

America's Search for New Enemies

Fake foreign threats are used to validate poor policy choices

By [Philip Giraldi](#)

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*Does anyone really think that Iran threatens the United States? It's only plausible if you can be convinced by a congenital liar and war criminal like Israel's **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** or by a buffoon like **Senator Lindsey Graham** of South Carolina. My head was still throbbing recently due to the damage done while watching Netanyahu's 56 standing ovations from a bought and paid for Congress when I came across among my old books a volume bearing a title that summed up what I have been thinking about. It was called "[In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story](#)" and was written by a former Agency colleague named **John Stockwell** back in 1978.*

Stockwell spent part of his high school years with his Presbyterian missionary father in the Belgian Congo. He then graduated from the University of Texas followed by three years in the United States Marine Corps. He joined the CIA in 1964 and earned respect as an experienced "Africa Hand," as the expression was commonly used, during his twelve years in the Agency's Operations Deputy Directorate that ended when he resigned in 1976. Stockwell served as a case officer through three wars: the Congo Crisis, as chief of the Agency "task force" in the Angolan War of Independence, and Vietnam. Six of Stockwell's years were in Africa, as Chief of Base in Katanga, then Chief of Station in Bujumbura, Burundi in 1970, before being transferred to Vietnam to oversee intelligence operations in Tay Ninh province where he received the CIA Intelligence Medal of Merit for keeping his post operating until just before the fall of Saigon to the communists in 1975.

In his resignation letter, Stockwell cited deep concerns over the methods and results of CIA paramilitary operations in Third World countries and he subsequently testified to that effect before Congressional committees. Two years later, he wrote *In Search of Enemies*, about that experience and its broader implications. He claimed that the CIA was damaging national security, and that its "secret wars" provided no benefit for the United States. The CIA, he stated, had singled out the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola ([MPLA](#)) to be an enemy in Angola despite the fact that the MPLA wanted good relations with the United States and had not threatened the US in any way. In 1978 he appeared on the American television program *60 Minutes* to discuss his book, *inter alia* claiming that CIA **Director William Colby** and **National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger** had systematically lied to Congress and the public about the CIA's operations in Africa and elsewhere.

Spring 1975: As Saigon falls, the CIA destabilizes
Angola in preparation for the next war.

IN SEARCH OF ENEMIES

A CIA STORY



John Stockwell
Former Chief CIA Angola Task Force

Stockwell played a major role in a war that America later chose to forget. It was a conflict full of lessons about the tyranny of bureaucracy run amok and the force of habit driving a bloody process that had no end game. Indeed, the top secret presidential finding authorizing the covert war in Angola explicitly directed the CIA to avoid victory — the goal was instead “to hemorrhage Russian coffers and bleed Angolan bodies, all to keep Russia ‘on its toes’” after the US abandonment of Vietnam the year before. Though no American troops were on the ground in Angola, only “advisors,” many millions of dollars were spent, many thousands died, and many lies were told to the American people in waging a war without any relationship to American vital interests and without hope of victory. In many ways it makes one think of the tragedies involving US foreign and national security policies that are playing out today. If it sounds a lot like the aftermath of the disengagement from Afghanistan more recently, it should. One needs an enemy to justify a bloated defense establishment and if there is no enemy available one will be invented just as Senator Lindsey Graham has already introduced Senate Bill SJ106, which authorizes in advance war with Iran even if Iran does nothing to provoke it. It is a declaration of war in advance against an “enemy” that will be convenient when needed!

Graham is at the tail end of a process of American warmongering that has been developing ever since the Second World War and which has intensified over the past thirty years. America’s real power and relevance as measured by its economy and leadership has declined, often due to bad decisions made by the country’s government that have turned competitors into truly motivated adversaries. Once upon a time developing countries like China have pursued successful export driven programs. China’s has now made it the largest economy in the world, but the US increasingly sees Beijing’s success as a “threat,” creating a crisis situation where one does not really exist. The US, trying to mask its decline and increase its relevance by boosting its military spending on costly obsolete weapon systems like aircraft carriers, has only made the matter worse by running up huge unsustainable deficits that will before too long come home to roost!

And once you have all that expensive military hardware sitting around, it behooves one to use it, tempting weak politicians to adopt aggressive postures in parts of the world where the US had no real interests to support. Washington’s 900 military bases around the world serve no conceivable defense purposes but the bullying-effect produced by their presence

elicits an inevitable reaction with developing and even some advanced countries figuring out that dollar dominance is at the heart of the problem. These countries have begun to join together to resist “Yankee imperialism” and negotiate agreements to create new economic and political alignments like BRICS, which will only serve to accelerate American decline.

Image: Madeleine Albright (Source: Wikimedia Commons)



So what is the solution perceived by Democrat and Republican leaders alike? More sanctions are the easy route as long as the US is able to manage much of world trade through the dominance of the dollar as the reserve currency. Currently one third of the nations in the world are under US sanctions for one reason or another and the Treasury Department’s [sanctions document](#) that lists those affected by name runs to 2669 pages. And there have been many more military interventions, coupled with special operations arranged with NATO and the dwindling group of friendly nations, which in turn drives the other nations into tight embraces with those who no longer are willing to accept what the clueless American **Secretary of State Madeleine Albright** [boasted about](#):

“If we have to use force, it is because we are America. We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall. We see further into the future.”

American thinking at the top level is clearly driven by what the country’s leadership will sell to the public, namely fear of alleged threats emanating from other countries, currently most particularly from China, Russia, North Korea, Venezuela and Iran. It is always good to have an enemy that you can blame everything on but it comes at a price, which is that the “enemies” will figure out what is going on and will band together and cooperate to resist US aggression. That is what we are seeing now with the US on many countries’ own enemies list and opinion polls suggesting how disliked Washington now is!

The sad truth is that it is the United States government that finds it expedient to begin the process of creating enemies for consumption in hopes of justifying non-beneficial alliances and other foreign arrangements and defense alignments that make no sense overseas. Say what one will about Russian **President Vladimir Putin**, but the moves made by Russian diplomats over the past twenty years were intended to create an accommodation with the west. Key to that improved relationship was Washington’s adherence to the post-Soviet Union break-up commitment to not expand NATO into Eastern Europe, which Moscow saw as a red line. The White House subsequently ignored that agreement almost immediately.

But it was Washington’s overthrow of an elected government in Ukraine that was friendly to Moscow in 2014 that set the stage for a deterioration in the multilateral relationship between Russia and NATO after Putin realized that there was little point in trying to

establish an acceptable *modus vivendi* with the West. As we [have learned recently](#) from former German **Chancellor Angela Merkel**, the Minsk Agreement which would have established a non-aligned Ukraine was all a fraud, with NATO intended to arm and extend membership to Kiev in spite of pledges not to do so. Even as late as April 2022, shortly after Russia intervened in Ukraine to protect the ethnic Russian minority in Donbas and Crimea in February 2022, British **Prime Minister Boris Johnson** [traveled unexpectedly to Ukraine](#) to warn **Prime Minister Volodymyr Zelensky** that any peace talks with Moscow would not be acceptable to the US, UK and NATO. It was a demand that Ukraine should be prepared to continue the war.

Likewise with the deliberate poisoning of relations with other potential and actual enemies. One recalls how in 1972 the US and China established a *modus vivendi* that would allow the two countries to live in peace, or at least in a way that would preclude armed conflict. It was called the “One China” policy and it recognized that an independent Taiwan, surviving under an American military umbrella, was a part of greater China. But, at the same time, China agreed not to try to acquire it by force and the US maintained what has been referred to as “strategic ambiguity” over the issue. Now, however, the United States has made a major issue of possible malevolent Chinese intentions and Beijing is increasingly being seen by both major parties in Washington as the over the horizon enemy. There is considerable talk in Washington about having to “deal with” China and the Chinese leadership is fully aware of what is being mooted. China will now do whatever is necessary to alleviate the threat and will act completely in its own interests, another huge failure of American diplomacy.

Image [source](#)



So the United States missteps have turned two major military and economic powers - Russia and China - into enemies and those two countries are responded as they see appropriately by creating relationships to strike back if necessary against the US. As Israel is about to launch a regional war with a focus on crippling Iran and Washington has pledged to defend the Jewish state even if it starts the conflict, which it has already done *de facto*, Russia, in particular, may have already come to the aid of Tehran, reportedly [supplying it](#) with sophisticated S-400 [air defense systems](#) that are capable of shooting down US and Israeli warplanes. Iran is reciprocating by selling Moscow armed drones in large numbers for use against Ukraine. The inevitable escalation between two nuclear armed major powers and a reckless nuclear armed Israel in the middle begins at that point and the sad thing is that the growing conflict never had to start in the first place if the White House had used its influence to restrain the Israeli government’s actions in Gaza and its assassinations in Lebanon and Iran itself.

In the “enemies ranking” after China and Russia certainly comes Iran itself, largely due to insistence that that must be so by the Israelis, who largely control aspects of foreign policy in Washington. Israel asserts that Iran is a threat to the US as well as to Israel because it is developing a nuclear weapon. This view was most recently reiterated in front of the US Congress by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and it is a complete fabrication. Even Israeli intelligence concedes that Iran has no nuclear weapon program and is far from having such a device. Indeed, the fact is that Iran has never threatened the United States and has no interest in doing so. Israel, which has a secret nuclear arsenal, is more of [a threat to the US](#) than is Iran due to its embrace of the “Samson Option” in which it would use its nukes to strike friendly countries under certain circumstances.

So there you have it. Witness the frantic search for new enemies as needed by the lunatics in charge in Washington, even when reality does not support the narrative. That is what the Stockwell book was all about and it was as true in 1964 as it is today. The United States and Europeans claim to be fearful of Russia providing top level weapons systems to Iran to help that country defend itself so it can develop a nuclear weapon, which it has in fact no intention of doing. And the record shows something quite different, i.e. that Iran has been on the receiving end of attacks from both Israelis and Americans as well as assassination of its senior officials including Donald Trump’s killing of Revolutionary Guard commander Qassim Soleimani in Baghdad in January 2020. So who are really the bad guys here? I think the answer is clear.

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