

Washington's Playbook for Waging Proxy Wars in the Middle East

By [Nauman Sadiq](#)

Global Research, February 02, 2019

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

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

Karl Marx famously said that history repeats itself, first as tragedy and then as farce. The only difference between the Soviet-Afghan jihad back in the 1980s, that spawned Islamic jihadists such as the Taliban and al-Qaeda for the first time in history, and the proxy wars in Libya and Syria 2011-onward is that the Afghan jihad was an overt jihad: back then, the Western political establishments and their mouthpiece, the mainstream media, used to openly brag that the CIA provides all those rocket-propelled grenades and stingers to the Afghan so-called "freedom fighters" to combat the Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

After the 9/11 tragedy, however, the Western political establishments and corporate media became a lot more circumspect, therefore this time around, they waged covert jihads against the Arab-nationalist Gaddafi regime in Libya and the anti-Zionist Assad government in Syria, in which Islamic jihadists (aka terrorists) were sold as "moderate rebels" with secular and nationalist ambitions to the Western audience.

Since the regime change objective in those hapless countries went against the mainstream narrative of ostensibly fighting a war against terrorism, therefore the Western political establishments and the corporate media tried to muddle the reality by offering color-coded schemes to identify myriads of militant and terrorist outfits that operated in Syria: such as the red militants of the Islamic State and al-Nusra Front, which the Western powers want to eliminate; the yellow Islamic jihadists, like Jaysh al-Islam and Ahrar al-Sham, with whom the Western powers can collaborate under desperate circumstances; and the green militants of the Free Syria Army (FSA) and a few other inconsequential outfits, which together comprised the so-called "moderate" Syrian opposition.

Over the decades, it has been a convenient stratagem of the Western powers with two-party political systems, particularly the US, to evade responsibility for the death and destruction brought upon the hapless Middle Eastern countries by their predecessors by playing blame games and finger-pointing.

For instance: during the Soviet-Afghan jihad of the 1980s, the Carter and Reagan administrations nurtured the Afghan jihadists against the Soviet-backed government in Kabul with the help of Pakistan's intelligence agencies. The Afghan jihad created a flood of millions of refugees who sought refuge in the border regions of Pakistan and Iran.

Moreover, the Reagan administration's policy of providing training and arms to the Afghan militants had the unintended consequences of spawning al-Qaeda and Taliban and it also destabilized the Af-Pak region, which is still in the midst of lawlessness, perpetual anarchy and an unrelenting Taliban insurgency more than four decades after the proxy war was fought in Afghanistan.

After the signing of the Geneva Accords in 1988, however, and the subsequent change of guard in Washington, the Clinton administration dissociated itself from the ill-fated Reagan administration's policy of nurturing Afghan militants with the help of Gulf's petro-dollars and Pakistan's intelligence agencies and laid the blame squarely on minor regional players.

Similarly, during the Libyan so-called "humanitarian intervention" in 2011, the Obama administration provided money and arms to myriads of tribal militias and Islamic jihadists to topple the Arab-nationalist Gaddafi regime. But after the policy backfired and pushed Libya into lawlessness, anarchy and civil war, the mainstream media pointed the finger at Egypt, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Russia for backing the renegade general, Khalifa Haftar, in eastern Libya, even though he had lived for more than [two decades](#) [1] in the US right next to the CIA's headquarter in Langley, Virginia.

Regarding the Western powers' modus operandi of waging proxy wars in the Middle East, since the times of the Soviet-Afghan jihad during the eighties, it has been the fail-safe game plan of master strategists at NATO to [raise money](#) [2] from the oil-rich emirates of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE and Kuwait; then buy billions of dollars' worth of weapons from the [arms markets](#) [3] in the Eastern Europe; and then provide those weapons and guerilla warfare training to the disaffected population of the victim country by using the intelligence agencies of the latter's regional adversaries. Whether it's Afghanistan, Chechnya, Libya or Syria, the same playbook was executed to the letter.

More to the point, raising funds for proxy wars from the Gulf Arab States allows the Western executives the freedom to evade congressional scrutiny; the benefit of buying weapons from unregulated arms markets of the Eastern Europe is that such weapons cannot be traced back to the Western capitals; and using jihadist proxies to achieve strategic objectives has the advantage of taking the plea of "plausible deniability" if the strategy backfires, which it often does. Remember that al-Qaeda and Taliban were the by-products of the Soviet-Afghan jihad, and the Islamic State and its global network of terrorists are the blowback of the proxy war in Syria.

On the subject of the supposed "powerlessness" of the US in the global affairs, the Western think tanks and the corporate media's spin-doctors generally claim that Pakistan deceived Washington in Afghanistan by providing safe havens to the Taliban; Turkey hoodwinked the US in Syria by using the war against Islamic State as a pretext for cracking down on Kurds; Saudi Arabia and UAE betrayed the US in Yemen by mounting ground offensive and airstrikes against the Houthis rebels; and once again Saudi Arabia, UAE and Egypt went against the ostensible policy of the US in Libya by destabilizing the Tripoli-based government, even though the renegade general in eastern Libya, Khalifa Haftar, is an American stooge.

If the US policymakers are so naïve, then how come they still control the global political and economic order? This perennially whining attitude of the Western corporate media that such and such regional players betrayed them, otherwise they were on top of their game is actually a clever stratagem that has been deliberately designed by the spin-doctors of the Western mainstream media and foreign policy think tanks to cast the Western powers in a positive light and to vilify adversaries, even if the latter are their tactical allies in some of the regional conflicts.

Regarding the Pax Americana which is the reality of the contemporary global political and economic order, according to an [infographic](#) [4] by the New York Times, 210,000 US military

personnel are currently stationed all over the world, including 79,000 in Europe, 45,000 in Japan, 28,500 in South Korea and 36,000 in the Middle East.

By comparison, the number of US troops in Afghanistan is only 14,000 which is regarded as an occupied country. Thus, all the European, Far Eastern and Middle Eastern states mentioned in the infographic are not sovereign countries but the clients of the US.

Fighting wars through proxies allows the international power brokers the luxury of taking the plea of “plausible deniability” in their defense and at the same time they can shift all the blame for wrongdoing on minor regional players. The Western powers’ culpability lies in the fact that because of them a system of international justice based on sound principles of morality and justice cannot be constructed, in which the violators can be punished for their wrongdoing and the victims of injustice, tyranny and violence can be protected.

Leaving the funding, training and arming aspects of insurgencies aside, but especially pertaining to conferring international legitimacy to an armed insurgency, like the Afghan so-called “freedom struggle” of the Cold War, or the supposedly “moderate and democratic” Libyan and Syrian insurgencies of the contemporary era, it is simply beyond the power of minor regional players and their nascent media, which has a geographically and linguistically limited audience, to cast such heavily armed and brutal insurrections in a positive light in order to internationally legitimize them; only the Western mainstream media that has a global audience and which serves as the mouthpiece of the Western political establishments has perfected this game of legitimizing the absurd and selling Satans as saviors.

The neocolonial powers only pay lip-service to the cause of morality, justice and humanity in the international arena and their foreign policies are solely driven by the motive to protect the Western national interests without any regard for human suffering in the remote regions of the world.

More often than not, it isn’t even about protecting their national interests, bear in mind that the Western powers are not true democracies; they are oligarchies catering to the needs of their business interests that wield a disproportionate influence in the governmental decision-making and the formulation of public policy. Thus the real core of the oft-quoted “Western national interests” is mainly comprised of the Western corporate interests.

*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons above. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

Nauman Sadiq is an Islamabad-based attorney, columnist and geopolitical analyst focused on the politics of Af-Pak and Middle East regions, neocolonialism and petro-imperialism.

Notes

1- Leaked tapes expose Western support for renegade Libyan general.

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/revealed-leaked-tapes-expose-western-support-renegade-libyan-general-185825787>

2- U.S. Relies Heavily on Saudi Money to Support Syrian Rebels.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/24/world/middleeast/us-relies-heavily-on-saudi-money-to-support-syrian-rebels.html>

3- Billions of dollars of weapons flowing from Eastern Europe to Middle East.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/27/weapons-flowing-eastern-europe-middle-east-revealed-arms-trade-syria>

4- What the U.S. Gets for Defending Its Allies and Interests Abroad?

http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/16/world/trump-military-role-treaties-allies-nato-asia-persian-gulf.html?smid=tw-share&_r=0

Featured image is from New Eastern Outlook

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Nauman Sadiq](#), Global Research, 2019

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

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Nauman Sadiq](#)

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