

Washington's Machiavellian Game in Syria

By [F. William Engdahl](#)

Global Research, February 18, 2016

[New Eastern Outlook](#) 17 February 2016

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

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

Image. F. William Engdahl

*One of my often-cited sayings is around 2,500 years old. It's from the respected Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu in his small masterpiece, *The Art of War*. For centuries it's been one of the most influential strategy writings not only in Asia, but also the Western world. It goes as follows:*

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle. — Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

In geopolitical analysis, when I examine a major political or economic development, it's very important that I first look into myself, to feel if I'm blurring my analysis because of deep-felt personal wishes for a peaceful, more harmonious world, blurring the reality of a given nation or groups of nations. Similarly, if I take those malevolent patriarchs who dominate American and NATO policies today, I must be certain I know, not merely the surface of what an American President or Secretary of State might say on a given day. It can be a lie, a slick maneuver or it can be even honest. The work of any serious analyst is to sort out which it is, to go deeper, to "mine" the lode in order to see the real strategic implications.

Such is the case with finding out what is the real Washington policy—the economic and foreign policy today. For example, what is the real meaning and purpose behind the journey of the 92-year-old Henry Kissinger to Moscow to meet Vladimir Putin and others recently? What's the real purpose of John Kerry when he appears to follow a policy more friendly towards Russia than, say, his Assistant Secretary Victoria Nuland or Secretary of Defense Ash Carter? Is it the voice of a significant faction within the foreign policy establishment that genuinely seeks a shift in Washington policy with Moscow from confrontation and war towards detente, diplomacy and a policy of peace and economic cooperation? What's the real intent of the Roman Pope in wanting to come together with the Orthodox Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, the first such meeting between those two churches—east and west—since the Great Schism of 1054? Is that a positive step towards world peace or is it something ominous?

Washington: confusion or deception?

It's a widespread notion, fostered by US and European mainstream and other media, even by media in Russia and China that Washington is in confused disarray, a Superpower or hegemon which has lost its bearings. Media analysts write of a policy clash or internal

factional battle that renders any US action in destroying DAESH or ISIS in Syria and Iraq a ludicrous, bumbling joke.

From years of looking at US foreign policy, I've learned to bring a certain respect in to my assessment. The respect is not at all admiration but an appreciation that, after all, the world's most powerful Superpower did not come to that position of power without extraordinary skills, cunning, a remarkable ability to lie convincingly, to deceive, to very precisely manipulate the weaknesses of their opponents.

That deception has been the hallmark of American foreign policy for the entire post-1945 period, as towards the Soviet Union of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1989, when Gorbachev trusted his American interlocutors who solemnly promised that the West would never advance NATO to the East. The deception is the hallmark of US economic policies since Bretton Woods in 1944 established the Dollar as supreme, and which destroyed any potential challenge to the domination of the US dollar as reserve currency—the most strategic of the American pillars of power aside from that of the US military.

Some years ago I was told by a former West Point officer that the cadets of West Point who go on to become America's future colonels, generals and military strategists, are steeped in Sun Tzu as well as in Italian Renaissance diplomat Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*, which teaches "the employment of cunning and duplicity in statecraft or in general conduct."

In international politics, it's unwise to believe your enemy is stupid. It can be fatal. Mistakes, of course, they continuously make, only to re-program and correct or push on another front in their obsession with world power and control.

More useful is to assume they have a well-thought-through strategy behind a veil of Machiavellian lies and deception, rather than to assume stupidity as our operating premise. So, amid a most incredible array of contradictory indications out of Washington, what's going on between the actors in the war against Syria and the entire Middle East today, in February 2016?

Using Russia in Syria

If we look at current US policies in the Middle East, especially in Syria and in Iraq, and assume it is a very well-thought-out strategy to reach a specific, well-defined goal, the situation looks very different.

My current conclusion is that under a smokescreen of apparent policy confusion and incompetence on the side of Washington, of the Pentagon, of the State Department and their backers on Wall Street, there is a carefully-planned strategy to ignite a war in the oil-and-gas-rich Middle East that will dramatically alter the political and geopolitical oil map of the world. Yes, another war about oil like so many of the wars of the last century, a Century of War as one of my books calls it.

The Washington-Wall Street think tanks behind the coming change are orchestrating the actions of state actors in the Middle East who, blinded by their own greed or desire for empire, Ottoman or Saudi, see not that they are falling into a fatal trap.

They apparently haven't studied Sun Tzu, much less, even a thought of such deep themes as knowing themselves and knowing their enemy. They are mostly driven by burning hate, as with Erdogan and his Turkey today—hate for the Syrians, for the Kurds, for the Europeans,

even for the Saudis with whom Erdogan claims to be allied. In Erdogan's Kasbah, everyone has their daggers ready behind their backs.

Washington sets the trap

What can be the true strategy of Washington and their patrons in Wall Street in the present Middle East chaos called the "war to defeat DAESH" or IS?

It's useful to go back to the end of September, 2015 when Russia surprised not only Washington, but the entire world, with the swiftness and effectiveness of its requested military intervention against DAESH and other terror groups destroying Syria.

It's clear from the lack of an effective Washington response, and from subsequent Washington actions, that their policy strategists took time to recalculate their original regime change strategy for Syria. What emerges is the clear evidence that they decided to actually use that Russian military intervention to advance their original strategic plan for the region, much like classical martial arts teaches—use your opponent's force against them. It smacks of Churchill's strategy of luring Hitler into a Polish invasion in 1939 so Britain could declare war on Germany, but waiting until Germany invaded the Soviet Union before seriously acting, the period of so-called Phony War.

Washington has orchestrated events, including the apparent US-Russian accord around the UN Security Council Resolution 2254 of December 18, 2015 that led to Geneva III "peace" talks. The Geneva III talks were sabotaged from the outset by Washington's control of the UN "peace" mediators, including US diplomat, now UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffery D. Feltman, and his subordinate, Staffan de Mistura, the Machiavellian United Nations Envoy to Syria and the Arab League. Washington acceded to Saudi demands that the large Syrian Kurdish minority, who are in the firing lines of DAESH in Syria, be excluded, and that Syrian "opposition" be determined by the oil-hungry Saudis.

Now, following the Munich talks of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) on February 12, co-chaired by Kerry and Lavrov, Russia and the USA have on paper agreed that, "cessation of hostilities will commence in one week, after confirmation by the Syrian government and opposition, following appropriate consultations in Syria." Further, "The members of the ISSG reaffirmed that it is for the Syrian people to decide the future of [Syria](#)."

Now there are two points that I find flashing red. The "cessation of hostilities" means that Russian highly-effective air support to the Syrian National Army and Hezbollah and other pro-Assad forces will stop or be significantly reduced at a critical point. Russian parliamentarians claim cessation will not apply to the areas around Aleppo controlled by DAESH or Al-Nusra Front, but that remains to be [seen](#). In either case it is a trap.

That ceasefire will happen just as Syrian forces, backed by Russia are on the brink of a major victory in Aleppo, breaking the DAESH supply lines to Erdogan's Turkey, the patron of DAESH along with the Saudi monarchy. Second, there is no demand that DAESH or Al-Nusra cease "hostilities." That means Russia has agreed to stop support of Assad but DAESH is no party to the deal, leaving it free to rearm with Turkish and Saudi support. Now the plot thickens and gets very dangerous.

Janus-faced Washington

Washington policy—the policy of the USA military-industrial complex and their Wall Street bankers—has in no way changed. That’s clear. I find no convincing evidence to the contrary. They plan to destroy Syria as a functioning nation, to finish the destruction of Iraq begun in 1991, and to spread that destruction now to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to Turkey, and across the entire oil and gas-rich Middle East. They are simply using other means to that end given the “game-changing” presence of Russia since September 30.

While State Secretary John Kerry was working the “soft cop” routine with Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in the run-up to the February 12 Munich talks, on February 10 a Pentagon spokesman falsely accused the Russian military of hitting two hospitals in Aleppo, even though, by prior agreement, it was US aircraft that operated over the city on that day. The US Pentagon spokesman, Colonel Steve Warren, charged that Russian aircraft in Syria were using “dumb” bombs, “indiscriminately scattering those bombs across populated areas regardless of whether those populated areas have women and children, civilians or hospitals,” charges denied by [Moscow](#).

Two days later in Munich, Lavrov, on behalf of Moscow, apparently compromised on its offer to impose a ceasefire in three weeks and instead accepted one week, a potentially devastating setback for the near-victory of the Syrian National Army forces to retake Aleppo and seal the Turkey DAESH supply route. It’s interesting that that decision came only nine days after Henry Kissinger met with Putin in Moscow. We may never know if there was a connection. Then on February 12, Vladimir Dzhubarov, first deputy chairman of the committee for international affairs at the Federation Council, told TASS that the areas still occupied by terrorists such as DAESH and Al-Nusra were not covered by the Munich ceasefire.

The Pentagon is also quietly putting “boots on the ground” in Iraq. War jargon in Washington has become so dehumanized in the era of drone warfare that we no longer speak of the soldiers, merely their “boots.” They are preparing a major military move in Syria whether through Turkish and Saudi proxies or direct, or both, despite the nice sounding words about humanitarian aid and UN supervised Syrian elections in 18 months. At the same time, US military veterans are preparing the propaganda in the US for a ten-year siege before the US could drive the last DAESH terrorist out of the oil-rich Mosul, the heart of north Iraqi oil production.

On January 22 in an interview with CNBC Defense Secretary Ash Carter stated that the US intends to defeat Islamic State’s greatest strongholds: the northern Iraqi city of Mosul and the IS “capital” Raqqa, in Syria.

“We’re looking for opportunities to do more and there will be boots on the ground, and I want to be clear about that. But it’s a strategic question whether you are enabling local forces to take and hold rather than trying to substitute for them,” Carter said. “We’re prepared to do a great deal because we have the finest fighting force the world has ever seen. We can do a lot ourselves,” Carter [said](#).

The US says it has already sent 50 special operations forces to northern Syria to gather intelligence and maintain contacts with local forces. “It is a keyhole through which one gets a lot of insight, and thereby allows us more effectively to bring the huge weight of coalition military power to bear on the battlefield in an effective way,” he stated. A leading Russian Duma parliamentarian, Vladimir Soloyvov, head of the Russian parliament’s Foreign Relations Committee, dismisses Carter’s statements as a Washington publicity move to

“steal thunder in fighting terrorism in the Middle East,” a sign that some at least in the Russian policy establishment do not really know their [enemy](#).

A spreading world war

I’m going to make a prediction which you can verify as accurate or, hopefully, not. In about two months I estimate, around late March or April it will be clear. The US Machiavellians have lured not only Turkey’s Erdogan and Saudi Arabia’s Prince Salman, but now Moscow into their trap in the Middle East. The initial losers in this unfolding deadly game will be Saudi, Turkey, Syria, Iraq and likely Russia. The ultimate losers, eventually, will also be the American Patriarchs or oligarchs behind these incessant wars of destruction, but not immediately, short of a miracle.

Look carefully at the little-reported statements in recent days of two key Washington war actors—Joe Biden and John Kerry. On January 24, Vice President Joe Biden, the one who orchestrated the US coup d’ etat in Kiev in February 2014, met with Turkish President and would-be Sultan of a neo-Ottoman imperium, Recep Erdogan. Biden told Erdogan and Prime Minister Davutoglu that Washington wanted Turkey and Iraq to “coordinate” on an emerging US military plan to take back the Iraqi city of Mosul from DAESH or the so-called Islamic State. An Obama Administration official described the Mosul attack as in “hard-core planning” stages, though not imminent.

The unnamed US “senior” official, most likely Biden, stated that the US is also selecting several hundred Sunni Arabs in Syria, as well as some Turks, who Turkey says its government has identified as “potential fighters,” to help the US close the roughly 60 miles of border with Syria that remains under Islamic State control. The source added that Washington is hoping to finalize a package in coming weeks of new technological assistance for Turkey to aid in securing that stretch of border.

Biden also strongly backed Turkey’s fight against the Turkish Kurdish PKK and said that the US would strengthen its military campaign against ISIS if there is no agreement on a political solution in Syria. Joe Biden well knows that Erdogan and Turkish MIT intelligence head, Hakan Fidan fully back DAESH and fully are out to create ethnic cleansing against the Kurds in Turkey, and in Syria. He knows because the CIA worked with Fidan, a US educated Turkish military veteran, at secret Turkish bases over the past two years to train DAESH terrorists in the Washington war against Assad.

If you are beginning to smell a big skunk here, you have a healthy sense of smell.

So now we have Washington and Erdogan bringing undesired US and Turkish troops into Iraq’s Mosul region to prepare a major military operation, with or without the agreement of Iraq’s Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, who has repeatedly and impotently demanded the Turkish army leave Mosul.

Why Mosul?

You may fairly ask, why Mosul? To paraphrase Bill Clinton in his 1992 famous retort to George H.W. Bush, “It’s the oil, stupid.” The US failed operation dubbed Arab Spring, the failed CIA and Obama Administration backing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and across Middle East oil states, and now their operations with Turkey in Mosul and Syria are all about the oil.

This time, however it isn't about taking over the rich oilfields of Iraq and Syria. It's about destroying them. The US-engineered, French-executed destruction of Qaddafi's Libya is the model. Iraq, as Dick Cheney's 2001 Energy Policy Task Force discovered, holds the world's third largest proven conventional oil reserves, on a par with Iran, with Saudi reserves the largest. The area around Mosul and the Kurd-controlled Kirkuk fields nearby are the current focus of the US military strategy. In Syria, DAESH terrorists control most all Syrian oilfields, where they illegally export with aid of Erdogan's family to world markets to finance their terror campaign against Assad's regime.

An ominous wire report sent a shiver down my spine when I read it. On January 28, US Army Lieutenant General Sean MacFarland, head of the US-led coalition against Daesh (ISIL) in Iraq and Syria, said that the US military was on site at the Mosul Dam to assess "the potential" for the collapse. Were it to be blown up, it would send a flood of water down the heavily populated Tigris river valley. "The likelihood of the dam collapsing is something we are trying to determine right now... all we know is when it goes, it's going to go fast and that's bad," MacFarland told reporters in Baghdad. The US State Department estimates up to 500,000 people could be killed and over one million rendered homeless should Iraq's biggest dam [collapse](#).

It would likely flood the large oilfields of Kirkuk on its path, rendering them inoperable. Whoever controls the Mosul Dam, the largest in Iraq, controls most of the country's water and power resource. The dam holds back over 12 billion cubic meters of water that is crucial for irrigation in the farming areas of Iraq's western Nineveh province. In a 2007 letter, US General David Petraeus, a key figure in the destruction of Iraq and in the creation of what became DAESH, warned Iraq's government that "A catastrophic failure of Mosul Dam would result in flooding along the Tigris River all the way to [Baghdad](#)."

Washington Proxy War Builds

Combine this statement by General MacFarland, head of the US-led coalition against Daesh (ISIL) in Iraq and Syria on that Mosul Dam, the Biden talks to get Turkey's military invasion accepted by Iraq "in the war against DAESH" and the encouragement by State Secretary John Kerry of Prince Salman's Saudi war against [Yemen](#), as well as the recent Davos statements by Ash Carter. Add to that the fact that the Saudi and Turkish militaries just announced plans undertake joint military actions to "cooperate against common threats."

On February 13, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu confirmed a joint Turkish-Saudi joint attack plan for invading Syria, telling press, "If we have such a strategy, then Turkey and Saudi Arabia may launch a ground [operation](#)." xvi

Now add to that the fact that Turkish military began shelling a Syrian airbase and village recently retaken by Syrian Kurds, with the argument that the Kurds of Syria were "terrorists" like the Turkish PKK Kurds. Turkish Prime Minister Davutoglu confirmed the cross-border mortar shelling into Syria territory on February 13: "We will retaliate against every step (by the YPG)," he told state broadcaster TRT Haber. "The YPG will immediately withdraw from Azaz and the surrounding area and will not go close to it [again](#)."

Now add the fact that this week Washington repeated that it does not regard the Syrian Kurds as terrorists and that the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) have just opened its first foreign representative office in Moscow and we begin to see the outlines of Washington's strategy of steering heated-up and hated-up Turkey and Saudi Arabia to

trigger Washington's surrogate war, a war where Turkey, a NATO member, Saudi and the Gulf Arab oil states, find themselves in a direct military confrontation with Russia in Aleppo province of Syria. The Turkish shelling at present is clearly a testing of the waters of a war with Russia to see how, in the wake of their ceasefire agreement, they will react. Will Russia retaliate by hitting Turkish military targets, in a NATO country?

Combine all that with the quiet but strategic Pentagon deployments inside Syria and Iraq with "boots on the ground," and we have the combination for an explosion across the oilfields of the entire Middle East that would rock the world. Truly, as the old Greek saying goes, whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad.

I can imagine a disgusted world turning on those American Patriarchs and their proxy partners in war, telling them, to use the words of the great Freddy Mercury song, the one about rocking certain people.

F. William Engdahl is strategic risk consultant and lecturer, he holds a degree in politics from Princeton University and is a best-selling author on oil and geopolitics, exclusively for the online magazine "[New Eastern Outlook](#)".

The original source of this article is [New Eastern Outlook](#)
Copyright © [F. William Engdahl](#), [New Eastern Outlook](#), 2016

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

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [F. William Engdahl](#)

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