



CHAOS UNLEASHED

Jeanne McKinney reports on building a culture of resistance

History shows that when a government's foreign policy includes helping Islamic rebels and resistance fighters overthrow a government – they do not factor in short or long-term scenarios. Jihad has become more than regime change in the wake of the Arab Spring that began in Tunisia in 2010.

A major slogan of uprisings in the Arab world was ash-sha'b yurid isqāt an-nizām! (Arabic: *ديري بعشلا*), literally 'the people want to bring down the regime.' But what are you replacing it with when

jihadists who desire strict Islamic rule take charge? One security expert says: "Islam is, at its core, a supremacist Utopian ideology. That means it is not nice or good."

Jihadists have no tolerance for the will of the people who desire freedoms lost under dictators and tyrants. People do not want to be subjugated with violent force. Even though jihadists pursue extensive propaganda campaigns to 'win' the citizenry over, the people soon find out radical Islamic rule is anything but free. Varying perceptions on how Islam shall rule a country is as individual as the terrorist groups who seek it. Culture,

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modernisation and demographics all factor in and for each country that is different. For example: Afghanistan has been tribal for centuries and although some modernisation has occurred, the Afghans have been fighting outsiders and each other for centuries. The story of Alexander the Great in Afghanistan was one of natives waging a harsh resistance war, threatening his dream of a world empire.

"May God keep you away from the venom of the cobra, the teeth of the tiger, and the revenge of the Afghans." Alexander the Great.

"The most glaring weakness of current jihadi discourse has to do with the fact that after the fall of dictators, people have chosen a political path that is irreconcilable with the jihadi worldview and have become the object of jihadi resentment. Thus, the jihadis' once-powerful grievances articulated against dictators are now reduced to soliloquies criticising the people," says Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. (CTC).

Jihadism is a combination of armed resistance and terrorism, motivated by religious ideology, nationalism and politics. Both rebels and terrorists are generally anti-government and/or anti-foreign intervention (unless it can serve their purpose). These groups are one and the same in nature as they target a country's public officials and individuals representing: "political, economic, military, security, social, religious, media, or cultural establishments," states the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI).

"Most terrorist groups conduct assassinations to eliminate enemies, intimidate the population, discourage cooperation, influence public opinion, decrease government effectiveness, gain media attention, or simply to exact revenge." They use a variety of armed attacks.

We have seen these 'rebel' factions operating throughout the globe; their militias and distributed hit groups using violent terror tactics (in opposition to and fighting government forces and local police). Why are foreign governments so interested in arming and training resistance fighters when the results are replacing one bad government with another? There are multiple examples of building up resistance forces ending with tragic outcomes. None more in the news today than Syria's war of resistance of which the US and other countries have been a critical part.

US and foreign-supplied weapons moved secretly across borders to rebels in Syria. "AK-47s, machine guns, explosives and more travel along new arms pipeline from Balkans to countries known to supply Syria," *The Guardian* reported in 2016, adding: "Since December 2015, three cargo ships commissioned by the US military's Special Operations Command (SOCOM), in charge of the covert supply of weapons to Syria, have left Black Sea ports in the Balkans for the Middle East, according to American procurement documents and ship tracking data."

Once the unregistered weapons were inside Syria they branched out and were hard to track or control (if anyone was trying). It becomes a frenzy for terror groups who could afford to buy them and those willing to sell them for profit.

The start of the Syrian revolution in 2011 began a descent into hell. During the years of opposition fighting millions of people have faced starvation (over

14-million are projected to be "food insecure" at varying critical levels). Ninety percent of Syria's population lives in poverty. Natural disasters like earthquakes and drought have added to the devastation as well as diseases like Cholera running rampant. Yet it all started with the ill-fated move to assist "rebels" in a regime change. Rebels who had ties to terrorists and led and enacted operations pushing for regime change.

Recently in Tulsi Gabbard's Senate Confirmation Hearing to be Director of National Intelligence, she was questioned on Syria: "When I was a member of Congress, I learned of President Obama's dual programmes that he had begun, really to overthrow the regime of Syria, and being willing to, through the CIA's Timber Sycamore programme that has been made public, of working with and arming and equipping al Qaeda in an effort to overthrow that regime, starting yet another regime change war in the Middle East."

THE BEST WAY TO FIGHT TERRORISM IS TO DENY THESE ORGANISATIONS LEGITIMACY OF ANY KIND

She mentions that Obama used the CIA's Timber Sycamore programme and began over a half billion-dollar Department of Defense train and equip programme, to arm what they called "moderate rebels" that were collaborating with fighters aligned with al-Qaeda's affiliate (al-Nusra Front) and allies on the ground in Syria. Obvious at the time and what unfortunately bore true is a regime change war in Syria not unlike the regime change wars in Iraq, and the toppling of Gaddafi (Libya) and Mubarak (Egypt).

Timber Sycamore is described as a classified weapons supply and training programme that's run by the United States Central Intelligence Agency and supported by the United Kingdom and some Arab intelligence services, including Saudi intelligence. (Wiki)

Gabbard continues, "While these are all dictators [this move] would likely result in the rise of Islamist extremists like al-Qaeda taking power."

"I shed no tears for the fall of the Assad regime, but today we have an Islamist extremist who is now in charge of Syria, as I said, who danced on the streets to celebrate the 9/11 attack, who ruled over Idlib with Islamist extremist governance, and who has already begun to persecute, kill and arrest religious minorities like Christians in Syria. Why that should be acceptable to anyone is beyond me and certainly not in our interests," adds Gabbard (C-Span).

Today an evolution and significant expansion of jihadism has occurred since Timber Sycamore. These "armed opposition groups have formed, allied with others and split up several times, making it hard to pinpoint their exact sizes and compositions," reported Aljazeera, days before the regime change in Syria.

Now, the Free Syrian Army, founded in 2011 by officers who defected from the Syrian Armed Forces,

is a big tent coalition of opposition rebel groups and resistance fighters; Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) is the biggest fighting group in Operation Deterrence of Aggression.

HTS controls Idlib and has economic control over swathes of Syrian territory and resources. Military commander Abu Mohammed al-Julani and his rebel fighters stormed Damascus on 8 December, 2024, ousting the Assad regime. Al-Julani is who Gabbard speaks of, now head of a transitional Islamic government, the long road of violent jihadism undeterred.

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“Hayat Tahrir al-Sham’s role in Assad’s eventual fall essentially began in July 2011, when Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi – then the leader of the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), previously known as al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) – sent Abu Mohammed al-Julani to spearhead his group’s entry into Syria. This was the same Julani who would later become the head of HTS, [and] spearhead the offensive that toppled Assad, and adopt the name Ahmed al-Sharaa, thereby casting himself as Syria’s next leader...” The Washington Institute for Near East Policy stated.

“A new history, my brothers, is being written in the entire region after this great victory,” declared

Abu Mohammed al-Julani, reminding the crowd that it would take hard work to build a new Syria that would be “a beacon for the Islamic nation,” reported Aljazeera.

After the take down of Assad, a White House official in the Biden administration said the United States was proactively involved with multiple groups in Syria and partners in the region. “I just want to emphasise the future here will be written by Syrians,” the official said. What he left out was Syrian rebels with working terrorist ties.

Obama can now see his Timber Sycamore vision unfold as the country languishes in destruction and instability still as rival jihadist groups fight it out. There is no Utopia here.

At one time Obama’s solution was not to give their propaganda “legitimacy.”

“So, the best way for us to fight terrorism is to deny these organisations legitimacy and to show that here in the United States of America, we do not suppress Islam; we celebrate and lift up the success of Muslim Americans. That is how we show the lie that they are trying to propagate. We should not play into terrorist propaganda. And we cannot suggest that Islam itself is at the root of the problem.”

Islam itself is the root of the problem when the instructions are to kill the infidels, force submission to their prophet. In order to deny them legitimacy – common sense says quit building up resistance fighters, knowing our Western democratic ideas are irreconcilable with Islamic elitist utopian ideas. We will never be one of them holding fast to our freedoms and equality for all ●

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is an award-winning military journalist, book author and documentary filmmaker. She recently published the true historical account of *Triumph Over the Taliban: The Untold Story of US Marines’ Courageous Fight to Save Camp Bastion* (now on Amazon). McKinney also wrote, directed, and is currently producing a limited documentary series called *Ronin 3: The Battle for Sangin* – that follows 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines through a labyrinth of murder holes and IEDs in a heavily entrenched Taliban stronghold in 2010, on mission to restore security to the local Afghan people.

Syrian rebels carry RPG-29 anti-tank missiles in Qaboun, Damascus

