from Tehran to Damascus to Beirut. And we saw the Assad regime as the keystone in that arc. That is a position we had well before the outbreak of hostilities in Syria. With the outbreak of hostilities we continued to want Assad to go.

The goal of weakening Arab countries with strong nationalist governments has been a clear one from the time of Israel's inception and is clearly articulated in the 'Yinon Plan' of the early 1980s. Formally titled A Strategy for Israel in the Nineteen Eighties, Oded Yinon's strategy involved Israel working towards dividing its Arab neighbours into ethnic and sectarian based mini-states. Egypt, the most populous Arab nation was earmarked for balkanisation into a Coptic Christian state and several Muslim statelets. Special attention was also given to the Ba'athist governments of Iraq and Syria. Of Syria, Yinon soothsayed the following:

Syria will fall apart in accordance with its ethnic and religious structure, into several states such as in present day Lebanon, so there will be a Shi'ite Alawi state along its coast, a Sunni state in the Aleppo area, another Sunni state in Damascus hostile to its northern nature and the Druzes will set up a state, maybe even in our Golan, and certainly in the Hauran and in northern Jordan.

While Israel has a peace treaty with Egypt, and has created a geopolitical arrangement that

renders Jordan as its protectorate together with developing what effectively is a symbiotic alliance with the Saudis, both Hezbollah and the Syrian state have not been compliant neighbours. Israel has long forsworn the aim of achieving a comprehensive peace with the Arab world and instead has worked in stealth with its 'friendly' neighbours to "contain, destabilize and roll-back" shared common enemies.

This was the thinking behind A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm; a policy document produced in 1996 for Binyamin Netanyahu during his first stint as prime minister. Part of the strategy explicitly alludes to the "weakening, controlling and even rolling back" of Syria.

But this, if it needs reminding, is not the policy alone of the Israeli state. The fundamental policy of the United States towards the Middle East is virtually in sync with the goals of Israel. Those goals mentioned in the aforementioned 'Clean Break' document are synonymous with that of the neoconservative-authored 'Statement of Principles' by the Project for the New American Century. Featured among a list of states considered as hostile to the "interests and values" of the United States and which America needed to "challenge" in the post-Cold War era were Iraq, Syria and Iran.

That this was put into effect in the immediate aftermath of the September 11th attacks of 2001 cannot be denied. General Wesley Clark recalled how former colleagues at the Pentagon alerted him to the existence of a memorandum detailing how the United States was going to "take out seven countries in five years". These were to be Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Iran.

This correlation between Western foreign policy objectives and those of Israel's security aims are almost never acknowledged by serving Western leaders who are not challenged by the Western media over why Bashar Assad's overthrow is being sought. Yet, Roland Dumas' comments provide a much needed insight into this as do the words of Hillary Clinton in a leaked email written while she was still the serving Secretary of State: "The best way to help Israel deal with Iran's growing nuclear capability," Clinton wrote, "is to help the people of Syria overthrow the regime of Bashar Assad."

This was, of course, not the brainchild of the Obama administration within which Clinton served, but was a continuum of policies devised during the tenure of George W. Bush. And as laid bare in an article published in the March 2007 edition of the [New Yorker](#) magazine, the United States had recalibrated its foreign policy in such a way as to provide support to Sunni militants sharing the ideology as the supposed perpetrators of the September 11 attacks on America. In doing so, Syria was firmly within America's sights as a target for destruction. As the Pulitzer award-winning Seymour Hersh wrote:

The Saudi government, with Washington's approval, would provide funds and logistical aid to weaken the government of President Bashar Assad of Syria. The Israelis believe that putting such pressure on the Assad government will make it more conciliatory and open to negotiations

In fact, if any confirmation were needed of the wiring of United States policy to the needs of Israel and the United States overarching culpability in fomenting the violent overthrow of Assad's government as an essential part of destroying the 'Shia Crescent', the leaked Clinton email provides it. In Clinton's own words:

Iran's nuclear program and Syria's civil war may seem unconnected, but they are. For Israeli leaders, the real threat from a nuclear-armed Iran is not the prospect of an insane Iranian leader launching an unprovoked Iranian nuclear attack on Israel that would lead to the annihilation of both countries. What Israeli military leaders really worry about -but cannot talk about- is losing their nuclear monopoly.

It is thus with an understanding of the background to Western involvement with the long term goals for the region and the modus operandi of supporting jihadists that the general attitude towards Russian military action in Syria and specifically towards ongoing events centred on the ancient metropolis of Aleppo can be best understood.

The Russian Federation, which has had an enduring relationship with Syria dating from the time of the Soviet Union, is involved in the Syrian conflict for reasons of fundamental national interest. It has a longstanding naval base in the coastal city of Tartus; one of only a few warm sea ports that it has at its disposal. It also has an interest in preventing the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad because the Western goal of securing the installation of a radical Islamic state or collection of mini-states in the stead of the secular-orientated Ba'athist government he heads would create the conditions for exporting Islamist terror to the Central Asian republics that border Russia.

The more overt form of Russian intervention which commenced at the end of September of 2015 was largely viewed as a welcome development by those who favour the idea of a return to a system of [multipolarity](#) in global security arrangements in contrast to the unipolar model that had existed since the ending of the US-Soviet Cold War.

The subsequent re-conquest of large swathes of Syrian territory from Assad's opponents such as IS, laid bare the disingenuous claims of an earnest fight on the part of the United States and its allies. It certainly painted a stark contrast between fighting a war dedicated to defeating the jihadist militias as opposed to one geared merely towards 'containing' them.

The lukewarm response and outright hostility on the part of the United States and its allies towards Russian action in Syria was and is clearly based on the fact that Russia is succeeding in frustrating the policy objectives of using jihadist groups as a foreign legion tasked with creating a new order in the Middle East.

Put simply, the Western alliance does not want Russia to succeed because it wants the armed jihadist rebels, dominated by IS and al Nusra, to succeed.

Thus it is the case that the fall of Aleppo, after the reclaiming of other cities by the Syrian Army alongside Hezbollah and Iranian advisors, would mark a decisive setback for the West. The cries from the Western media over a "humanitarian crisis" in Aleppo also reveal with disturbing clarity the largely biased nature of the corporate Western media in effectively serving as a propaganda mouthpiece for the governments of the United States and Britain.

Western policy has created ongoing humanitarian crises in other parts of Syria and in other countries subjected to NATO intervention such as Iraq and Libya which are not of present concern to the media. The humanitarian disaster in the Yemen which is presently being caused by unrestrained Saudi Arabian military force is also not a priority for either Western governments or mainstream media organisations. The Saudis are, of course, mainly armed by American and British manufacturers.

The fate of the US-Russian ceasefire over Aleppo, undermined by a purportedly accidental massacre of over 60 Syrian Army troops in Dier al-Zour by NATO action, can be understood to be the inevitable ending of an agreement with a disingenuous party. The statement on September 22nd by the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Dunford before a US Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on US strategy in the Middle East, that the US military had no intention of sharing intelligence with their Russian counterparts if Moscow and Washington were ever to work together against Islamist militants in Syria, offered a great degree of clarification of the 'accident' at Dier al-Zour. The result of the attack had been to enable jihadist militias to take offensive positions.

The Western media allowed itself to report the issues surrounding Aleppo as partly being one associated with the need for the Russian Air Force to separate locations held by so-called 'moderate rebels' from those held by jihadist militias. The resurgent notion of the existence of 'moderate rebels', implying that a significant amount of anti-government fighters are both secular and democratic in ethos is a long discredited one.

Early studies undertaken of a range of indigenous anti-government militias fighting in the different regions of Syria found most subscribed to a Salafist agenda. These included groups such as Ahara Al-Sham, Jaysh al-Islam, Suqour al-Sham Brigade, Liwa al-whid and Liwa al-Tarmouk. A report by the Times of Israel in June 2014 quoted the Israeli Defence Force's head of Military Intelligence Research and Analysis Division as estimating that over eighty percent of the opposition fighters "have a clear Islamist agenda."

The United States itself admitted the abject failure of its plan to build a viable opposition political movement and a 'Free Syrian Army' when it announced that its \$500 million dollar investment had only yielded a paltry five guerillas. But even when some militias have identified themselves as 'Free Syrian Army', they have been quick to reveal their underpinning ideology. Reporting from Aleppo earlier this year, the British journalist Peter Osborne related the story of a Syrian woman who sought refuge in the city. When her village had been taken over by a species of FSA, she was forced to stay at home and wear a black veil.

But the Western media has been sparing in its references to al Nusra, the dominant rebel force in and around Aleppo, during its reporting of the siege of the city. The media has also shown its acquiescence to government propaganda by unquestioningly accepting the explanation of an accident as having occurred at Dier al-Zour while unhesitatingly subscribing to Russian responsibility for an attack on an aid convoy heading to Aleppo.

While much of the media has revelled in filming half-naked and bloodied children evidently coached to mention "barrel bombs" and the name of "Bashar" as the instigator of the calamity surrounding them, there is little mention of al Nusra reportedly destroying hospitals and water supplies or of it holding people as human shields. The taking by al Nusra of the southwestern part of the city cut off over a million people and enabled the opposition to organise a siege which has prevented humanitarian aid from reaching them.

The al Nusra group is also reported to have executed militants attempting to flee the city and has followed this by killing their families. The media ignores Syrian government offers of safe passage for the terrorists of the sort that it has arranged in the past such as when reclaiming the city of Homs. When the media shows the physical destruction of the city, the implication is that Russian bombing is the sole cause. No regard is given to the fact that it had already sustained a great deal of damage before the Russian campaign began.

The Western mainstream media's reporting of the Syrian crisis has for some time consistently followed a pattern of biased reporting of Russia alongside a campaign of demonization against its leader Vladimir Putin. Yet, whatever the shortcomings there are in regard to Russia's internal governance, an objective reading of the flashpoints of Russian-NATO tensions reveals the Russian position as one that is reactive rather than aggressive. These include the NATO inspired provocations which led to the Russo-Georgian War of 2008 and the [Ukrainian crisis](#) which commenced in 2014.

The former involved an attack on South Ossetia by US and Israeli-trained Georgian troops while the latter involved a US-sponsored coup d'état which deposed the democratically elected president and installed an ultra-nationalist regime which immediately made known its hostility towards Russia and the mainly Russian speaking eastern region. Russia withdrew from the parts of Georgia that it had occupied and did not mount an invasion of the Ukraine; it being content to apply its 'Black Sea Doctrine' by securing its warm sea port in Sevastopol via the annexation of Crimea after the holding of a plebiscite. Without its port in Crimea, Russian action in Syria would have been made more difficult.

In the same manner, the Russian action taken in Syria is one which was reacting to events imposed by the policies of the United States and its allies. America's embrace of militarism through the Wolfowitz Doctrine has imbibed its policymakers with a belief in the limitless reach of an American sphere of influence while entitling Russia to none.

The Syrian conflict and the United States attitude towards Putin's Russia is also best understood by reference to the key tenets of the Brzezinski Doctrine through which the United States has sought to militarily intimidate, weaken and ultimately dismantle what remained of the former Soviet Union in order to prevent the rise of a Eurasian power able to compete economically and militarily with the West. It has as its end game, the reducing of Russia, or its balkanized components, into a vassalage designed primarily to serve the energy needs of the West.

While there is some truth in the thesis of an extension of the use of the Russian military technique of Maskirovka into the realm of foreign policy propaganda, a dissection of the respective records of both Western governments and their Russian counterpart demonstrably show where the aforementioned aggressive and reactive currents of events have emerged.

Criticism of Western policy towards Russia does not only emanate from the traditional Left but from all parts of the political spectrum. The utility of 'idiot' analysts cannot be limited to those who are critical of Western foreign policy so far as it relates to Russia and the wider world. The Western media has been shown to be susceptible to forms of pressure and influence from the intelligence services.

For instance, 'Operation Mass Appeal' was set up by the British Secret Intelligence Service in the run up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. It was a campaign of media disinformation designed to exaggerate the military capabilities of the Iraqi military and thus influence public opinion. In 2005, the Lincoln Group, a Washington-based public relations company was revealed to have been placing articles in Iraqi newspapers which had been secretly written by the US military. The potential use of 'black propaganda' among other tried and tested devices of manipulation needs to be borne in mind in regard to the present media portrayal of Aleppo.

What also needs to be borne in mind are the possible affiliations of journalists to the intelligence services. In 2014, Udo Ulfkotte, a former editor of Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, alleged that many of the top journalists in Western Europe are in the pay of the CIA. He claimed that both the CIA and the German Federal Intelligence Service or Bundesnachrichtendienst, bribe journalists to write articles favourable to NATO issues and other stories with a pro-Western agenda. This is done on the understanding that they may lose their jobs if they do not comply.

So while some analysts may be more prone to being critical of Western foreign policy than others owing to a residue of empathy the political Left may have towards the successor state of the Soviet Union or those white nationalists who tout Vladimir Putin as the saviour-in-waiting of the European races, it is clear that many reasonable pundits spanning the gamut of the political spectrum have come to the conclusion that the philosophies and doctrines guiding the conduct of Western foreign policy have been predicated on a hubristic drive for global hegemony.

It has not been Russia but the United States-led Western alliance which has destroyed Iraq, Libya and Syria. Yet, there is an apparent lack of reflection on the part of writers such as Dominic Sandbrook on the damage wrought by Western policy on Western prestige and its civilizational values.

The destruction of nation states and the attitudes expressed by leaders such as Madeleine Albright that the deaths of half a million Iraq children as a result of the imposition of sanctions prior to the war of 2003 were “worth it”, as well as the “we came, we saw, we died” remark by Hillary Clinton over the lynching of Colonel Gaddafi, have served to cast the West in a barbaric light.

It cannot by an stretch of the imagination be “warped” or “ignorant” -to use Sandbrook’s descriptions- to point out the West’s culpability for the Syrian tragedy. Britain’s role in fomenting the conflict has been clear from the earliest time of the conflict when reports indicated that British military officers were stationed at the border shared between Syria and Jordan and offering training to rebels and prospective insurgents arriving from abroad. The British Guardian newspaper reported in March 2013 that British, French and American military advisers were giving rebels what it termed “logistical and other advice in some form”.

The British role in Syria has provided clear evidence of the moral contradictions inherent in participating in foreign interventions of dubious legality. Consider for instance the collapse of the 2015 [trial](#) of a man charged with terrorist activities in Syria on the grounds that Britain’s security and intelligence services would have been “deeply embarrassed” because of their covert support for anti-Assad militias, and the conviction two weeks earlier of a London cab driver who received a life sentence for making improvised explosive devices while serving as part of the resistance to the illegal occupation of Iraq by US and British armed forces.

The connection between consciously and strategically utilizing radicalised Islamist guerrillas as a tool in unseating secular Arab governments such as in Syria and the perpetration of terror outrages on Western European soil by those sharing the same ideology appears rarely to be part of the public discourse.

The focus on Aleppo amid calls by leaders of the United States for war crimes investigations

against Russia when the United States itself has refused to put itself under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court reeks of hypocrisy.

And in keeping with the deception at the very heart of Western involvement in Syria, which unlike that of Russia is not based on an invitation from the legitimate government of Syria, the calls for a 'No Fly Zone' over Aleppo are concerned less with ongoing human suffering and more to do with protecting the jihadist legions that are central to Western policy. As the aforementioned DIA document of 2012 provides, the declaration of 'safe havens', which is another term for 'No Fly Zones', is a technique used by the United States to shield and preserve areas conquered by Islamist insurgents. It is based on the template utilised in overthrowing the Gaddafi government in Libya and forms the first step towards a so-called 'humanitarian war'.

By abandoning the idea that both Russia and the US-led alliance have jihadist militias as the common enemy in place of one earmarking Russia as the enemy and the obstacle to peace, the West and its mainstream media are effectively inviting a catastrophic collision between two nuclear armed powers. As General Dunford informed the Senate hearing of September 22nd, the imposition of a 'No Fly Zone' "will mean war with Russia."

A war, it may be added, which would arise as a result of the illegal enterprise of arming a largely foreign-imported contingent of mercenaries to overthrow the government of a sovereign state. A war that would happen after consistent illegal violations of Syrian airspace and one for which the United States Congress has not given constitutional authorization.

Jeremy Corbyn proved to be right in his dissent in regard to the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and he is clearly right when he ascribes blame to the United States, Britain and their allies for the Syrian tragedy.

In the final analysis, it is Western journalists with the stances of Dominic Sandbrook who are fulfilling the appellation of 'useful idiots'.

Adeyinka Makinde is a writer and law lecturer with an interest in geo-politics who is based in London, England.

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