

Coming Soon: Trumped! (Part 5—Hillary's War Cabinet In Waiting)

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By David Stockman

NOTE TO READERS

I am in the throes of finishing a book on the upheaval represented by the Trump candidacy and movement. It is an exploration of how 30 years of Bubble Finance policies at the Fed, feckless interventions abroad and mushrooming Big government and debt at home have brought America to its current ruinous condition.

It also delves into the good and bad of the Trump campaign and platform and outlines a more consistent way forward based on free markets, fiscal rectitude, sound money, constitutional liberty, non-intervention abroad, minimalist government at home and decentralized political rule.

In order to complete the manuscript on a timely basis, I will not be doing daily posts for the next week or two. Instead, I will post excerpts from the book that crystalize its key themes and which also relate to the on-going gong show in the presidential campaigns and in the financial and economic arenas. The **fifth** of these is included below.

I am also working with my partners at Agora Financial on a new version of Contra Corner. More information on that will be coming early next month.

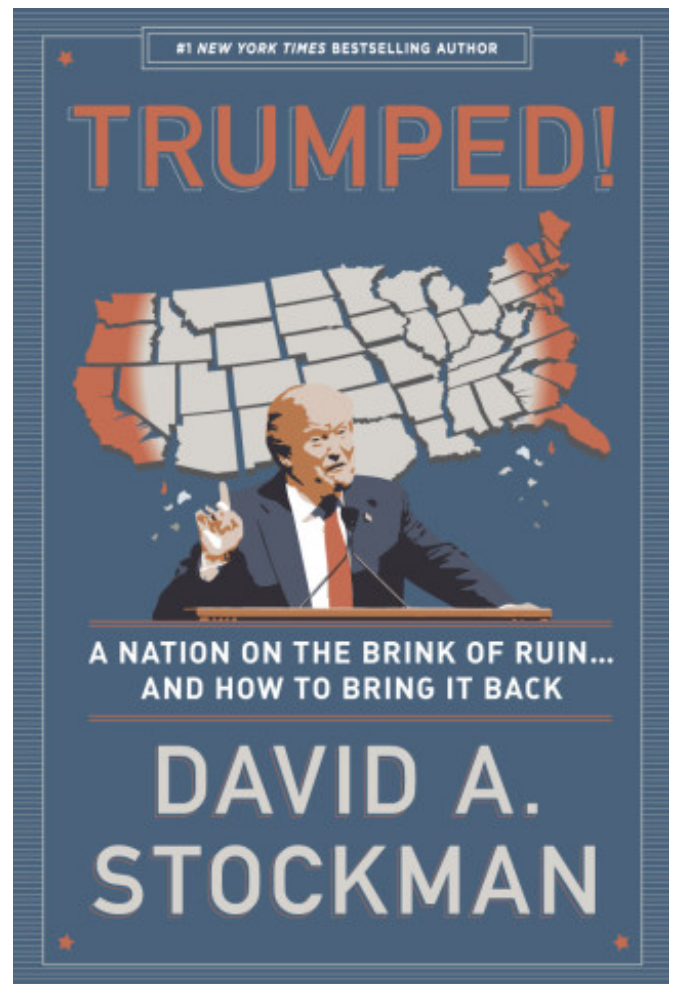
.....This fair summer camp for the (very) fortunate got double-whammy'd by the War Party during a weekend of "big think" last August.

First there was a "debate" about whether ISIS should be "contained" or "defeated". That was followed by a glowing progress report from General John Allen. He was President Obama's Special Envoy for the Global Coalition of the Unwilling and Unable (to fight ISIS), and the gist of his speech was that 6,000 airstrikes since the previous August had been winning droves of hearts and minds in the Upper Euphrates valley.

Well, that number is up to 11,000 now, and there is scant sign of hearts and minds being won.

Still, General Allen's speech was all for the edification of the pooh bahs of the foreign policy establishment who had been in town for **the annual Aspen Strategy Group conclave**. The latter bills itself as "a bipartisan foreign policy group that includes legislators, experts, journalists, policy practitioners, members of academia, and business leaders".

No it's not. It's an off-campus exercise in mendacity, vapid group-think and narcissistic self-glorification by the perpetrators of Washington's endless foreign policy catastrophes. Once a year they come to admire each other and split hairs



about pointless tactical differences.

The debate about “containing” versus “defeating” ISIS proved that in spades. In fact, the “exterminate ISIS” team embodied an exact caricature of the bipartisan folly which has congealed in the Washington War Party.

Not surprisingly the #2 chair in the duo was occupied by an-out-and-out neocon warmonger, Professor Phillip Zelikow. He was an architect of the Bush wars on WMD and head of the 9/11 Whitewash Commission. His case boiled down to shouting vehemently that the Islamic hordes are heading for Times Square.

So America needs to obliterate the 200,000 citizens of Raqqa, Syria before they get us. Never mind that there is not one iota of evidence that the self-appointed enforcers of Islamic purity who occupy a few dusty desert towns in the Upper Euphrates have any real capacity to mount a military attack on the fleshpots of Broadway and 42nd.

But the neocons are taking no chances. To nearly every last armchair warrior, led by Robert Kagen, they are lining-up behind Hillary.

Apparently, they fear Trump might make a deal with Putin to unleash President Assad and his Shiite crescent allies. In short order that would put the Islamic State out of business and close the Syrian theatre of neocon war games, too.

But what was dispositive about last summer’s confab was that the #1 chair on the perpetual war team was occupied by Michele Flournoy.

That’s right. She was Obama’s #2 at DOD and was ostensibly a legatee of what was once the Democratic Party’s left-leaning peace wing.

No more. Ms. Flournoy has climbed Washington’s slippery pole of power by growing a heavy plume of hawkish feathers.

Accordingly, she presented not a single coherent argument about how ISIS is a **military threat** to the safety and security of the citizens of Lincoln NE or Springfield MA. Her case amounted to nothing more than a glib recitation of ISIS’ murderous brutalities, beheadings and benighted barbarisms.

But as John Quincy Adams so profoundly observed, America’s security does not require that it search the world for monsters to destroy.

Apparently, Hillary Clinton does, however. For her Secretary of Defense-Designate is none other than Michelle Flournoy. Both share an obliviousness to Adams’ profound truth because they are credentialed member of the Washington War Party.

And as a team, they are as good a reason as any to give Donald Trump a shot at the commander-in-chief job.

After all, he has not spent a lifetime in the Imperial City looking for monsters to destroy abroad. He has even had the good sense to suggest that the vast network of US bases used for this purpose should be sharply curtailed.

Defend America at home, first, he says. And why not. The Washington Imperium has failed virtually everywhere, and its bombs, drones and occupations have hatched far more terrorists than they have killed.

Nor is Trump a paid-off supplicant of the military-industrial-congressional complex that Eisenhower warned about, and which since the demise of the Soviet Union has done exactly as he predicted.

To wit, it has never stopped inventing enemies, provocations and threats designed to justify a massive, costly and obsolete cold war military machine.

As we indicated in the precious chapter, the whole military industrial complex, NATO and international security

apparatus should have been disbanded when the cold war ended for lack of a genuine industrial state enemy.

Instead, searching for monsters to destroy has been the very *raison d'etre* of American foreign policy. And it has surely been the source of the endless catastrophes that have ensued.

To wit, in the great wash of history did it really matter to America which tyranny—that of the brutish Saddam Hussein or the repressive Sharia law-based regime of Sheikh al-Sabah—controlled the oilfields on the Kuwait/Iraq border?

After all, legitimate national sovereignty had nothing to do with it. Iraq was never a country, but only a spoils-of-war map drawn by British and French diplomats in 1916 and subsequently held together by the sword of dictators and generals; and Kuwait was a Bedouin settlement of no particular legitimacy, which had prospered only due to the deals its chieftains made with British Petroleum after the oil discoveries of the 1930s.

Besides, the answer to oil shortages everywhere and always is high prices, not the Fifth Fleet. This truth has been demonstrated over and over in the last half-century—not the least in the current cycle.

High oil prices at \$150 per barrel lasted a few months in 2008 and tottered above \$100 a few years thereafter, but have now been buried as far as the eye can see by an outpouring of shale, tar sands and other lower grade or costly-to-extract hydro-carbon supplies from provinces all over the planet. And that's to say nothing of the vast upwelling of alternative energy and conservation responses to higher prices.

In fact, OPEC is no more, and the opulent princes of the Persian Gulf will one-day be scrambling to fuel up their 747s for a final bon voyage.

Stated differently, economics will out, and whatever sovereign controls the bounty of Mother Nature buried beneath the desert sands of the Persian Gulf and North Africa will produce all of it they can.

Every dictator of the last half-century proved that—from Muammar Gaddafi, to Saddam Hussein to the mullahs of the Iranian Republic. Indeed, the politically induced shortages have all been the work of the Washington War Party's perennial sanctions and embargoes; these slight “shortages” were cooked up by the denizens of the Aspen Strategy Group, not blood-thirsty men in black turbans.

Needless to say, as the Aspen Strategy Group carried on its simulacrum of debate and analysis, the original grey-haired perpetrators of the Persian Gulf oil security myth were all there to cheer them on, including Brent Scowcroft who advised Bush the Elder to draw a pointless line in the Kuwaiti sand.

Yet, as we now know, what actually got implanted in the sand were the boots of the American army in Saudi Arabia. It was Washington's spurious meddling in the \$40 billion dispute between Saddam and the greedy princes of Riyadh over who owed what from their joint war on Iran during the 1980s that resurrected a Wahhabi fanatic named Osama bin Laden from obscurity and unemployment after his CIA-funded Mujahedeen work in Afghanistan ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

That senseless revival, in turn, ultimately enabled the flukish calamity of 9/11.

As bin Laden ranted in his famous “**Declaration Of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places**,

The latest and the greatest of these aggressions, incurred by the Muslims since the death of the Prophet (ALLAH'S BLESSING AND SALUTATIONS ON HIM) is the occupation of the land of the two Holy Places [Mecca and Medina] -the foundation of the house of Islam, the place of the revelation, the source of the message and the place of the noble Ka'ba, the Qiblah of all Muslims- by

the armies of the American Crusaders and their allies. (We bemoan this and can only say: “No power and power acquiring except through Allah”)...

But once bin Laden’s tiny cohort of fanatical jihadists—never numbering more than a few thousands according to the CIA itself—was unleashed, the War Party proceeded to add insult to injury. It mistook the US military’s easy time of shooting Saddam’s ducks in a barrel on the Kuwaiti desert as evidence of Washington’s war-winning prowess; and the popularity of CNN’s first ever live action war games as an endorsement of the American peoples’ appetite for foreign adventurism.

So under the clueless authority of Bush the Younger, the denizens of the Aspen Strategy Group added lies and dissimulation to the sin of false pride. That is, they carried out an unprovoked Shock and Awe invasion of a country that had never, ever threatened America, had no capacity to harm the American people, and no connection whatsoever to the fanatical sect that pulled off 9/11 against all odds.

Stated differently, 9/11 style terrorism was a domestic public safety and policing challenge back then and it remains so today. The remote threat of an ISIS terrorist attack or even an ISIS inspired copycat attack in any given American city or town has not been reduced by an iota owing to the random bombing and droning campaigns being carried out in the Upper Euphrates Valley by the Washington war party.

So Imperial Washington had it wrong from the beginning. Fighting terrorism was never an appropriate mission for the Pentagon’s conventional war machine—a lethal armada of tanks, planes and ships that had been mistakenly built by Ronald Reagan to fight an industrialized enemy like the Soviet Union, which was no more.

Yet once the American war machine was unleashed on the fragile polity that Saddam had stapled together with machine guns and canisters of deadly gases, the furies of historical grudges and sectarian grievances were inexorably unleashed.

The truth is, Washington mid-wifed ISIS by hanging Saddam and destroying a brutal but serviceable regime which had at least been based on the secularist tenants of Baathist nationalism. Saddam had a penchant for brandishing rifles and liquidating dissidents, but he had no cotton for beheading infidels.

That was the modus operandi of the Shiite militias that got a free hand once Saddam was gone. And it was these vengeance seekers who ran riot over the land between the two rivers after the American people properly elected a peace candidate pledged to extricate Washington from its grizzly mayhem in Iraq.

Likewise, the reason more than anything else that the Sunni lands of western Iraq fell to the butchers of ISIS during the summer of 2014 was that they offered a shield of protection against the vengeance of the Shiite vigilantes and the monumental corruption and theft of the Shiite government in Baghdad.

Even then, however, their lightning conquest was made in Washington. That is, ISIS conquered not by the “sword” of Sunni fundamentalism at all, but owing to the massive arsenal of tanks, Humvee’s, field artillery, lethal weaponry and ammunition and advanced paraphernalia of 21st century warfare that had been deposited by the American military.

Indeed, during the debate about “containment” versus “rollback” that Sunday afternoon there occurred a moment of clarity that explains why the War Party’s abominations go unchecked.

David Petraeus, the disgraced general whose misbegotten “surge” campaigns caused the pointless deaths of more than 1,000 American servicemen in Iraq and Afghanistan and whose egomaniacal strutting led him to drop the CIA’s black book of secrets on Paula Broadwell’s pillow, had the cheek to stand up and explain that it was Obama who blew his victory in Anbar province.

Yes, that's exactly what the man said!

Did the audience give the ex-general the Bronx cheer he deserved or did the moderator call foul ball? No they did not. The moderator invited him to star in the next debate and the audience welcomed the blithering nonsense he offered in the guise of a question.

Well, here's the real question. **Who's infinitely dumb idea was it to spend \$25 billion purportedly training and equipping an "Iraqi" army in what by 2007 was an utterly failed state,** rent asunder by sectarian strife that was beyond recall?

Yes, **it was David Petraeus** and his congressional sponsors like the **rabid war-mongers, Senators McCain and Graham,** who did exactly that.

The only reason that there was even a debate about the proper anti-ISIS strategy during this Aspen confab was because the War Party in its wisdom left behind in Sunni lands 2,300 Humvees, 74,000 machine guns, 40 Abrams tanks, and countless more accoutrements of war with what was, in fact, a Shiite militia wearing Iraqi uniforms—uniforms they instantly shed when it came to defending Sunni towns against the descending hordes of ISIS.

Needless to say, the War Party learns nothing and never quits. Thus, its debate team of ISIS eradicators had yet another scheme. By their lights, "containment" of ISIS in its pitiful desert redoubts is not enough. Channeling Barry Goldwater's 1964 campaign slogan, they claimed that America can settle for no less than "victory" over ISIS.

Yes, and that is to be accomplished with no American boots on the ground. The eradication is to be carried on by the Sunnis themselves.

Say what?

Would that be the Sunni nation of Turkey, equipped as it is with NATO's best 1,000 planes, 5,000 tanks and a professional military of 500,000? Well, that all depends on what Sultan Erdogan intends to do now that he has made himself dictator.

Besides, there are complications due to the Kurdish issue and the obsession of the Sultan with liquidating the Syrian Kurdish allies of his own insurgent population of 15 million Kurds before getting around to vanquishing the Sunni caliphate.

Indeed, most of the cross-border bombing campaigns carried out by Turkey in the past year have really been a thinly disguised cover to make war on the Kurdish enclaves of northern Syrian and Iraq.

Why? The better to stir up anti-Kurdish venom among the Turkish populace. Nothing could better serve Erdogan's evident plan to extend his current emergency powers to rule by decree or to eventually amend the nation's constitution to make himself Presidential dictator for life.

Next, of course, is the real irony. The only great Sunni tribe that has shown itself willing and able to fight ISIS is the Kurds. But Kurdistan—a nation of 30 million—doesn't even have an army because it was the one large tribe that came back from Versailles empty-handed and without a nation of its own.

So its people remained scattered among hostile Shiite governments in Iraq and Iran, and bombed and prosecuted by a newly installed dictatorship in Ankara. The only boots the Kurds will be leaving on the ground are the ones felled by the Turkish air force.

Likewise, to the south is the 88 million strong Sunni nation of Egypt. But it goes without saying that General al-Sisi, its newly legitimized dictator by way of Washington's renewed \$1.5 billion flow of aid and weapons, will not be sending his army to the Upper Euphrates. He needs the entirety of his 469,000 man military to keep the population

of Egypt subdued.

In the case of the vast Sunni population of Saudi Arabia (about 25 million), the prospects of raising an anti-ISIS fighting force under the auspices of the government in Riyadh are between slim and none. The House of Saud knows full well that if it sends its army to Syria it will defect to the Sunni jihadists' side in short order.

So whence cometh the Sunni boots on the ground that will be needed to eradicate the purported 20,000 ISIS fighters? After all, what happened last time Washington got itself busy identifying, recruiting, vetting, training and deploying the proverbial "moderate" Syrian rebels who want to take back their country from the jihadists?

After years of jabbering and a half billion dollars spent, however, here is what the War Party and its Aspen Strategy Group thinkers have accomplished. Namely, after nearly two years of effort Washington was finally able to field a force of 60 soldiers.

That's right. There are no zeros missing—and even that rag-tag ensemble promptly met its doom.

Its commander and deputy were captured by the Nusra Front, several members were killed and the balance defected or disappeared into the rubble of the former Syrian state.

Yes, this is beyond pathetic. But here's the thing. The opposing side in the Aspen Strategy Group debate was at least sober enough to advocate "containment" rather than indulging in the juvenile game of where's the Sunni Waldo.

But they never did say how long the US would have to "contain" ISIS by bombing the 81,000 square miles it controls, or whether this would constitute taking it back to the stone age or merely recognizing that it was already essentially there.

Notwithstanding that Ramadi, Fallujah, Mosul and Raqqa were once respectable centers of civilization and commerce, the truth is there is next to nothing left there after years, even decades, of US instigated warfare.

So the so-called Islamic State is no state at all—it's just a backwater dystopia that is utterly incapable of ever mounting a military threat to America's security.

Indeed, now that oil is down to \$40 per barrel and most of the motley array of Syrian oil wells have been decimated, the Islamic State has apparently discovered a new method of revenue raising. To wit, they are reportedly harvesting and selling the body parts of their wounded.

Stated differently, the blood-thirsty fanatics who run the Islamic State are killing the commerce, the population and even the flocks and fields on which these quasi-subsistence villages once depended. For crying out loud, according to General John Allen himself, the whole joint was being run on revenue of less than \$1 billion per year; and now that its oil revenues are going dry, its funds are down to a small fraction of even that.

Don't these Washington geniuses know that when it comes to recruiting even soldiers of Allah that the rule of "no ticky, no washy" applies, and in spades ?

And what kind of crackpots really think that as abhorrent as ISIS is—that a real state with a modern military capability can finance itself on the slave trade of young women, body parts of the wounded, hostage taking and punitive taxation of a nearly starving population in its shrunken areas of control?

This is nuts! The War Party's futile effort to "contain" ISIS by relentless droning and bombing of the unfortunate towns and villages caught up in its snare is accomplishing only one thing—and it amounts to a monumental self-inflicted setback.

Namely, it provides horrific, living color video proof that the crusaders are still visiting mayhem on the innocent and

Allah-fearing peoples of the putative caliphate. And it is the overpowering magnet that brings new recruits to join the fight against the Great Satan in Washington.

The way to stop ISIS, therefore, is to ground the bombers and drones; send home the spotters, trainers and other infrastructure of intervention; forget about who controls the oil—it will be produced by someone; and recognize that **American has no dog in the 1300 year old fight between Sunni and Shiite.**

Indeed, the elephant in the room during the Aspen debate was the Shiite Crescent. That is, the 100 million Shiite citizens of Iran; the rump of Iraq in Bagdad and the south; the Alawite/Shiite minority of the Assad regime in Syria and the Hezbollah/Shiite fighters who represent 45% of Lebanon and constitute its largest political party.

All of them have been condemned to the sword as apostates by the ISIS caliphate, and at the end of the day they are the one force that can keep the latter bottled-up in its miserable territories until its bloody regime collapses of its own inhumanity.

Alas, when it comes to the Shiite Crescent—a group of Islamic nations no better or worse than the brutal tyranny of Egypt or the glutinous obscenity of the Persian Gulf sheikdoms—the War Party cannot see straight.

The Aspen Strategy Group, Hillary, Flournoy and the rest are utterly clueless as to why the Iranian regime has been so hostile to the American Imperium's plans for a better world.

Let's see. The CIA did overthrow Iran's elected government in 1953 for the sin of nationalizing the nation's oilfields. Washington did stand 100% behind the Shah's 25-year reign of plunder and helped him organize and operate the Savak—an internal secret police so brutal and murderous as to make the East German Stasi seemed civilized by comparison.

Yes, and the neocons of the Reagan White House did tilt toward Iraq after its unprovoked attack on Iran. Indeed, they went so far as to use the CIA's spy satellites to act as spotters for Saddam's chemical weapons attacks on Iran battle forces—often just teenage boys armed with wooden rifles.

And their successors in the administration of Bush the Elder did identify the Iranian Republic as the new enemy to replace the fallen Soviets, thereby keeping the military industrial complex and CIA surveillance state alive and funded at its accustomed levels.

Likewise, **they did induce Bush the Younger to identify Iran as part of the Axis of Evil in** his 2002 State of the Union address. That is, they proclaimed Iran among the nations slated for the cleansing force of a Washington orchestrated “regime change” and that its leaders, like Saddam, would be disposed of at the end of a hangman's rope.

So they don't like us—profoundly so. Yet the leaders in Tehran have had the good sense to bend over and accept Obama's humiliating deal to exchange a non-existent nuclear weapons program and 15 years of an international nuclear inspection proctology for the right to re-enter world commerce and the community of nations.

Even then, they will fight and contain ISIS because their survival depends upon it.

None of these realities penetrated last summer's Aspen War Games, nor **Hillary's war cabinet in waiting.**

Indeed, as General Allen droned on during that occasion—and, yes, the man was droning profusely—about the scores of godforsaken Syrian border towns that have been allegedly liberated from ISIS, the police forces that have been stood up, the fresh recruits that have joined the so-called Iraqi Army, the thousands of ISIS fighters who have been sent to a better world, the thousands of teachers and medics that have been put into the field, I closed my eyes.

I then **did hear the voice of General William C. Westmoreland echoing over the decades.** We are winning the

hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people, he intoned; we are Vietnamizing the conflict; the strategic hamlet program has become a swell success; we are building schools and clinics in the rice paddies; the body count of dead Viet Cong is swelling by the day.

It was all one giant tapestry of BS, of course, which temporarily camouflaged the catastrophe of LBJ's war and the genocidal destruction that it inflicted on an innocent people.

Still, General Allen's completely bogus progress report reminded me why I was a Peacenik way back then; of how profoundly Hillary and her War Party have betrayed the cause; and why even an untutored and often uncouth showman like Donald Trump cannot possibly do worse than the pretentious armchair warriors of the Aspen Strategy Group.

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