

America's Proxy War in Syria: Are Washington War Hawks Losing their Grip over Middle East Politics?

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It comes as welcome news that [Australia is set to abandon its opposition to Bashar al-Assad](#) as part of a durable peace settlement in Syria.

The recent military escalation by Russia and reported sightings of Chinese war ships in the Mediterranean in the last week must come as something of an embarrassment to the war hawks in Washington, and the knives may well be out for whichever rookie secretary forgot to register *the war on terror* as a trademark. Still this has done little to change the tripartisan rhetoric coming out of Canberra. *"I don't for a moment shy away from the comments that we have made in the past about the illegitimacy of the regime."* *"President Assad unleashed chemical weapons on his own people, and the death and destruction in Syria is appalling and at unprecedented levels"*, Ms Bishop recently said in an address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

In hearing these remarks I can't help be reminded of the outrageous claims and bald faced lies which led us into war in Iraq in 2003. Whatever happened to all those weapons of mass destruction which Saddam was stockpiling? Was he able to secretly shield them from UN weapons inspectors with an invisibility cloak? Perhaps the same cloak that Dr Assad is using to hide his chemical weapons arsenal?

Or the one that Iran is evidently using to conceal its uranium enrichment program?

Not to put too fine a point on it, but when the [executive director of Human Rights Watch](#) is leading the cheer for the removal of the legitimate government of a sovereign nation state which currently enjoys the support of 80% of its people, one might wonder if we are being told the whole truth.



Having taken part what now seems like an age ago in the rallies against the 2003 invasion of Iraq – the biggest protests Australia has seen since the Vietnam War, I'm more than a little miffed at the lack of public outrage at Australia's compliance in 2015. Perhaps the media is doing a better job of selling its lies and deception this time around, but so far I remain unconvinced. I am tired of the blatant propaganda surrounding this illegal war. I'm tired of the persistent references to "civil war" in a country which is clearly being attacked by outside forces. I'm tired of hearing the government of Syria constantly referred to as "the Assad regime", and carnal knowledge of dead animals aside, I'm well tired of David Cameron referring to Bashar al-Assad as a butcher.

So far as Washington's support for terrorists is concerned, there's no putting the cat back in the bag. I have argued this extensively in other essays, but it doesn't take a political analyst to see that Obama, Netanyahu, Erdogan, Salman and Abdullah before him have been working hand in glove with various terror groups to destabilize and ultimately remove the Syrian government for their own nefarious ends. Washington's war hawks have bypassed congressional appropriations by directing their client state Saudi Arabia to deploy radical anti-Syrian (and often anti-US) militants against Assad, unleashing a wave of terror on the region. Playing both sides against the middle may have some merit in games of strategy, but willingly supporting terrorists who commit atrocities against civilians by any other name is still a war crime.

Of course there are many players in this proxy war, each with their own interests: Obviously there's the US and its allies, who in their relentless quest for world domination just can't seem to keep their grubby hands out of other people's business. In their latest adventure, United States Secretary of State John Kerry and the late King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia in collusion with Wall Street insiders had contrived to control the entire region's oil and gas reserves and to weaken Russia and Iran by selling cheap oil to China.

There's Russia, whose soft underbelly comprises almost every country ending in 'stan' from which Islamist extremists might enter its borders. Already feeling the squeeze of tough trade sanctions since the shooting down of MH17, this manipulation of the oil market, despite weakening its economy, will likely strengthen its resolve.

There's Israel, a newly created, US backed, militarised rogue state whose original British colonial design includes not just the annexation of both the West Bank and Gaza but of all the land from the Nile to the Euphrates including parts of Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, the Sinai, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. (The plan for *Greater Israel* involves the Balkanization of surrounding Arab states, beginning with Iraq, which is to be divided into Shia and Sunni territories and a separate Kurdish state.)

There's China, an emerging superpower now lumbered with a stalling economy and forced to choose between a ready supply of cheap oil and the prospect of the war in Syria spilling into Iran, Southern Russia and eventually breaching its own western borders.

There's Germany, which seems to have embraced the prospect of close to a million new low paid workers with the same enthusiasm with which it welcomed the surge of cheap skilled labour at the close of the Soviet era (an attitude perfectly consistent with EU ambitions to enforce human misery through austerity.)

And then there are the endless hordes now beating a path to Europe in what's been called the biggest mass movement of refugees since WWII. It's not just the Alawites, Yazidis and other religious and ethnic minorities once protected under Syria's Ba'athist government who now face a grim future, but the entire Syrian population, of whom more than half are now internally displaced or have fled in fear for their lives. Pray tell what conceivable form of 'regime change' would ever allow these people to return to their homes?

Syria was and is the last secular nation state in the Middle East, and as has been argued by many, not least President Putin himself, it is for the people of Syria and nobody else to decide who will govern them. Russia is now working in concert with Iran, Hezbollah and other regional partners to end the horror brought to bear by Washington's incessant

meddling, and while Obama still condemns Russia's strategy as "doomed to failure" and continues to demand Assad's ultimate resignation, this outcome is looking increasingly less likely.

While China's last minute arrival is obviously a game changer, it's not like the US were never invited to the party. Putin's attempts to forge an alliance of nations to deal with the growing threat of global terror have never specifically excluded US participation, but with the US demonstrably the world's greatest sponsor of terrorism, it does make things a little awkward. As well as Iran, Iraq, Hezbollah and the Syrian Arab Army, the new coalition looks likely to include all members of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO); Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, and Tajikistan. This poses an obvious question right off the bat. Is Washington really afraid that Russia's intervention will make matters worse in Syria? Or rather that putting an end to ISIS once and for all might render the US irrelevant?

What emerges from this picture is a strong sense that Washington's war hawks are losing, or have lost, their grip over Middle East politics. The Iranian moderates who are inclined to cooperate with the West for economic reasons are naturally allied to Russia where the Syrian ISIS threat is concerned; the Gulf monarchies seem only too happy for Russia to broker a peace between warring Shi'ite and Sunni factions, and with Russia now flexing its military muscle, Netanyahu is hardly likely to be spoiling for a fight either.

Whether or not any of this could lead to a lasting peace in the Middle East it's too early to say, and with the likes of Carly Fiorina now set to trump Trump for the GOP candidacy, and Hilary Clinton still a likely choice for the Democrats, Washington's campaign for global hegemony is unlikely to end any time soon. It does however seem that we may have reached a turning point. Could the battle for Syria prove a victory for peace and diplomacy in an increasingly multi-polar world? Or is this how WWII begins?

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