

Trump's Muslim Ban

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The result has been devastating wars, desperate terrorism, massive refugee movement that is uprooting entire peoples and transforming parts of Europe, desperate terrorism, and the horror that is ISIS.

By Alison Weir

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Israeli strategic plans from 2001 and before to “remake the Middle East” targeted the same countries

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President Trump has issued an executive order suspending entry to the U.S. for people from Iraq, Syria, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Iran, and Yemen (the order is called “Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States”). These same countries were the focus of the “Visa Waiver Program Improvement and Terrorist Travel Prevention Act of 2015” under President Obama.

While reports on Trump's ban emphasize that these are Muslim majority countries, analysts seem to have ignored another significant characteristic that these countries share.

With just a single exception, all of these countries were targeted for attack by certain top U.S. officials in 2001. In fact, that policy had roots that went back to 1996, 1991, 1980, and even the 1950s. Below, we will trace this policy back in time and examine its goals and proponents.

The fact is that Trump's action continues policies influenced by people working on behalf of a foreign country, whose goal has been to destabilize and reshape an entire region. This kind of aggressive interventionism focused on “regime change” launches cascading effects that include escalating violence.

Already we've seen devastating wars, massive refugee move-

ment that is uprooting entire peoples and reshaping parts of Europe, desperate and horrific terrorism, and now the horror that is ISIS. If this decades-long effort is not halted, it will be increasingly devastating for the region, our country, and the entire world.

2001 Policy Coup

Four-star general Wesley Clark, former Supreme Allied Commander, has described what he called a 2001 “policy coup” by a small group of people intent on destabilizing and taking over the Middle East, targeting six of the seven countries mentioned by Obama and Trump.

Clark gave the details in 2007 in an interview broadcast by Democracy Now and in a lecture at the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco.

Clark described a chance meeting in the Pentagon in 2001 ten days after 9/11 in which he learned about the plan to take down these countries.

After meeting with then-Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, Clark went downstairs to say hello to people on the Joint Staff who had worked for him in the past. One of the generals called him in.

‘Sir, you’ve got to come in and talk to me a second.’ He told Clark, ‘We’ve made the decision we’re going to war with Iraq.’

Clark was shocked. He said, ‘We’re going to war against Iraq? Why?’ The officer said he didn’t know. Clark asked if they had found information connecting Saddam to Al-Qaeda. The man said, ‘No, no, there’s nothing new that way. They just made the decision to go to war with Iraq.’

A few weeks later, Clark went back to the Pentagon and spoke to the general again. He asked whether the U.S. was still planning to go to war against Iraq.

The general replied: ‘Oh, it’s worse than that.’ Clark says that the general picked up a piece of paper and said, ‘I just got this down from upstairs today. This is a memo that describes how we’re going to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran.’

Clark asked, "Is it classified?" He said, "Yes, sir."

Clark said he was stunned: "I couldn't believe it would really be true. But that's actually what happened. These people took control of the policy of the United States."

1991

Clark says he then remembered a 1991 meeting he had with Paul Wolfowitz. In 2001 Wolfowitz was Deputy Secretary of Defense, and in 1991 he was Under Secretary of Defense of Policy, the number three position at the Pentagon.

Wolfowitz is a pro-Israel neoconservative who an associate has called "over the top when it comes to Israel."

Clark describes going to Wolfowitz's office in March of 1991. Clark said to Wolfowitz, "You must be pretty happy with the performance of the troops in Desert Storm." Clark says Wolfowitz replied, "Not really, because the truth is we should have gotten rid of Saddam Hussein, and we didn't."

Wolfowitz declared the U.S. had an opportunity to clean up "Syria, Iran, Iraq, before the next super power came on to challenge us."

Clark says he was shocked at Wolfowitz's proposal that the military should initiate wars and change governments, and that Wolfowitz believed that the U.S. should invade countries whose governments it disliked. "My mind was spinning."

Clark says Scooter Libby was at that meeting. Libby is another pro-Israel neoconservative. In 2001 He was Vice President Cheney's chief of staff, and worked closely with the Office of Special Plans, which manufactured anti-Iraq talking points.

"This country was taken over by a group of people with a policy coup," Clark said in his 2007 lecture. "Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld, Cheney, and you could name a half dozen other collaborators from the Project for a New American Century. They wanted us to destabilize the Middle East, turn it upside down, make it under our control."

(The Project for a New American Century was a think tank that operated from 1997-2006, and was replaced by the Foreign Policy Initiative.)

Clark continued: “Did they ever tell you this? Was there a national dialogue on this? Did Senators and Congressmen stand up and denounce this plan? Was there a full-fledged American debate on it? Absolutely not. And there still isn’t.”

Clark noted that Iran and Syria know about the plan. “All you have to do is read the *Weekly Standard* and listen to Bill Kristol, and he blabbermouths it all over the world – Richard Perle is the same way. They could hardly wait to finish Iraq so they could move into Syria.”

Clark says that Americans did not vote George Bush into office to do this. Bush, Clark pointed out, had campaigned on “a humble foreign policy, no ‘peace keeping,’ no ‘nation building.’”

Others have described this group, their responsibility for pushing the invasion of Iraq, and their pro-Israel motivation.

Neoconservatives, Israel, and Iraq

A 2003 article in *Ha’aretz*, one of Israel’s main newspapers, reported bluntly: “The war in Iraq was conceived by 25 neoconservative intellectuals, most of them Jewish, who are pushing President Bush to change the course of history.” (*Ha’aretz* often highlights the Jewish affiliation of important players due to its role as a top newspaper of the self-declared “Jewish State.”)

It gave what it termed “a partial list” of these neoconservatives: U.S. government officials Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith, and Eliot Abrams, and journalists William Kristol and Charles Krauthammer. The article described them as “mutual friends who cultivate one another.”

The article included an interview with *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, who was quoted as saying:

“It’s the war the neoconservatives wanted. It’s the war the neoconservatives marketed. Those people had an idea to sell when September 11 came, and they sold it. Oh boy, did they sell it. So this is not a war that the masses demanded. This is a war of an elite.”

The article continued:

“Friedman laughs: ‘I could give you the names of 25 people (all of whom are at this moment within a five-block radius of this office) who, if you had exiled them to a desert island a year and a half ago, the Iraq war would not have happened.’”

Another *Ha'aretz* article described how some of these individuals, high American officials, gave Israeli leaders tips on how to manage American actions and influence US Congressmen, concluding: “Perle, Feith, and their fellow strategists are walking a fine line between their loyalty to American governments and Israeli interests.”

Ha'aretz reported that the goal was far more than just an invasion of Iraq: “at a deeper level it is a greater war, for the shaping of a new Middle East.” The article said that the war “was being fought to consolidate a new world order.”

“The Iraq war is really the beginning of a gigantic historical experiment...”

We're now seeing the tragic and violent result of that regime-change experiment.

American author, peace activist, and former CIA analyst Kathleen Christison discussed the neoconservatives who promoted war against Iraq in a 2002 article. She wrote: “Although much has been written about the neo-cons who dot the Bush administration, their ties to Israel have generally been treated very gingerly.”

The Bush administration, she wrote, was “peppered with people who have long records of activism on behalf of Israel in the United States, of policy advocacy in Israel, and of promoting an agenda for Israel often at odds with existing U.S. policy.”

“These people,” she wrote, “who can fairly be called Israeli loyalists, are now at all levels of government, from desk officers at the Defense Department to the deputy secretary level at both State and Defense, as well as on the National Security Council staff and in the vice president's office.”

Author Stephen Green wrote a meticulously researched 2004 expose describing how some of these individuals, including Perle and Wolfowitz, had been investigated through the years by U.S. in-

telligence agencies for security “lapses” benefiting Israel.

Yet, despite a pattern of highly questionable actions suggestive of treason, they continued to procure top security clearances for themselves and cronies. The neocon agenda also became influential in Britain.

(During the recent U.S. presidential election, neoconservatives were extremely hostile to Trump, and were perturbed to have less influence in his administration they they expected to have with Hillary Clinton. They may be relieved to see him targeting their pet punching bags in the Middle East. It’s unclear whether neoconservatives will remain outside the White House’s inner circle for long: neocon Michael Ledeen is quite close to Trump’s recently named White House National Security Advisor Michael Flynn. And there is talk that Trump may appoint Elliott Abrams as Deputy Secretary of State.)

1996 plan against Iraq and Syria

The neocon regime-change strategy had been laid out in a 1996 document called “A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm.” It was written for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by a study group led by Richard Perle. Although Perle and the other authors were American citizens, the “realm” in question was Israel.

Perle was chairman of the United States Defense Policy Board at that time. He had previously been U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy.

The report stated that in the past, Israel’s strategy was to get the U.S. to use its money and weaponry to “lure Arabs” to negotiate. This strategy, the plan stated, “required funneling American money to repressive and aggressive regimes.”

The report recommended, however, that Israel go beyond a strategy just focused on Israel-Palestine, and address the larger region – that it “shape its strategic environment.”

It called for “weakening, containing, and even rolling back Syria” and “removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq.” The paper also listed Iran and Lebanon as countries to be dealt with (and Tur-

key and Jordan as nations to be used in the strategy).

The plan stressed that it was necessary to obtain U.S. support for the strategy, and advised that Israel use “language familiar to the Americans by tapping into themes of American administrations during the cold war ...”

Perle, Douglas Feith (who would be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense by 2001) and the other signatories of the report framed their proposal as a new concept, but the idea for Israel to reshape the political landscape of the Middle East had been discussed for years. (Lest we be unclear, “reshape the political landscape” means to change governments, something that has never been accomplished without massive loss of life and far-reaching repercussions.)

In 1992 Israeli leaders were already working to indoctrinate the public about an alleged need to attack Iran. Israeli analyst Israel Shahak wrote in his book *Open Secrets* that the goal would be “to bring about Iran’s total military and political defeat.”

Shahak reported: “In one version, Israel would attack Iran alone, in another it would ‘persuade’ the West to do the job. The indoctrination campaign to this effect is gaining in intensity. It is accompanied by what could be called semi-official horror scenarios purporting to detail what Iran could do to Israel, the West and the entire world when it acquires nuclear weapons as it is expected to a few years hence.”

1982 & 1950s Israeli plans to fragment the Middle East

A document called “A Strategy for Israel in the Nineteen Eighties,” proposed by Israeli analyst Oded Yinon, was published by the World Zionist Organization in 1982.

The document, translated by Israel Shahak, called for the dissolution of existing Arab states into smaller states which would, in effect, become Israel’s satellites.

In an analysis of the plan, Shahak pointed out: “[W]hile lip service is paid to the idea of the ‘defense of the West’ from Soviet power, the real aim of the author, and of the present Israeli establishment is clear: To make an Imperial Israel into a world power.”

Shahak noted that then Israeli Defense Minister and future

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon planned “to deceive the Americans after he has deceived all the rest.”

Shahak wrote that reshaping the Middle East on behalf of Israel had been discussed since the 1950s: “This is not a new idea, nor does it surface for the first time in Zionist strategic thinking. Indeed, fragmenting all Arab states into smaller units has been a recurrent theme.”

Shahak pointed out that this strategy was documented in a book called *Israel’s Sacred Terrorism* (1980), by Livia Rokach. Drawing on the memoirs of the second Prime Minister of Israel, Rokach’s book described, among other things, a 1954 proposal to execute regime change in Lebanon.

The result

Returning to the present, let’s examine the situation in the “countries of concern” named by President Trump, by President Obama in 2015, and targeted by Wolfowitz et al in 2001.

Several years ago, journalist Glenn Greenwald commented on General Clark’s statement about the 2001 policy coup: “If you go down that list of seven countries that he said the neocons had planned to basically change the governments of, you pretty much see that vision... being fulfilled.”

Greenwald noted that the governments of Iraq, Libya, and Lebanon had been changed; the U.S. had escalated its proxy fighting and drone attacks in Somalia; U.S. troops were deployed in Sudan; “and the most important countries on that list, Iran and Syria, are clearly the target of all sorts of covert regime change efforts on the part of the United States and Israel.”

Below are sketches of what’s happened:

Iraq was invaded and the country destroyed. According to a 2015 NGO report, the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq had led to the deaths of approximately 1 million Iraqis – 5 percent of the total population of the country – by 2011. More than three million Iraqis are internally displaced, and the carnage continues. The destruction of Iraq and impoverishment of its people is at the root of

much of today's extremism and it's been demonstrated that it led to the rise of ISIS, as admitted by former British Prime Minister and Iraq war co-perpetrator Tony Blair.

Libya was invaded in 2011 and its leader violently overthrown; in the post-Gaddafi power vacuum, a 2011 UN report revealed torture, lynchings and abuse. Five years on, the country was still torn by civil war and ISIS is reportedly expanding into the chaos. A 2016 Human Rights Watch report stated: "Libya's political and security crisis deepened ... the country edged towards a humanitarian crisis, with almost 400,000 people internally displaced." Warring forces "continued with impunity to arbitrarily detain, torture, unlawfully kill, indiscriminately attack, abduct and disappear, and forcefully displace people from their homes. The domestic criminal justice system collapsed in most parts of the country, exacerbating the human rights crisis." [Photos linked in online version.]

Sudan: The U.S. engaged in so-called "nation-building" in Sudan, advanced the claim in 2005 that the government was perpetrating a genocide, and some U.S. players ultimately organized the secession of South Sudan from Sudan in 2011. (Neocon Israel partisan Elliott Abrams was one of these players.) One journalist reported the result: "[A]n abyss of unspeakable misery and bloodshed Tens of thousands have been killed, 1.5 million have been displaced, and 5 million are in dire need of humanitarian assistance."

Somalia: There have been a number of U.S. interventions in Somalia, most recently a clandestine war under Obama using Special Operations troops, airstrikes, private contractors and African allies; Somali extremists, like others, repeatedly cite Israel's crimes against Palestinians, enabled by the U.S., as motivators of their violent extremism.

Iran: Iran has long been targeted by Israel, and Israel partisans have driven the anti-Iran campaign in the U.S. Most recently there has been a public relations effort claiming that Iran is developing nuclear weapons, despite the fact that U.S. intelligence agencies

and other experts do not support these accusations. Israel and the U.S. deployed a computer virus against Iran in what has been called the world's first digital weapon. Young Iranian nuclear physicists have been assassinated by U.S. ally Israel, and the U.S. instituted a blockade against Iran that caused food insecurity and mass suffering among the country's civilians. (Such a blockade can be seen as an act of war.) Democratic Congressman and Israel partisan Brad Sherman admitted the objective of the Iran sanctions: "Critics of sanctions argue that these measures will hurt the Iranian people. Quite frankly, we need to do just that."

Yemen: The US has launched drone strikes against Yemen for years, killing numerous Yemeni civilians and even some Americans. In 2010, a few weeks after Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize, he had the military use cluster bombs that killed 35 Yemeni women and children. The Obama administration killed a 16-year-old American in 2011, and U.S. forces under Trump killed the boy's sister on January 30, 2017. In 2014 American forces attacked a wedding procession, and in 2015 the Obama administration admitted it was making war on Yemen. Today over two million Yemeni children suffer from malnutrition. The Yemeni regime that we're attacking became politically active in 2003 as a result of the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Syria: In an email revealed by Wikileaks, Hillary Clinton wrote that the "best way to help Israel" was to overthrow the Syrian regime.

Syria seems to be a poster child for the destruction recommended by Israeli strategists. As the UK Guardian reported in 2002: "Disorder and chaos sweeping through the region would not be an unfortunate side-effect of war with Iraq, but a sign that everything is going according to plan."

Half the Syrian population is displaced – 5 million have fled the country and another 6 million are internally displaced – and over 300,000 are dead from the violence. Major cities and ancient sites are in ruins and the countryside devastated. Amnesty International calls it "the worst humanitarian crisis of our time."

While the uprising against a ruthless dictator was no doubt begun by authentic Syrian rebels, others with questionable agendas

flowed in, some supported by the U.S. and Israel. Israel's military intelligence chief said Israel does not want ISIS defeated. Israel's defense minister has admitted that Israel has provided aid to ISIS fighters.

ISIS

A major factor in Syria's chaos and the rise of ISIS was the destruction of Iraq, as revealed by in-depth interviews with ISIS fighters by researchers for Artis International, a consortium for scientific study in the service of conflict resolution:

"Many assume that these fighters are motivated by a belief in the Islamic State... but this just doesn't hold for the prisoners we are interviewing. They are woefully ignorant about Islam and have difficulty answering questions about Sharia law, militant jihad, and the caliphate."

"More pertinent than Islamic theology is that there are other, much more convincing, explanations as to why they've fought for the side they did."

One interviewee said: "The Americans came. They took away Saddam, but they also took away our security. I didn't like Saddam, we were starving then, but at least we didn't have war. When you came here, the civil war started."

The report noted that the fighters "came of age under the disastrous American occupation after 2003."

"They are children of the occupation, many with missing fathers at crucial periods (through jail, death from execution, or fighting in the insurgency), filled with rage against America and their own government. They are not fueled by the idea of an Islamic caliphate without borders; rather, ISIS is the first group since the crushed Al Qaeda to offer these humiliated and enraged young men a way to defend their dignity, family, and tribe."

The leader of the Islamic State, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, was imprisoned for eight months in the infamous Abu Ghraib, a U.S.-run Iraqi prison known for grotesque torture of prisoners. Photos published at that time show U.S. soldiers smiling next to piles of naked prisoners and a hooded detainee standing on a narrow box with

electrical wires attached to his outstretched hands.

An Abu Ghraib interrogator later revealed that Israelis trained them in the use of techniques used against Palestinians. General Janis Karpinski (in charge of the unit that ran the prison) and others say that Israelis were involved in interrogations. It was reported that the head of the defense contracting firm implicated in the torture at Abu Ghraib prison had close ties to Israel and had visited an Israeli training camp in the West Bank.

Another major factor in the rise of anti-Western extremism is the largely unconditional support for Israel's violent oppression of Palestinians. As a UN report documented, "The scale of human loss and destruction in Gaza during the 2014 conflict was catastrophic and has ... shocked and shamed the world."

Professor John Mearsheimer of and Professor Stephen Walt of Harvard have written that U.S. policies promoted by the Israel lobby have given "extremists a powerful recruiting tool, increases the pool of potential terrorists and sympathizers, and contributes to Islamic radicalism around the world." Osama Bin Laden cited U.S. support for Israeli crimes against Palestinians among his reasons for fighting the U.S. The U.S. gives Israel over \$10 million per day.

Reaction to the Trump executive order

Thousands of people across the U.S. have opposed Trump's order for the extreme hardship it imposes on multitudes of refugees. The focus on Muslims (Trump has said that Christians might be exempted) has caused outrage at such religious discrimination and unfair profiling (the large majority of Muslims strongly oppose extremism).

Individuals across the political spectrum from Code Pink to the Koch brothers have decried the order. The Kochs issued a strong statement against it:

"We believe it is possible to keep Americans safe without excluding people who wish to come here to contribute and pursue a better life for their families. The travel ban is the wrong approach and will likely be counterproductive. Our country has benefited tremendously from a history of welcoming people from all cultures and

backgrounds. This is a hallmark of free and open societies.”

New York Democratic Senator Chuck Schumer, who supported the Iraq War and suggests God sent him to guard Israel, choked back tears at a press conference and called the order “mean-spirited and un-American.”

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), known for its fervent pro-Israel advocacy (and history of smearing criticism of Israeli policy as “anti-Semitism”), has vowed a “relentless fight” against the ban.

Some are concerned that Trump’s action will stoke terrorism, rather than defend against it. Many others support the order in the belief it makes them safer from extremist violence. (As mentioned above, the Obama administration undertook a similar, though milder, action for a similar reason.)

I suggest that everyone – both those who deplore the order for humanitarian reasons, and those who defend it out of concern for Americans’ safety – examine the historic context outlined above and the U.S. policies that led to this order.

For decades, Democratic and Republican administrations have enacted largely parallel policies regarding the Middle East and Israel-Palestine. We are seeing the results, and most of us are deeply displeased.

I would submit that both for humanitarian obligations and for security necessities, it is urgent that we find a different way forward.

President Trump has issued an executive order suspending entry to the U.S. for people from Iraq, Syria, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Iran, and Yemen. While reports on President Trump's ban emphasize that these are Muslim majority countries, analysts seem to have ignored another significant characteristic that these countries share.

With just a single exception, all of these countries were targeted for attack by certain top U.S. officials in 2001. In fact, that policy had roots that went back to 1996, 1991, 1980, and even the 1950s. Here we will trace this policy back in time and examine its goals and proponents.



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