

NATO Proxies Turkey and Saudi Arabia Move to War Footing on Eve of Syrian 'Peace Summit'

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The NATO-backed covert aggression against Syria could be reaching a tipping point for all-out war involving state forces. That should be no surprise. For the past 16 months, NATO and its regional proxies have been steadily increasing the violence and turmoil inside and outside Syria, while the Western corporate-controlled media maintain the ridiculous fiction that the bloody chaos is largely due to the government forces of President Bashar Al Assad cracking down on "peaceful protesters".

Ironically, the crisis is culminating at the same time that the United Nations convenes an emergency summit on Syria in Geneva this weekend. The meeting, which is ostensibly aimed at "reviving the Kofi Annan peace plan", will be attended by the five permanent members of the UN security council and other "invited" regional states. The irony is that leading NATO members, the US, Britain and France, as well as their Turkish and Arab allies who will also be attending the crisis conference, are the very parties that have deliberately created the precipice for all-out war in the Middle East.

As dignitaries fly into Geneva to "salvage peace in Syria", there is a lockstep military build-up on the northern and southern flanks of Syria underway, with news that Turkey has dispatched battlefield tanks, missile batteries and heavy artillery to its Syrian border, while to the south Saudi Arabia has announced that its military forces have been put on a "state of high alert".

Ankara's military mobilization along its 800km land border with Syria came within hours of the declaration by Turkey's prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan slating Syria as "a hostile state". The immediate cause of the deterioration in relations between the neighbouring countries is the downing of a Turkish fighter jet last week in Syrian territorial waters. Syria claims it was acting in self-defence after the Phantom RF-4E warplane entered its airspace on Friday. Ankara has so far failed to give an explanation for why one of its warplanes was making such a provocative low-flying manoeuvre into Syrian airspace. But the Turkish government has announced that any move by Syrian armed forces towards its border will be viewed as another "hostile act" that it will respond to. How's that for a provocative tether? Especially towards a country that is being attacked by armed groups crossing over its border with Turkey.

Meanwhile, on the same day that Turkey is militarizing along its border with Syria, Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah makes an unprecedented announcement putting his armed forces on high alert "due to the tense situation in the Middle East". Using vague and contrived language, the Saudi ruler warned against "foreign or terrorist attacks" to justify the mobilization of the kingdom's armed forces.

The military pincer movement against Syria tends to support the analysis that the downing of the Turkish fighter jet was a deliberate set-piece scenario designed to furnish a cause for war, or at least a stepping up of the international psy-ops campaign of intimidation against Syria.

It is notable that the circumstances surrounding the shooting down of the warplane have yet to be clarified. The Syrians seem to have firm grounds for acting in the way they did given the provocative conduct of the Turkish fighter jet. And there is an onus on the Ankara government to give some explanation for the unusual military manoeuvre, especially in the light of claims that the aircraft was on a reconnaissance mission on behalf of anti-Assad forces on the ground in Syria. Yet almost reflexively, before details have been established about the incident, Turkey has moved on to a war footing. Equally telling is that Saudi Arabia, a key ally of Ankara in opposition to Syria, has simultaneously moved also on to a war footing – without any substantive grounds for such a mobilization.

Some informed analysts have said that the Turkish-Saudi pincer on Syria is more aimed at intensifying the psy-ops pressure on Bashar Al Assad to cave in and relinquish power. Hisham Jaber, director of the Beirut-based Center for Middle East Studies, told Press TV that Ankara and Riyadh will balk at an all-out war with Syria because both are well aware that any such conflict will bring in Iran, Russia and China in support of their ally in Damascus.

Nonetheless, there is an ineluctable logic towards all-out war. Ever since the armed insurrection by foreign mercenaries was instigated in Syria's southern town of Deraa in mid-March 2011, Turkey and Saudi Arabia have played key roles in fomenting the covert campaign of aggression to overthrow the Assad government – a campaign that is authored by leading NATO members, the US, Britain and France. The division of labour is such that Turkey has supplied land bases to organize the mercenaries from Libya, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Iraq; while Saudi Arabia provides the money – up to \$100 million – to buy weapons and pay wages for the soldiers of fortune; and ultimately it is Washington, London and Paris that are calling the tactical shots in the NATO war plan on Syria.

As several other commentators have pointed out, this war plan is aimed at asserting Western capitalist hegemony in the oil-rich Middle East and Central Asia regions. Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria are part of an overarching bid for “full-spectrum dominance” that will eventually target, overtly, Iran, Russia and China.

It is this crucial wider context of war-making by the waning capitalist powers that underscores the gravity of the military build-up inside and outside Syria. The dynamic for war has a compelling, nefarious logic – as the history of world wars testifies.

Which makes the Geneva “crisis conference” this weekend appear all the more ludicrous. In attendance are the US, Britain, France, Turkey and the Gulf Arab monarchical states of Kuwait and Qatar. All are professing to support a peaceful solution in Syria even though all the above are funnelling weapons, logistics and personnel to wage a brutal, terrorist assault on that country – an assault that has now led to the precipice of all-out regional war.

Also attending the UN conference are secretary general Ban Ki-moon and the UN/Arab League special envoy to Syria, Kofi Annan. The UN and the Arab League and these two figureheads in particular have shown themselves to be willing dupes to NATO's war of aggression on Syria, and beyond, by indulging in the charade that the Western powers are “supporting peace” instead of denouncing them as “supporting war”. Significantly, the UN

and Annan have not invited Iran to attend the conference as a result of US pressure. How provocative is that? Iran clearly has vital interests at stake given its proximity and geopolitical threats from the encroaching war on its Syrian ally.

The other ghost missing from the feast in Geneva this weekend is Saudi Arabia. The omission of Saudi Arabia should not be seen as some kind of consolation to Syrian and Iranian sensibilities, but rather as a way of shielding the House of Saud from embarrassment. Considering the incendiary role of Saudi Arabia in Syria, and possibly the region's conflagration, the Saudi rulers should be summoned to a top seat at the "peace summit" - to face the most withering questions about their warmongering, criminal interference in a neighbouring state.

Then, using Nuremburg principles, prosecutors should proceed to arraign the rulers in Riyadh along with their accomplices in Washington, London, Paris and Ankara.

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