

Proxy War in Syria Threatens Catastrophe for the Middle East

By [Shamus Cooke](#)

Global Research, January 30, 2012
30 January 2012

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

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

In an effort to undermine Iran by overthrowing its strategic ally, Syria, western nations are using their Middle East client states to conduct a multi-pronged attack against Syria through the media, the Arab League, the United Nations and now through military proxy forces. This fact is widely recognized by many mainstream western media sources. For example, the well-connected pro-western magazine, the Economist, casually states:

“Iran and Russia aide the [Syrian government] regime; Saudi Arabia and Turkey favor the rebels... Left alone, the rival camps will fuel a worsening conflict that could destabilize the entire region.” (January 28, 2012).

Of course Saudi Arabia and Turkey are key U.S. allies. Saudi Arabia doesn't sneeze until first consulting its U.S. ambassador.

A grouping of U.S. client states known as the Gulf Cooperation Council — Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, and Bahrain — recently dealt a death blow to the Arab League's monitoring mission in Syria and are now demanding that the UN Security Council take all “necessary measures” — presumably including an invasion — to ensure regime change in Syria, the same diplomatic maneuver that the U.S. and its European partners in NATO used to justify its mass bombing campaign of Libya.

The Gulf Cooperation Council — a grouping of nations with totalitarian monarchies — appears to be pursuing a serious campaign to overthrow the Syrian government. According to The Times of London:

“Saudi Arabia and Qatar have agreed to fund the Syrian opposition, which is struggling to afford weapons in its fight against President Bashar al-Assad, a Syrian dissident has told The Times... [Syrian] opposition figures held a secret meeting with Saudi and Qatar officials after an Arab League meeting in Cairo last weekend. All the Gulf countries [Cooperation Council] decided then to pull their observers from a monitoring mission that has been widely criticized for being toothless.” (January 27, 2012).

When it comes to the so-called Syrian Free Army — the various armed groups inside Syria attacking the Syrian government — U.S. allies are instrumental in arming, funding, and shielding the fighters. It is no coincidence that the Syrian Free Army is strongest on the borders of Turkey, Iraq, Northern Lebanon, and Jordan — areas with strong U.S. alliances. The Asian Times reports:

“In spite of Turkish denials of support, FSA [Free Syrian Army] fighters are exploiting the relative safety they enjoy in southern Turkey to mount attacks against Syrian forces. The

FSA is also alleged to have established bases in northern Lebanon and northern Jordan, regions that have similarly witnessed an influx in Syrian refugees.” (December 20, 2011).

In fact, Turkey hosted the initial meetings of the pro-western, anti-Syria government opposition group, The Syrian National Council, which enjoys tremendous support by the United States but very little inside of Syria.

Another military proxy force was flown in from the U.S.’ new ally, Libya, as reported by the London Telegraph:

“At the meeting, which was held in Istanbul and included Turkish officials, the Syrians [opposition] requested “assistance” from the Libyan representatives and were offered arms, and potentially volunteers.”

“There is something being planned to send weapons and even Libyan fighters to Syria,” said a Libyan source, speaking on condition of anonymity. “There is a military intervention on the way. Within a few weeks you will see.” (January 29, 2012).

Indeed we have seen!

This is confirmed by the Wall Street Journal: “... [It is] estimated that 300 to 400 Libyans have based themselves in southern Turkey and crossed the border to join Syrians in skirmishes against government forces... Once inside Syria, they [Libyan fighters] fought in two separate skirmishes in an area they said they believed was in Idlib.” (December 20, 2011).

It is widely rumored that the Libyan fighters are the same Islamic extremists that NATO admits it used to attack the Libyan government.

U.S. allies are enlisting the help of Islamic extremists who fight either for cash or for Jihad. Sunni extremists are enlisted in this fight because the Syrian government relies on Shia Muslim support domestically and also externally, since Iran’s regime is largely Shia Muslim and is a key Syrian Ally.

The majority of Muslims in the world care very little about the small differences between Shia and Sunni Islam; only small groups of extremist sects are willing to kill for their unique vision of Islam. But it is precisely these sects that the U.S. and its Middle Eastern allies rely upon as a military and political force in the region. These sects are powerful only because of years of immense financial and military support by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia.

Dating back before the U.S.’ support of Islamic extremists later known as the Taliban against the USSR in Afghanistan, the U.S. and its ally, Saudi Arabia (a Sunni Islam extremist dictatorship), have used extremist proxy forces all over the Middle East as pawns in their geo-political chessboard (Vijay Prashad documents Saudi Arabia’s exporting of Sunni extremism in a chapter of his excellent book, *The Darker Nations*).

One recent example of U.S. backed Sunni extremism is in Iraq, where the United States armed and funded the now-powerful Sunni extremist “Awakening Council” in order to hunt down any Iraqi opposition to the U.S.’ military presence. Now the Awakening Council is being discarded by the Shia majority in Iraq, but the 80,000 plus armed members will not go silently; many of them are rumored to have gone into Syria to further serve their Saudi and

U.S. masters.

The New York Times reported about the recent Sunni extremist trend in Syria:

“In interviews last week, some residents of Homs, including several Christians and Alawites [Shia Muslims], expressed fears that hard-line Sunnis known as Salafis were forming armed groups and stoking violence. Those fears... reflected mounting concerns among secular activists that as the conflict drags on, an Islamist [extremist] presence in some militias was giving the uprising an increasingly sectarian character. The tensions played out this week between secular and Islamist activists, with the Islamists pushing to name the weekly Friday protests “Al Jihad,” ...” (January 28, 2012).

The article also explains that much of the violence in Syria is not due to the Syrian government gunning down un-armed protesters, but responding instead to the violent attacks from these armed groups.

The above Asian Times article also commented on the Sunni extremist trend mounting against the Syrian government from northern Lebanon, a country which contains some key U.S. allies:

“Prominent radical Salafist [Sunni] clerics in Tripoli [Lebanon], including Dai al-Islam al-Shahhal, have called on Syrian Sunnis to join the uprising against the Ba’athist [Syrian] regime... Lebanon’s US- and Saudi-aligned “March 14 Alliance” (which includes former Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri’s Sunni-dominated Future Movement) is in the forefront of organizing anti-Syrian [government] activities in Lebanon.”

Fanning sectarian flames in Syria is especially dangerous. Like Iraq, Syria has a complex make-up of ethnic and religious groups that, if armed and manipulated, could easily lead to another Iraqi-style humanitarian tragedy. But the U.S. and its allies know no other form of intervention; divide and rule is a very effective way to overthrow a government. What the U.S. and its allies have not fully considered is whether they can confine the potential devastation to Syria.

Iran and Russia have a huge stake in the Syrian government’s survival; Russia has freely admitted to recently sending \$550 million worth of fighter jets to Syria, while also sending Russian battle ships as a deterrent to a foreign invasion. As the proxy war lumbers on, further foreign intervention — money and arms — on both sides will increase; the interfering nations will thus become more “invested” in the conflict, increasing the urge to protect their investments, possibly pulling them directly into the war.

Tensions in the Middle East have already reached explosive levels. The U.S. and its allies careless attitude in provoking a possible regional war seems more than a little mad. But this insanity has a logical basis; the declining economic power of the United States has forced it to rely on its military might as it battles China and Russia for global economic/political supremacy. The U.S.’ activity in Afghanistan, Iraq, and now Libya is pushing Russia and Iran to take a more confrontational stance in stopping the spread of U.S. client states in the region. Syria is thus a global proxy battleground in a larger series of events that now directly threatens the entire Middle East, and possibly beyond.

Shamus Cooke is a social worker, trade unionist, and writer for Workers Action (www.workerscompass.org)

References

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/gulf-states-to-fund-struggling-resistance-fighters/story-e6frg6so-1226254713240>

http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/ML20Ak02.html

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/8917265/Libyas-new-rulers-offer-weapons-to-Syrian-rebels.html>

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204791104577108073328172622.html>

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/28/world/middleeast/violence-rises-sharply-in-syria-flustering-arab-league-monitors.html?_r=1

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Shamus Cooke](#), Global Research, 2012

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

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Shamus Cooke](#)

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