

Whipping up public enthusiasm for a Syrian war

Here come the old weapons-of-mass-destruction warnings again. Hey, they worked to justify the invasion of Iraq

It seems that previous and sensational news stories about Syria weren't doing the job, so the right-wing tank-thinkers at the Fraser Institute — "Syria's chemical weapons could fall into terrorist hands" by Alan W. Dowd, July 26 — resorted to the hearts-and-minds-tested "weapons of mass destruction" shibboleth. (It worked in launching an attack on Iraq.)

Yes, even a Fox News study shows 78 per cent of Americans oppose intervention in Syria — North Americans are waking up. We know what "boots on the ground," as the Fraser Institute's Dowd put it, will entail in Syria: massive civilian deaths; destruction of basic urban infrastructures such as water, electricity and sewage processing; and dismemberment of the target state into Balkanized statelets.

So what is a war-promoting think-tank, close to Stephen Harper's Conservatives, to do in order to win over the Canadian electorate weary of the long, losing and expensive war in Afghanistan; the never-ending ramp ceremonies for fallen young Canadian men and women in arms; the disaster in Iraq; the chaos left over in Libya after Canada's role over 100 days of straight bombing?

Dowd's sensational paragraphs about WMDs tell us: NATO's strategy is to keep us in a constant state of fear, so we support beating up yet another, much weaker country. These Iraq-style wars are precisely why countries like Syria stock up on chemical weapons. Last year, Doug Bandow wrote in *The National Interest* about the "end of non-proliferation." Libya, after giving up its WMD program, was attacked by NATO. The message was clear: You had better have a big stick in a NATO-dominated world.

It is not a healthy message, but the United States is encouraging weapons proliferation.

Many countries, including the U.S., Russia, and Israel, possess deterrent weapons (nuclear and/or biological and chemical), designed to prevent attacks by foreign countries. In fact, the U.S. has used them offensively: Just ask the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Syria was not allowed to have nuclear weapons, so it acquired chemical weapons to deter foreign invaders like the U.S. and Israel. Nobody is calling for pre-emptive attacks on the U.S., Russia or Israel to seize their deterrent weapons. Why, then, the double standard for Syria?

The answer is that the WMD story is just one arrow in the propaganda quiver. So far, we've been given stories (later proven false) of lesbians blogging against the regime, girls being beheaded (later exposed as a hoax), and even alleged Syrian government massacres of civilians, which later turned out to be videos taken in Iraq and or massacres committed by mercenaries in the pay of the West.

Governments and compliant media fed citizens these lies while the so-called "Friends of Syria" (U.S., France, Turkey, and some Arab monarchies) openly recruited, armed, and paid tens of thousands of mercenaries to infiltrate Syria's borders and cities where they have set off bombs, killed Syrian police and soldiers, and terrorized civilian neighbourhoods. This process is called terrorism. And, in fact, many of the mercenaries are widely reported to be al-Qaeda affiliates from Afghanistan, Libya and Iraq.

Just as in Libya, Western leaders, such as Hillary Clinton, announced their Syrian agenda right from the beginning: regime change. They wail about the safety of Syrian civilians, while their own militaries bomb Afghanistan, Yemen and,

indirectly, Syria itself. You can look at Libya today to see the game plan for Syria: a pro-Western "democracy" too weak to govern, but with the strength of hand to sign over oil concessions and sovereignty.

In Syria's case, they also need to remove an ally of Iran, a client state of Russia, a strong supporter of Hezbollah in Lebanon, and a powerful bulwark of the Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation.

So let the Fraser Institute drop the do-gooder act. What the "Friends of Syria" is doing is for selfish reasons of state and is directly contrary to international law, the right of nations to self-determination, and the United Nations charter. Furthermore, the "humanitarian" intervention they propose, namely, to send troops into Syria to seize the WMDs, will turn out as much a disaster as the so-called "Responsibility To Protect" the citizens of Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Yugoslavia.

Syrian President Bashar Assad has reiterated that Syrian WMDs will not be used against Syrian civilians. However, the Syrian government reserves the right, like any other national government, to defend itself from attack.

Just imagine what the U.S. would do to a collection of nation states guilty of sending thousands of armed mercenaries across U.S. borders, attacking every government building in sight, jeopardizing the ability of the state to function. If the "Friends of Syria" were really concerned about the fate of Syrian civilians, they would stop initiating terrorism in Syria and start finding ways to make Kofi Annan's UN peace initiative bear fruit.

That's the "least worst" option Dowd says he is looking for.

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