

Middle Eastern Wars Have Always Been About Oil

By [Washington's Blog](#)

Global Research, January 15, 2020

[Washington's Blog and Global Research](#) 26

February 2016

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

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Oil and Energy](#), [US](#)

[NATO War Agenda](#)

Relevant article selected from the GR archive, first published on GR in February 2016.

Robert Kennedy Jr. [notes](#):

For Americans to really understand what's going on, it's important to review some details about this sordid but little-remembered history. During the 1950s, President Eisenhower and the Dulles brothers — CIA Director Allen Dulles and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles — rebuffed Soviet treaty proposals to leave the Middle East a neutral zone in the Cold War and let Arabs rule Arabia. Instead, they mounted a clandestine war against Arab nationalism — which Allen Dulles equated with communism — particularly when Arab self-rule threatened oil concessions. They pumped secret American military aid to tyrants in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon favoring puppets with conservative Jihadist ideologies that they regarded as a reliable antidote to Soviet Marxism [and those that possess [a lot of oil](#)]. At a White House meeting between the CIA's director of plans, Frank Wisner, and John Foster Dulles, in September 1957, Eisenhower advised the agency, "We should do everything possible to stress the 'holy war' aspect," according to a memo recorded by his staff secretary, Gen. Andrew J. Goodpaster."

Let's look at specific countries ...

Iraq

Between 1932 and 1948, the roots for the current wars in Iraq were planted. As Wikipedia [explains](#):



The Mosul-Haifa oil pipeline (also known as Mediterranean pipeline) was a crude oil pipeline from the oil fields in Kirkuk, located in north Iraq, through Jordan to Haifa (now on the territory of Israel). The pipeline was operational in 1935–1948. Its length was about 942 kilometres (585 mi), with a diameter of 12 inches (300 mm) (reducing to 10 and 8 inches (250 and 200 mm) in parts), and it took about 10 days for crude oil to travel the full length of the line. The oil arriving in Haifa was distilled in the Haifa refineries, stored in tanks, and then put in tankers for shipment to Europe.

The pipeline was built by the Iraq Petroleum Company between 1932 and 1935, during which period most of the area through which the pipeline passed was under a British mandate approved by the League of Nations. The pipeline was one of two pipelines carrying oil from the Kirkuk oilfield to the Mediterranean coast. The main pipeline split at Haditha with a second line carrying oil to Tripoli, Lebanon, which was then under a French mandate. This line was built primarily to satisfy the demands of the French partner in IPC, Compagnie Française des Pétroles, for a separate line to be built across French mandated territory.

The pipeline and the Haifa refineries were considered strategically important by the British Government, and indeed provided much of the fuel needs of the British and American forces in the Mediterranean during the Second World War.

The pipeline was a target of attacks by Arab gangs during the Great Arab Revolt, and as a result one of the main objectives of a joint British-Jewish Special Night Squads commanded by Captain Orde Wingate was to protect the pipeline against such attacks. Later on, the pipeline was the target of attacks by the Irgun. [[Background.](#)]

In 1948, with the outbreak of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the official operation of the pipeline ended when the Iraqi Government refused to pump any more oil through it.

Why is this relevant today? Haaretz [reported](#) soon after the Iraq war started in 2003:

The United States has asked Israel to check the possibility of pumping oil from Iraq to the oil refineries in Haifa. The request came in a telegram last week from a senior Pentagon official to a top Foreign Ministry official in Jerusalem.

The Prime Minister's Office, which views the pipeline to Haifa as a "bonus" the U.S. could give to Israel in return for its unequivocal support for the American-led campaign in Iraq, had asked the Americans for the official telegram.

The new pipeline would take oil from the Kirkuk area, where some 40 percent of Iraqi oil is produced, and transport it via Mosul, and then across Jordan to Israel. The U.S. telegram included a request for a cost estimate for repairing the Mosul-Haifa pipeline that was in use prior to 1948. During the War of Independence [what Jews [call](#) the 1948 war to form the state of Israel], the Iraqis stopped the flow of oil to Haifa and the pipeline fell into disrepair over the years.

National Infrastructure Minister Yosef Paritzky said yesterday that the port of Haifa is an attractive destination for Iraqi oil and that he plans to discuss this matter with the U.S. secretary of energy during his planned visit to Washington next month.

In response to rumors about the possible Kirkuk-Mosul-Haifa pipeline, Turkey has warned Israel that it would regard this development as a serious blow to Turkish-Israeli relations.

So the fighting over Iraq can be traced back to events occurring in 1948 and before.

But let's fast-forward to subsequent little-known events in Iraq.

The CIA plotted to [poison the Iraqi leader](#) in 1960.

In 1963, the U.S. [backed the coup which succeeded](#) in killing the head of Iraq.

And everyone knows that the U.S. also toppled Saddam Hussein during the Iraq war. But most don't know that neoconservatives planned regime change in Iraq once again [in 1991](#).

4-Star General Wesley Clark - former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO - said:

It came back to me ... a 1991 meeting I had with Paul Wolfowitz.

In 1991, he was the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy - the number 3 position at the Pentagon. And I had gone to see him when I was a 1-Star General commanding the National Training Center.

And I said, “Mr. Secretary, you must be pretty happy with the performance of the troops in Desert Storm.” And he said: “Yeah, but not really, because the truth is we should have gotten rid of Saddam Hussein, and we didn’t ... But one thing we did learn [from the Persian Gulf War] is that we can use our military in the region – in the Middle East – and the Soviets won’t stop us. And we’ve got about 5 or 10 years to clean up those old Soviet client regimes – Syria, Iran, IRAQ – before the next great superpower comes on to challenge us.”

And many people don’t know that the architects of the Iraq War *themselves* [admitted the war was about oil](#). For example, former U.S. Secretary of Defense – and former 12-year Republican Senator – Chuck Hagel [said](#) of the Iraq war in 2007:

People say we’re not fighting for oil. Of course we are. They talk about America’s national interest. What the hell do you think they’re talking about? We’re not there for figs.

4 Star General John Abizaid – the former commander of CENTCOM with responsibility for Iraq – said:

Of course it’s about oil, it’s very much about oil, and we can’t really deny that.

Former Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan [said](#) in 2007:

I am saddened that it is politically inconvenient to acknowledge what everyone knows: the Iraq war is largely about oil

President George W. Bush [said](#) in 2005 that keeping Iraqi oil away from the bad guys was a *key motive* for the Iraq war:

‘If Zarqawi and [Osama] bin Laden gain control of Iraq, they would create a new training ground for future terrorist attacks,” Bush said. “They’d seize oil fields to fund their ambitions.”

John McCain [said](#) in 2008:

My friends, I will have an energy policy that we will be talking about, which will eliminate our dependence on oil from the Middle East that will — that will then prevent us — that will prevent us from having ever to send our young men and women into conflict again in the Middle East.

Sarah Palin [said](#) in 2008:

Better to start that drilling [for oil within the U.S.] today than wait and continue relying on foreign sources of energy. We are a nation at war and in many [ways] the reasons for war are fights over energy sources, which is nonsensical

when you consider that domestically we have the supplies ready to go.

Former Bush speechwriter David Frum – author of the infamous “Axis of Evil” claim in Bush’s 2002 State of the Union address – [writes](#) in Newsweek this week:

In 2002, Chalabi [the Iraqi [politician and oil minister](#) who the Bush Administration favored to lead Iraq after the war] joined the annual summer retreat of the American Enterprise Institute near Vail, Colorado. He and Cheney spent long hours together, contemplating the possibilities of a Western-oriented Iraq: an additional source of oil, an alternative to U.S. dependency on an unstable-looking Saudi Arabia.

Key war architect – and Under Secretary of State – John Bolton said:

The critical oil and natural gas producing region that we fought so many wars to try and protect our economy from the adverse impact of losing that supply or having it available only at very high prices.

A high-level National Security Council officer strongly implied that [Cheney and the U.S. oil chiefs planned the Iraq war before 9/11 in order to get control of its oil](#).

The Sunday Herald [reported](#):

It is a document that fundamentally questions the motives behind the Bush administration’s desire to take out Saddam Hussein and go to war with Iraq.

Strategic Energy Policy Challenges For The 21st Century describes how America is facing the biggest energy crisis in its history. It targets Saddam as a threat to American interests because of his control of Iraqi oilfields and recommends the use of ‘military intervention’ as a means to fix the US energy crisis.

The report is linked to a veritable who’s who of US hawks, oilmen and corporate bigwigs. It was commissioned by James Baker, the former US Secretary of State under George Bush Snr, and submitted to Vice-President Dick Cheney in April 2001 — a full five months before September 11. Yet it advocates a policy of using military force against an enemy such as Iraq to secure US access to, and control of, Middle Eastern oil fields.

One of the most telling passages in the document reads: ‘Iraq remains a destabilising influence to ... the flow of oil to international markets from the Middle East. Saddam Hussein has also demonstrated a willingness to threaten to use the oil weapon and to use his own export programme to manipulate oil markets.

This would display his personal power, enhance his image as a pan-Arab leader ... and pressure others for a lifting of economic sanctions against his regime. The United States should conduct an immediate policy review toward Iraq including military, energy, economic and political/diplomatic assessments.

'Military intervention' is supported ...

The document also points out that 'the United States remains a prisoner of its energy dilemma', and that one of the 'consequences' of this is a 'need for military intervention'.

At the heart of the decision to target Iraq over oil lies dire mismanagement of the US energy policy over decades by consecutive administrations. The report refers to the huge power cuts that have affected California in recent years and warns of 'more Californias' ahead.

It says the 'central dilemma' for the US administration is that 'the American people continue to demand plentiful and cheap energy without sacrifice or inconvenience'. With the 'energy sector in critical condition, a crisis could erupt at any time [which] could have potentially enormous impact on the US ... and would affect US national security and foreign policy in dramatic ways."

The response is to put oil at the heart of the administration — 'a reassessment of the role of energy in American foreign policy'.

Iraq is described as the world's 'key swing producer ... turning its taps on and off when it has felt such action was in its strategic interest". The report also says there is a 'possibility that Saddam may remove Iraqi oil from the market for an extended period of time', creating a volatile market.

Halliburton is one of the firms thought by analysts to be in line to make a killing in any clean-up operation after another US-led war on Iraq.

All five permanent members of the UN Security Council — the UK, France, China, Russia and the US — have international oil companies that would benefit from huge windfalls in the event of regime change in Baghdad. The best chance for US firms to make billions would come if Bush installed a pro-US Iraqi opposition member as the head of a new government.

Representatives of foreign oil firms have already met with leaders of the Iraqi opposition. Ahmed Chalabi, the London-based leader of the Iraqi National Congress, said: 'American companies will have a big shot at Iraqi oil.'

The Independent [reported](#) in 2011:

Plans to exploit Iraq's oil reserves were discussed by government ministers and the world's largest oil companies the year before Britain took a leading role in invading Iraq, government documents show.

The minutes of a series of meetings between ministers and senior oil executives are at odds with the public denials of self-interest from oil companies and Western governments at the time.

Minutes of a meeting with BP, Shell and BG (formerly British Gas) on 31 October 2002 read: "Baroness Symons agreed that it would be difficult to justify British companies losing out in Iraq in that way if the UK had itself been a conspicuous supporter of the US government throughout the crisis."

The minister then promised to "report back to the companies before Christmas" on her lobbying efforts.

The Foreign Office invited BP in on 6 November 2002 to talk about opportunities in Iraq "post regime change". Its minutes state: "Iraq is the big oil prospect. BP is desperate to get in there and anxious that political deals should not deny them the opportunity."

After another meeting, this one in October 2002, the Foreign Office's Middle East director at the time, Edward Chaplin, noted: "Shell and BP could not afford not to have a stake in [Iraq] for the sake of their long-term future... We were determined to get a fair slice of the action for UK companies in a post-Saddam Iraq."

Whereas BP was insisting in public that it had "no strategic interest" in Iraq, in private it told the Foreign Office that Iraq was "more important than anything we've seen for a long time".

BP was concerned that if Washington allowed TotalFinaElf's existing contact with Saddam Hussein to stand after the invasion it would make the French conglomerate the world's leading oil company. BP told the Government it was willing to take "big risks" to get a share of the Iraqi reserves, the second largest in the world.

Over 1,000 documents were obtained under Freedom of Information over five years by the oil campaigner Greg Muttitt. They reveal that at least five meetings were held between civil servants, ministers and BP and Shell in late 2002.

The 20-year contracts signed in the wake of the invasion were the largest in the history of the oil industry. They covered half of Iraq's reserves - 60 billion barrels of oil ...

[Note: The 1990 Gulf war - while not a regime change - was also about oil. Specifically, Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait caused oil prices to skyrocket. The U.S. invaded Iraq [in order to calm oil markets](#). In its August 20, 1990 issue, Time Magazine [quoted](#) an anonymous U.S. Official as saying:

Even a dolt understands the principle. We need the oil. It's nice to talk about standing up for freedom, but Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are not exactly democracies, and if their principal export were oranges, a mid-level State Department official would have issued a statement and we would have closed Washington down for August.]

Syria

The history of western intervention in Syria is similar to our meddling in Iraq.

The CIA backed a right-wing coup in Syria [in 1949](#). Douglas Little, Professor, Department of Clark University History professor Douglas Little [notes](#):

As early as 1949, this newly independent Arab republic was an important staging ground for the CIA's earliest experiments in covert action. The CIA secretly encouraged a right-wing military coup in 1949.

The reason the U.S. initiated the coup? Little explains:

In late 1945, the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO) announced plans to construct the Trans-Arabian Pipe Line (TAPLINE) from Saudi Arabia to the Mediterranean. With U.S. help, ARAMCO secured rights-of-way from Lebanon, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. The Syrian right-of-way was stalled in parliament.

In other words, Syria was the sole holdout for the lucrative oil pipeline.

Robert Kennedy Jr. [notes](#):

The CIA began its active meddling in Syria in 1949 — barely a year after the agency's creation. Syrian patriots had declared war on the Nazis, expelled their Vichy French colonial rulers and crafted a fragile secularist democracy based on the American model. But in March 1949, Syria's democratically elected president, Shukri-al-Quwatli, hesitated to approve the Trans-Arabian Pipeline, an American project intended to connect the oil fields of Saudi Arabia to the ports of Lebanon via Syria. In his book, *Legacy of Ashes*, CIA historian Tim Weiner recounts that in retaliation for Al-Quwatli's lack of enthusiasm for the U.S. pipeline, the CIA engineered a coup replacing al-Quwatli with the CIA's handpicked dictator, a convicted swindler named Husni al-Za'im. Al-Za'im barely had time to dissolve parliament and approve the American pipeline before his countrymen deposed him, four and a half months into his regime.

The BBC [reports](#) that — in 1957 — the British and American leaders seriously considered attacking the Syrian government using Muslim extremists in Syria as a form of “false flag” attack:

In 1957 Harold Macmillan [then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom] and President Dwight Eisenhower approved a CIA-MI6 plan to stage fake border incidents as an excuse for an invasion by Syria's pro-western neighbours, and then to “eliminate” the most influential triumvirate in Damascus.... More importantly, Syria also had control of one of the main oil arteries of the Middle East, the pipeline which connected pro-western Iraq's oilfields to Turkey.

The report said that once the necessary degree of fear had been created, frontier incidents and border clashes would be staged to provide a pretext for Iraqi and Jordanian military intervention. Syria had to be “made to appear as the sponsor of plots, sabotage and violence directed against neighbouring governments,” the report says. “CIA and SIS should use their capabilities in both the psychological and action fields to augment tension.” That meant operations in Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon, taking the form of “sabotage, national conspiracies and various strong-arm activities” to be blamed on Damascus. The plan called for funding of a “Free Syria Committee” [hmmm ... sounds [vaguely familiar](#)], and the arming of “political factions with paramilitary or other actionist capabilities” within Syria. The CIA and MI6 would instigate internal uprisings, for instance by the Druze [a [Shia Muslim sect](#)] in the south, help to free political prisoners held in the Mezze prison, and stir up the Muslim

Brotherhood in Damascus.

Neoconservatives planned regime change in Syria once again [in 1991](#) (as noted above in the quote from 4-Star General Wesley Clark).

And as the Guardian [reported](#) in 2013:

According to former French foreign minister [Roland Dumas](#), Britain had planned covert action in Syria as early as 2009:

“I was in England two years before the violence in Syria on other business,” he told French television: “I met with top British officials, who confessed to me that they were preparing something in Syria. This was in Britain not in America. Britain was preparing gunmen to invade Syria.”

Leaked emails from the [private intelligence firm Stratfor](#), including notes from [a meeting with Pentagon officials](#), confirmed that as of 2011, US and UK special forces training of Syrian opposition forces was well underway. The goal was to elicit the “collapse” of Assad’s regime “from within.”

In 2009 – the same year former French foreign minister Dumas alleges the British began planning operations in Syria – Assad [refused to sign](#) a proposed agreement with Qatar that would [run a pipeline from the latter’s North field](#), contiguous with Iran’s South Pars field, through Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and on to Turkey, with a view to supply European markets – albeit crucially bypassing Russia. Assad’s rationale was “to protect the interests of [his] Russian ally, which is Europe’s top supplier of natural gas.”

Instead, the following year, Assad pursued negotiations for [an alternative \\$10 billion pipeline plan with Iran](#), across Iraq to Syria, that would also potentially allow Iran to supply gas to Europe from its South Pars field shared with Qatar. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the project was signed in July 2012 – just as Syria’s civil war was spreading to Damascus and Aleppo – and earlier this year Iraq signed a [framework agreement for construction of the gas pipelines](#).

The Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline plan was a “[direct slap in the face](#)” to Qatar’s plans. No wonder Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan, in a failed attempt to bribe Russia to switch sides, told President Vladimir Putin that “whatever regime comes after” Assad, it will be “[completely](#)” [in Saudi Arabia’s hands](#) and will “not sign any agreement allowing any Gulf country to transport its gas across Syria to Europe and compete with Russian gas exports”, according to diplomatic sources. When Putin refused, the Prince vowed military action.

It would seem that contradictory self-serving Saudi and Qatari oil interests are pulling the strings of an equally self-serving oil-focused US policy in Syria, if not the wider region. It is this – the problem of establishing a pliable opposition which the US and its oil allies feel confident will [play ball](#), pipeline-style, in a post-Assad Syria – that will determine the nature of any prospective intervention: not concern for Syrian life.

[Footnote: The U.S. and its allies have toppled [many other governments, as well.](#)]

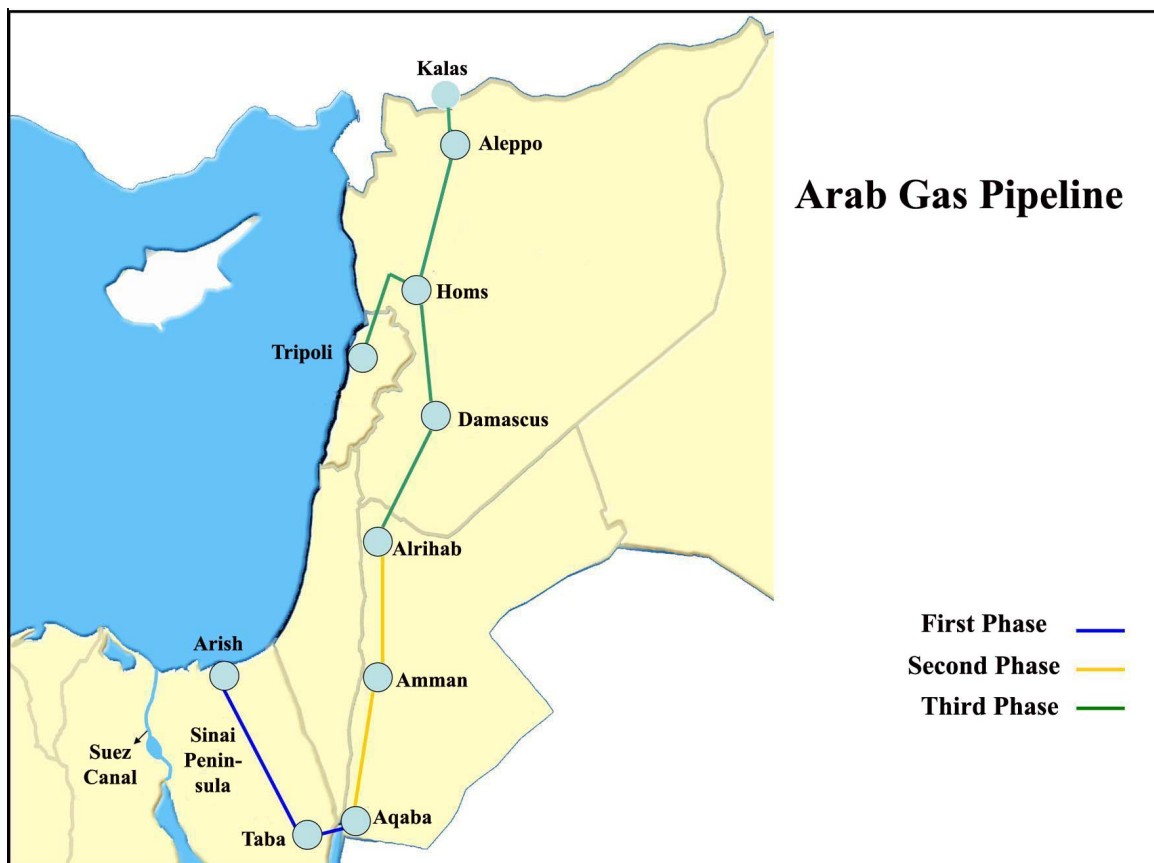
The war in Syria - like Iraq - is largely about oil and gas. International Business Times [noted](#) in 2013:

[Syria] controls one of the largest conventional hydrocarbon resources in the eastern Mediterranean.

Syria possessed 2.5 billion barrels of crude oil as of January 2013, which makes it the largest proved reserve of crude oil in the eastern Mediterranean according to the Oil & Gas Journal estimate.

Syria also has oil shale resources with estimated reserves that range as high as 50 billion tons, according to a Syrian government source in 2010.

Moreover, Syria is a [key chess piece](#) in the pipeline wars. Syria is an [integral part](#) of the proposed 1,200km Arab Gas Pipeline: Here are some [additional graphics](#) courtesy of Adam Curry:



ARAB GAS PIPELINE PROJECT



- THE EGYPTIAN GAS IS CURRENTLY BEING SUPPLIED TO SYRIA
- THE NETWORK OF TURKEY AND SYRIA WILL BE LINKED WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF REMAINING 230 KM.
- FURTHER GAS SUPPLIES MUST BE SECURED BEFORE PROCEEDING WITH SYRIA – TURKEY INTERCONNECTOR



Syria's central role in the Arab gas pipeline is also a key to why it is now being targeted.

Just as the Taliban was scheduled for removal after they demanded too much in return for the Unocal pipeline, Syria's Assad is being targeted because he is not a reliable "player".

Specifically, Turkey, Israel and their ally the U.S. want an assured flow of gas through Syria, and don't want a Syrian regime which is not unquestionably loyal to those 3 countries to

stand in the way of the pipeline ... or which demands too big a cut of the profits.

A deal has also been inked to run a natural gas pipeline [from Iran's giant South Pars field through Iraq and Syria](#) (with a possible extension to Lebanon). And a deal to run petroleum from Iraq's Kirkuk oil field to the Syrian port of Banias has also been approved:



Turkey and Israel would be cut out of these competing pipelines.

Gail Tverberg- an expert on financial aspects of the oil industry - [writes](#):

One of the limits in ramping up Iraqi oil extraction is the limited amount of infrastructure available for exporting oil from Iraq. If pipelines through Syria could be added, this might alleviate part of the problem in getting oil to international markets.

Iran

The U.S. carried out regime change in Iran in 1953 ... which led to radicalization of the country in the first place.

Specifically, the CIA [admits](#) that the U.S. overthrew the moderate, suit-and-tie-wearing, Democratically-elected prime minister of Iran in 1953. (He was overthrown because he had [nationalized Iran's oil](#), which had previously been controlled by BP and other Western oil companies). As part of that action, the CIA [admits](#) that it hired Iranians to pose as Communists and stage bombings in Iran in order to turn the country against its prime minister.

If the U.S. *hadn't* overthrown the moderate Iranian government, the fundamentalist Mullahs would have *never taken over*. Iran has been known for thousands of years for [tolerating Christians and other religious minorities](#).

Hawks in the U.S. government been pushing for *another round* of regime change in Iran [for decades](#).

Libya

Not only did the U.S. engage in direct military intervention against Gaddafi, but also - as [confirmed by a group of CIA officers](#) - *armed Al Qaeda* so that they would help topple Gaddafi.

Emails from Hillary Clinton's email server hint that regime change in Libya [was about oil](#).

Turkey

The CIA has acknowledged that it was behind the [1980 coup in Turkey](#).

The original source of this article is [Washington's Blog and Global Research](#)
Copyright © [Washington's Blog](#), [Washington's Blog and Global Research](#), 2020

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

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Washington's Blog](#)

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