

Since 9-11 America's Insane Foreign Policy — Continued Under Obama — Has Killed a Million and Created ISIS

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These are the US-NATO led wars which are upheld by the media as peace-keeping operations. Double standards with regard to the media's coverage of the Ukraine crisis.

Why does American policy abroad strengthens groups like ISIS.

Thirteen years ago [in relation to date of publication], a draft dodger from Texas stood on a pile of rubble in New York City and promised, "The people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon." Of course, the people who flew the planes into the World Trade Center could not hear anybody, as their remains were buried in the rubble beneath Bush's feet. And our government's extraordinary relationship with one of the world's last and most brutal absolute monarchies ensured that any accomplices still in the U.S. were quickly flown home to Saudi Arabia before the crime could be investigated. In 2003, [Bush meekly complied](#) with Al-Qaeda's most concrete demand, that he withdraw U.S. forces from military bases in Saudi Arabia.

A month after September 11, Donald Rumsfeld stood at a podium in front of a \$2 billion B-2 bomber at Whiteman AFB in Missouri and [addressed the aircrews of the 509th Bomber Wing](#), before they took off across the world to wreak misdirected vengeance on the people of Afghanistan. Rumsfeld told them, "We have two choices. Either we change the way we live, or we must change the way they live. We choose the latter. And you are the ones who will help achieve that goal."

Since then, the United States has launched [more than 94,000 air strikes](#), mostly on Afghanistan and Iraq, but also on Libya, Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. Rumsfeld's plan has undoubtedly achieved his goal of changing the way people live in those countries, [killing a million of them](#) and reducing tens of millions more to lives of disability, disfigurement, dislocation, grief and poverty.

A sophisticated propaganda campaign has politically justified 13 years of systematic U.S. war crimes, exploiting the only too human failing that George Orwell examined in his 1945 essay, "[Notes on Nationalism](#)." As Orwell wrote, "The nationalist not only does not disapprove of atrocities committed by his own side, but he has a remarkable capacity for

not even hearing about them.” Orwell listed “[torture](#), the use of [hostages](#), [forced labor](#), [mass deportations](#), [imprisonment without trial](#), [forgery](#), [assassination](#), the [bombing of civilians](#).” The U.S. has committed all these atrocities in the past 13 years, and Americans have responded exactly as the “nationalists” Orwell described.

But some of the horrors of the U.S. invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan found their way into the conscience of millions of newly war-wise Americans, and President Obama was elected on a “peace” platform and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. To the deep disappointment of his former supporters, Obama has overseen [the largest military budget since WWII](#); an [eight-fold increase](#) in drone strikes; special forces operations in at least [134 countries](#), twice as many as under Bush; and a massive increase in the special forces night raids or “manhunts” originally launched by Rumsfeld in Iraq in 2003, which increased from 20 in Afghanistan in May 2009 to [1,000 per month by April 2011](#), killing [the wrong people most of the time](#) according to senior officers.

Like Eisenhower after Korea and other Presidents after Vietnam, Obama turned to methods of regime change and power projection that would avoid the political liabilities of sending young Americans to invade other countries. But the innovations of Obama’s doctrine of covert and proxy war have only spread America’s post-9/11 empire of chaos farther and wider, from Ukraine to Libya to the seas around China. Covert wars are no secret to their victims, and the consequences can be just as dire. The U.S. dropped [more tonnage of bombs](#) in its secret war on Cambodia than it dropped on Japan in WWII. As Cambodia imploded in an orgy of genocide, [the CIA’s director of operations](#) explained that Khmer Rouge recruiting “has been most effective among refugees subjected to B-52 strikes.”

As Western politicians and media breathlessly follow the escalation of U.S. bombing in Iraq, they neglect to mention, or maybe haven’t even heard as Orwell suggested, that Obama has already launched more than 24,000 air strikes, [mostly in Afghanistan](#), with the same results as in Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia and Iraq, killing thousands of people and making implacable enemies of millions more. These air strikes are an integral component of Obama’s covert war doctrine, but they are only covert in the sense that they are unreported.

In Libya, the U.S. and its NATO allies launched [7,700 air strikes](#) in a war that killed [at least 25,000 people](#) and plunged the country into endless chaos. NATO’s illusory and short-lived success in Libya led to [airlifts of weapons and fighters](#) to Turkey, where British special forces provided training and the CIA infiltrated fighters into Syria to try and duplicate the overthrow and butchering of Gaddafi.

The sobering experience of watching a CIA operation in Afghanistan in the 1980s lead to the crime of the new century in New York on September 11 should have led U.S. officials to reject new alliances with Islamist jihadis. But the Obama doctrine embraced the use of Islamist militias to destabilize Libya, providing them with weapons, equipment, training and air support. Leadership on the ground came from [Qatar’s mercenary “special forces,”](#) many of whom are [veterans of the Pakistani military](#) and its ISI intelligence agency, which works with the Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan. These Qatari special forces are part of the Libyan template that was transposed onto Syria, where they embedded with the al-Nusra Front. They and/or [their Turkish allies](#) probably trained al-Nusra in the use of chemical weapons for the “false flag” attack that almost triggered another U.S. bombing campaign in 2013.

With U.S. support, [Qatar spent \\$3 billion](#) and flew 70 planeloads of weapons to Turkey to support its proxies in Syria, while its regional rival Saudi Arabia sent volunteers and convicts, and paid for [weapons shipments from Croatia to Jordan](#). Wealthy Gulf Arabs paid [up to \\$2,000 per day](#) to hardened mercenaries from the Balkans and elsewhere. As first al-Nusra and then ISIS established themselves as the dominant rebel group, they absorbed the bulk of the fighters and weapons that the U.S. and its allies poured into the country.

The chaos that Obama's doctrine of covert and proxy war has wreaked in Libya, Syria and Iraq should be a reminder of one of the obvious but unlearned lessons of September 11, that creating and arming groups of religious fanatics as proxies to fight secular enemies has huge potential for blowback and unintended consequences as they gain power and escape external control. Once these forces were unleashed in Syria, where they had limited local support but powerful external backers, the stage was set for a long and bloody conflict. But the U.S. and its allies, the U.K., France, Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, were so committed that [they schemed](#) to undermine Kofi Annan's 2012 peace plan and pledged ever more support, funding and weapons to the rebels as the conflict escalated into a full-blown civil war.

The current view of ISIS (or ISIL or IS) in Western media and political debate is distorted by a dangerous confluence of interests between Western propaganda and ISIS' own public relations in playing up its strength and its atrocities. On the other hand, when the U.S. and its allies downplayed the role of ISIS in Syria and pretended to be funding and arming only "moderate" forces, this allowed ISIS to quietly gain strength and eliminate its rivals. So Western propaganda has effectively helped ISIS at every turn.

This reckless pattern in Western propaganda extends back to the origins of ISIS. When the original leader of its precursor, Al-Qaeda in Iraq, the "terrorist mastermind" Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, was crowned as America's new public enemy in Iraq in 2004, U.S. military intelligence officers [explained his propaganda value](#) to Adrian Blomfield of the U.K.'s Daily Telegraph as follows:

We were basically paying up to \$10,000 a time to opportunists, criminals and chancers who passed off fiction and supposition about Zarqawi as cast-iron fact, making him out as the linchpin of just about every attack in Iraq... Back home this stuff was gratefully received and formed the basis of policy decisions. We needed a villain, someone identifiable to latch on to, and we got one.

After Zarqawi's death in 2006, Al-Qaeda in Iraq was rebranded as the Islamic State of Iraq, but it continued to fulfill the same function in U.S. propaganda, helping to paint the Iraqi Resistance as dangerous, bloodthirsty religious fanatics rather than people legitimately and bravely resisting the illegal invasion and occupation of their country. The Bush administration claimed that ISI was responsible for 15% of violent incidents in Iraq, but this was debunked by a [Congressional Research Service investigation](#) in 2007, which held ISI responsible for only 2% of violent incidents. Of course, all such analyses completely ignored the far greater violence of U.S. air-strikes, night-raids and other uses of excessive and indiscriminate force in Iraq, as well as the the root cause of all the violence, the U.S. invasion and occupation itself.

As the Western- and Arab royalist-backed proxy war took hold in Syria in 2012, the rump of ISI, which had been reduced to as few as 1,000 men under arms in Iraq, found a new lease

on life. In March 2013, when rebels led by the al-Nusra Front [captured Raqqa](#), a provincial capital with a population of 220,000, ISIS took control of the provincial and local government. Raqqa was once the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate that stretched from North Africa to Central Asia in the ninth century, so it serves both a symbolic and practical role as the capital of ISIS's new caliphate or Islamic State.

Now that ISIS is once again fighting in Iraq as well as Syria, we have come full circle and Western propaganda and ISIS itself have again found common cause in exaggerating its strength and highlighting its brutality. But its true role in Iraq and its relationship with other Resistance forces there is ambiguous. The gains of Resistance forces, now spearheaded by ISIS, are the result of a political crisis that has been brewing ever since the U.S. invasion. The sectarian Maliki government politically and economically marginalized the mainly Sunni Arab areas of northern and western Iraq, and its security forces have dealt with dissent and political demands from these areas with utter brutality.

Part of the [U.S. response to resistance in Iraq](#) was to recruit, train and direct Iraqi death squads, mostly from the Badr Brigades Shia militia. It unleashed these forces in a reign of terror in Baghdad in 2005 and 2006, torturing and killing tens of thousands of mainly Sunni Arab men and boys and ethnically cleansing most of the city. Deputy Interior Minister and Badr Brigade commander Adnan al-Asadi, who oversaw that campaign, remains in office today and has run the Interior Ministry while the formal position of Interior Minister has remained vacant for years on end. The forces he commands, originally called the Special Police, were rebranded the National Police after their al-Jadiriya torture center was exposed in November 2005, and then rebranded again as the Federal Police, but these are the same forces that have terrorized Sunni Arabs and other minorities and dissidents in Iraq since the darkest days of the U.S. occupation. The Interior Ministry has responded to the current crisis with a new upsurge in [death squad activity](#).

During the Arab Spring in 2011, [Iraqis took to the streets](#), held rallies and set up protest camps like their counterparts across the Arab world to protest their repressive, sectarian government. They were met by security forces sealing off public squares, arrests, beatings, torture, snipers firing from roof-tops and U.S. helicopters flying over to dump garbage on a protest camp in a square in Mosul.

[A new round of protests](#) broke out on December 21st 2012 after security forces raided the home of a popular Sunni politician, Finance Minister Rafi al-Issawi, and arrested his staff and bodyguards. Dr. al-Issawi was the director of Fallujah Hospital during the two U.S. Marine massacres in 2004 and a vocal opponent of Prime Minister Maliki, and he had already survived an assassination attempt a year earlier. Three weeks after the arrest of his bodyguards, he survived another bomb attack.

Within two weeks, protests shut down major highways near Fallujah and Ramadi, and spread to at least 13 other cities, from Nasiriyah in the south to Kirkuk in the north, while tribal delegations from all over the country traveled to Fallujah and Ramadi to support the main protests. Government security forces responded with typical brutality, opening fire on protesters in Mosul and Fallujah. On January 25, they killed seven protesters and wounded 70 in Fallujah. Tribal leaders in Anbar issued a joint declaration that they would launch jihad against government forces if the killers were not brought to justice, but protests remained mainly peaceful, even as government forces killed more protesters.

In March 2013, Dr. Issawi and Izz al-Din al-Dawla, the Minister of Agriculture, resigned from

the government, and Bunyan al-Obeidi, a protest leader in Kirkuk, was killed by a government death squad. In April, after an Army officer was killed in Hawija, near Kirkuk, [the government besieged Hawija](#) and at least 56 people were killed in armed clashes between the residents and government forces. Peaceful protests gradually gave way to armed resistance across the north and west of Iraq. The government banned 10 satellite TV channels, including Al-Jazeera, to censor news of the uprising. In May 2013, the UN reported the highest monthly death toll in Iraq in 5 years, with hundreds of people killed. By the end of the year, the UN estimated that 7,818 civilians and over 1,000 Army and Interior Ministry troops had been killed.

On Dec. 28, 2013, government forces raided the home of Ahmed al-Alwani, a Member of Parliament from Ramadi, killing his brother and 5 of his guards. Two days later, the government sent in Federal Police commandos to destroy the Ramadi protest camp, and 10 protesters and three police commandos were killed. Forty Sunni members of Parliament resigned, and a general tribal uprising forced Army and Interior Ministry forces to withdraw from Fallujah and Ramadi.

Over the next few days, hundreds of ISIS fighters appeared in Fallujah, Ramadi and around Anbar province, and formed a sometimes uneasy alliance with other Iraqi resistance groups and tribal leaders. As in Syria, they have come to dominate and lead the uprising that has swept through western and northern Iraq in the past nine months. ISIS' main allies have been secular ex-Baathist military officers, still under the umbrella of the Baath Party and formally headed by General [Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri](#), now aged 72; and tribal leaders led by [Ali Hatem al-Suleiman](#) of Anbar's Dulaim tribe and the Anbar Tribes Revolutionary Council. Douri eventually announced a split with ISIS in July 2014 after it launched an ethnic cleansing campaign against Christians in Mosul, but this has only led to a few localized clashes between ISIS and other resistance forces.

Suleiman has claimed that ISIS fighters make up only 5-7% of Resistance fighters in Iraq, and that the resistance could oust ISIS from regions it controls. But he has said it will not do so until government forces withdraw from northern and western Iraq and a political transition grants civil and political rights denied to the people of these regions. Another tribal leader from Anbar, Abu Muhammad al-Zubaa'i, echoed Suleiman's claims in [an interview two weeks ago](#). Zubaa'i told the BBC's Jim Muir, "We don't want guns from the Americans, we want a real political solution, which the U.S. should impose on those people it installed in the Green Zone. The IS problem would end. If they guarantee us this solution, we'll guarantee to get rid of IS."

Zubaa'i described a clash at Garma, near Fallujah, that killed 16 ISIS fighters, but added, "We had to choose between a comprehensive confrontation with IS, or ceding control of that area and keeping a low profile. We decided to stand down because we are not ready to fight IS in the current circumstances—who would we be fighting for? On the daily bombing of Fallujah and other cities by the Iraqi air force, with heavy civilian casualties, Zubaa'i said, "Our biggest concern now is a political solution. A security solution will achieve nothing. The bombing has to stop."

These tribal leaders claim to represent 90% of Sunni-majority tribes in Iraq. They have tried to approach U.S. officials, but without any response. Zubaa'i sees the options facing the U.S. as a stark choice between solidly supporting a genuine political transition and fueling an out-of-control spiral of violence, "If things stay the same, a new generation will emerge, beyond the control of the U.S. or Iran or Syria—hundreds of thousands of young men will join

up with IS.”

President Obama’s bombing campaign to support a repressive, sectarian government and Kurdish separatists will reduce more Iraqi cities to rubble, kill thousands more civilians and turn ISIS into the unstoppable monster that Zubaai predicts. But, as he says, the President still has another choice. He can provide full diplomatic and political support for a legitimate political transition in Iraq that would honor the civil and political rights of all Iraqis. This could begin to solve the long-running political crisis caused by the U.S. invasion, which has led millions of Iraqis to see an alliance with ISIS as a lesser evil than submission to the brutal U.S.- and Iranian-backed regime in the Green Zone.

Like the crisis in Iraq, every part of the current crisis in U.S. foreign policy is amenable to serious diplomacy. We are on the verge of a diplomatic solution to the [phony crisis](#) over Iran’s non-existent nuclear weapons program. There is global consensus on ending the Israeli occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, with only the United States clinging to its [effective support](#) for a territorial expansion that the world will never recognize. The [framework for a peace process](#) in Syria was agreed on in Geneva on June 30, 2012, more than two years ago, but stalled as the U.S. and its allies reintroduced their precondition that President Assad must resign first. The coup regime in Ukraine and its Western backers may finally be ready to accept [long-standing Russian proposals](#) for a political and diplomatic resolution based on regional autonomy and international neutrality. And ISIS’s allies in Iraq are offering to “get rid of” it in exchange only for the basic civil and political rights that the U.S. promised them when it invaded their country.

But as [Robert Parry noted recently](#), there’s an “old woman who swallowed a fly” quality to neoconservative U.S. foreign policy. The proposed solution to any U.S. foreign-policy failure is always some kind of escalation, invariably leading to an even more dangerous crisis. Instead of developing more rational policy goals in response to their overreaching and failures, neoconservative policymakers instead keep doubling down to take on more powerful adversaries and risk even greater disasters. Thus a failed CIA coup in 1996 and the impending collapse of the UN sanctions regime led to the invasion and destruction of Iraq; the U.S. defeat in Iraq led to targeting Syria and Iran; and Russia’s role in Syria led to a U.S.-led coup in Ukraine and a U.S.-Russian confrontation that has raised the specter of nuclear war: “There was an old lady who swallowed a horse. She died of course.”

The U.S. propaganda system presents Americans with a looking-glass view of the world, in which our “shining city on a hill” is a bastion of peace, democracy and prosperity, while the rest of the world is a dreadful mess riven by endless crises and insoluble problems. The dirty little secret that our propaganda system cannot mention is that the current crises are all deeply rooted in U.S. policy. At this point in our history, most of those roots lead back to the fateful decision to respond to a mass murder in New York City with 94,000 air strikes, an opportunistic global military expansion and a doubling of the military budget. So Zubaai’s plea for Iraq echoes through the larger crisis in U.S. foreign policy, “Our biggest concern now is a political solution. A security solution will achieve nothing. The bombing has to stop.”

Nicolas J. S. Davies is the author of “Blood On Our Hands: The American Invasion and Destruction of Iraq.” Davies also wrote the chapter on “Obama At War” for the book, “Grading the 44th President: A Report Card on Barack Obama’s First Term as a Progressive Leader.”

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