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US/Israel-Created Middle East Tensions *Making of Regional Implosion*

by NORMAN POLLACK

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The US designedly engenders political-diplomatic conflict wherever it goes and whenever it can, not because it is integrally infantile or churlish, but because its geopolitical strategy of divide-and-conquer is integral to its ambition for unilateral global hegemony. Even divide-and-conquer is mere surface, the instrumental framework within which to realize an ideological deeply-ingrained counterrevolutionary ethos and world posture, the half-century thread of anticommunism never lost and recently transmuted into a doctrine of permanent war tightly attached to counterterrorism.

America has managed, under a wholly bipartisan political tent, to syncretize, in desperation of losing its cherished place of military-commercial-financial supremacy in the world, somewhat unrelated elements which define a total historical-political position of REACTION, the more misleading and insidious because parading under the banner of liberalism, as in liberal humanitarianism. Although there is nothing new about the politicization of Exceptionalism in marking American expansion, this time in the consecutive march toward hegemony we find that the stakes are higher.

World power is becoming crowded at the top. And neither the military establishment nor the national-security advisers, working together in harmony (a Military-Executive aggrandizement

of power), is oriented/dedicated to other than war, and quite simplistic in their respective planning for its fighting, so that the current turmoil in the Middle East should not be surprising. “Blowback” is not descriptively sufficient; US/Israel jointly have created a seething cauldron, the possible locus for WWII, particularly because the region—despite oil reserves—is only a pawn, an immediate sphere of influence, in the main theater of confrontation.

America prioritizes Russia and China singly and together as Evil Incarnate, each to be contained, isolated, drastically weakened, Islamic militancy now and in future the sideshow, distraction, indeed pretext, for the full militarization of American society in going after bigger game. Syria and Ukraine are identified as geostrategic opportunities having sequential import, under the cover of antiterrorism placing decisive military “assets” in closer proximity to the Enemy. First, ISIS (today the New York Times announces that there are still darker forces than ISIS waiting to strike America) and, perhaps under the guise of “mission creep,” for which the public has been prepared already, then the maneuvering and jostling to set up the wider staging ground... at the risk of nuclear war.

The New York Times editorial, “The Unlikeliest of Coalitions,” (Sept. 20), credits the implosive character of the region, but—as usual—without seeking underlying causes, rather, the Editorial Board head down, plunging ahead to solidifying a coalition conducive to achieving American goals. Yet, even these goals, degrading and destroying ISIS, mean, once accomplished, a return to business-as-usual, protection of the Homeland having wider implications, the perceived Ultimate Showdown, local skirmishes giving way to head-to-head confrontation. Here the Ukraine crisis has been useful both in the demonization of Putin and Russia and the hoped for solidification of EU-NATO as “friends and allies” in the greater struggle for freedom and democracy.

China cannot be approached without at least the partial vanquishing of Russia, not only dangerous but self-defeating, because pressure on Russia only drives it and China closer together, overcoming decades of their mutual distrust (under Stalin and Mao) and competitiveness. In its rush to restore US unilateral dominance of the world system in face of the clear decentralization of the international order, America is at pins and needles at how to proceed. The Middle East provides a good start. Subservience to Israeli needs, wishes, and strategic assumptions is a constant and also near-adequate explanatory guide to US actions, but even there, Israel becomes more of a convenience to be accommodated into the American ideological-systemic blueprint than purist goal for its own sake. Symbiosis is a wondrous state for power politics, in this case, a tried-and-true military-intelligence partnership which leaves each the kingpin in its respective domain.

The Times keeps Israel out of the picture, as though the coalition America is forming to fight ISIS occurs in a self-contained vacuum. My question: Would there ever have been ISIS, under whatever name, as a movement of disaffected Islamic militancy, had not the US-Israel effort at the organization of the region to further their respective goals (successive circles of hegemony) been undertaken and implemented? Absent the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, even dating back to the Yishuv (pre-Independence), plus American penetration (given added import, beyond oil,

from the Cold War onward), and indigenous government authority, especially that of Saudi Arabia and Iran, would have prevented the jihadist phenomenon as destabilizing regional order and their own regimes.

But no, the US and Israel could not keep hands off, the demiurge of domination for one, that along with support of a pivotal ally in achieving stabilization of a different kind, for the other, as a regional military presence the better to widen America's sphere of influence in the contestation over global power. On the Middle East alone, repression is ugly, no matter whom the perpetrator, and no doubt a subsequent Arab Spring, had not the US-Israel paradigm of purposes and practices exacerbated the rise of popular consciousness, could have been controlled and moderated so as to be pressured back into existing channels. That appears to have happened anyway, as though a deeper current of understanding runs between all the parties underwriting the status quo. But WHO is principal repressor, seems the bone of contention.

By its intervention in the region against Iraq, its biased position with respect to an Israeli-Palestinian peace, its concerted animus, including regime change, with respect to Iran, its military and naval bases throughout the Arab countries, all these and more transferred the reins of repression to the US, using elites on the ground, through the sugar candy of weaponry and money, to keep order on American terms of reference: enlistment on its side in a potential or renewed Cold War, noninterference in Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. From the foregoing, it may appear outrageous and subversive to say, No wonder ISIS... but without implying endorsement of any kind, I cannot help but implicate America and Israel in its creation and actions.

For which now, the frantic coalition-building. Getting Sunnis on board is particularly opportunistic, as The Times readily admits: "The Obama administration needs to bring together a reliable international coalition as the backbone of its campaign to defeat the Islamic State, the Sunni extremist group that controls large parts of Iraq and Syria. So far, more than 40 countries have offered to help, and none are more important than the Sunni Muslim countries that are needed to give legitimacy to the American-led effort." This is a step up in Obama's thinking, legitimacy generally not of concern, period, in light of the drone assassinations, ubiquitous airstrikes real and contemplated, use of sanctions as a mode of political and economic warfare, Special Ops and CIA missions the scope and extent of which we shall probably never know, torture, rendition—why go on, the list is interminable. But here, by all means, stay within bounds of legitimacy in what is, after all, an illegitimate policy of crossing national borders—a compelling reason, besides diminishing Iran's power, for ousting Assad.

The task will not be easy: "But even if every would-be ally agreed to play a productive role [i.e., engage in airstrikes or send in ground forces], political grievances, sectarian tensions and mistrust make organizing the coalition a lot like solving a Rubik's Cube." I've never tried to, but neither has anyone done the more important equivalent: disengagement from the region, dismantlement of bases, let Israel sink or swim in its policies of occupation and prevention of a two-state solution, or simply, along with all of the foregoing, talk to the adversary, negotiate, putting away internal fears of weakness, the mindset of hubris, the fig leaf of Exceptionalism. This is why WWII is not out of the question. The US's psychopathology of strength, dominance, hatred of difference, driving America into a cul-de-sac of ideological hardness and

inflexibility, rather dead than red (even when red is not around), is like a locomotive rushing downhill, no brakes, almost, beneath the toughness, craving oblivion. I've written on Thanatos in previous CounterPunch articles; here it appears equally applicable because tapping the same muddled will to power. The Times editorial has cogent things to say about the present strategy, as in the editorial's subtitle, "Can Adversaries Become Allies to Fight ISIS?" We seem to play both sides against a middle of our own inspiration.

Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, Iran and Syria, all in bold-face and caps, in all cases political cleavages we have helped to create, ensuring patch-work settlements through the common struggle against ISIS will be at best short-lived. The discussion on Iran provides a good example: "Both the United States and Iran, adversaries since the Islamic Revolution [actually US support of the Shah's coup d'etat had never been forgotten], consider ISIS a threat. But Iranian leaders have ruled out direction cooperation in repelling the extremist group. [Not true: willingness to cooperate if the US reciprocated the cooperation.] Iran, one of the Assad regime's strongest allies, is worried that American airstrikes in Syria and expanded support for Syrian rebel forces could further damage Mr. Assad's hold on power." It continued, "American leaders have been cool to cooperating with Iran because that would anger Saudi Arabia and other Sunni Muslim states. Negotiations on Iran's nuclear program, now at a critical point, are also affecting these calculations." Too many balls in the air, an atmosphere of obfuscation; meantime, the main thrust of military-political-economic policy toward global hegemony grinds on.

My New York Times Comment on the editorial, same date, follows:

The Times allows itself to fall into an abyss, and therefore an unresolvable political-diplomatic problem, without first peeling away CAUSAL layers for the present situation. Why the imbroglio? Why accept US actions, analysis, goals, solutions?

Is not the seeming Middle East chaos a function of interrelated developments: US intervention in the region (e.g., bases in Saudi Arabia precipitating the rise of bin Laden; Iraq intervention, a genesis for ISIS by way of Qaeda in Iraq), and Israel's divide-and-conquer strategy, aimed at both Iran and Assad?

Why bemoan the chaos, rather than demand US non-meddling where it should not be? America creates the original setting because of its larger geopolitical framework and strategy (containment of Russia and China) and then wants 40 nations to bail it out. We have been treated to a carnival of lies about "no troops on the ground." Months, perhaps weeks—and the lies will be exposed.