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Want to Stop Terrorism? Get Out of the Middle East

By Geoff Davies
6/8/2017

The tragic loss of innocent lives to terrorist acts will not stop until we admit to the folly of current policies.

Lost amid the genuine anguish, the outrage, the media frenzy and the political posturing after each terrorist event in the West is a simple question: “Why are they so angry, these terrorists?”

You don’t really have to look far for an answer.

Western powers have been meddling in the Middle East for a very long time. A few examples will suffice.

In 1953, Britain and the U.S. conspired to overthrow democratically-elected Iranian Prime Minister Mossadegh and replace him with a tyrant — the Shah of Iran. Mossadegh wanted to nationalise a British oil company and reap the profits for Iran. It was Iran’s oil, after all. The Shah was more obliging, and let the flows of profits and cheap oil to the West continue.

We know how well that ended. The Shah’s iron-fisted repression eventually produced a fundamentalist theocratic revolution and a regime since labelled as one of the “axis of evil”.

Saudi Arabia is well-known to be the source of Wahhabism, the fundamentalist Islamic sect that promotes the Sharia law so loathed and dreaded by the likes of Pauline Hanson. Yet Saudi Arabia is an ally of the U.S. and, perforce, of Australia. How come? Well, Saudi Arabia sits on the world’s biggest pool of oil.

Saudi Arabia has also given the world Osama bin Laden and most of the terrorists who brought down the Twin Towers in New York in 2001. Saudi Arabia is widely reputed to be the major,

though unofficial, source of funds supporting Middle Eastern terrorists. So why is Saudi Arabia an ally?

The 2003 invasion of Iraq has been an unmitigated disaster. A recent estimate is that there have been nearly 200,000 civilian deaths in the aftermath. Iraq quickly descended into civil war and anarchy (as widely predicted), the conflict spread into neighbouring Syria and Islamic State, or ISIS, spread out of Syria. The conflict has been the major recruiting incentive to Islamic extremism and terrorism. Assessments to that effect even by our own intelligence agencies are occasionally leaked or mentioned indiscreetly.

The invasion of Iraq was illegal and based on a transparently flimsy allegation that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. It was inflicted by Western governments in the face of clear opposition from their citizens, voiced through polls and the biggest street demonstrations since the Vietnam War era. Even in the U.S. only 50% of the people supported it. It was principally driven by President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, with our own Prime Minister Howard enthusiastically yapping along behind.

The U.S. regularly conducts remote drone assassinations around the world. They were presided over for eight years by the saintly Barack Obama. These regularly kill innocent people, along with the alleged enemy target. That is, if the intelligence supposedly identifying the target is even reliable. Can you argue that death falling unpredictably from the sky is not terrorism?

There are many more terrorist attacks and innocent casualties in the Middle East itself than in Western countries, though only the latter attract a Western media frenzy.

The collapse of Syria into anarchy, which is the source of recent tides of refugees into Europe, was precipitated by a combination of the war in neighbouring Iraq and a prolonged and severe drought, plausibly aggravated by global warming. The latter, of course, is due to burning fossil fuels, including Middle Eastern oil.

Middle Eastern terrorism has been generated or severely aggravated by a century or more of political interference by Western powers for reasons of empire and oil. The oil has been used for the maintenance of Western military and industrial superiority. Even so, it could simply have been purchased, more cheaply, for a fair market price.

The dark irony is that burning all that oil will bring down the Western industrial system anyway, along with much else, through global warming.

So why are these young terrorists so angry? Is it really so hard to figure out?

The currently escalating cycle of outrage and counter-attack is destroying their countries and our once-open, liberal democracies, as more and more draconian police-state measures are imposed on us in a futile quest for security.

Western blundering around in the Middle East has been profoundly counter-productive. Worse, many Western actions verge into tolerance of or active collusion in terrorism.

The remedy is obvious: withdraw from the Middle East.

We manage to ignore or tolerate plenty of other tyrannical regimes around the world, so the likely continuation of outrages within the Middle East is not a reason for us to stay on. Our presence routinely makes things worse. The sooner we get out the sooner they are likely to begin the slow process of settling into less lethal arrangements.

Image path may not contain ":", "\", "<", or ">" The West does not belong in the Middle East (Image via @LNPSNIGHTMARE)

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