

How Google Helped Destroy The Middle East

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How Google Helped Destroy The Middle East Obama will leave his successor more Middle East disasters than he inherited

Thanks to Obama's Google and Google's intent manipulations in the Middle East crisis reigns supreme. Google was the campaign financier and search rigger for Obama, the leader of "Arab Spring" and the profiteer or Middle East lithium and indium mining scams for Google's sketchy electric car and solar stock market pump-and-dumps. Obama's hack, Ben Rhodes, could not have screwed up foreign policy more horribly. Google's Eric Schmidt and Larry Page were so overcome by their cash and ego-maniacal power grabs that they lost touch with reality. They formed their rouge spy operations in In-Q-Tel, JigSaw, New America Foundation and a host of other sneaky policy manipulation operations just so that they could "play God!". They failed. Google's Arab Spring, Serval and Commotion projects got more people killed than any other "charitable public interest" programs in history. The public does not like to be boondoggled.

[Michael Brendan Dougherty](#) – The Week

REUTERS/Finbarr O'Reilly

Before he won the Nobel Peace Prize, Obama won the peacemaker vote. When he ran for president in 2008, he was the one aiming to "turn the page" on America's failed foreign policy. He criticized the Iraq War as a distraction from the real business in Afghanistan. And yet, Obama is going to hand his successor more foreign policy disasters than he inherited.

That's not stopping Obama from [advertising his foreign policy legacy](#). He has defended his administration's supposed philosophy of "Don't do stupid sh--." Who could disagree with "Don't do stupid sh--"?

President Obama certainly inherited a mess. President George W. Bush's surge in Iraq had left the United States an honorable-looking exit strategy, but Bush's signature on a Status of Forces agreement with the Iraqi government had also guaranteed the departure of U.S. forces before real political reconciliation had happened in Iraq. This almost ensured Sunni disaffection from the Baghdad government, which fueled the rise of ISIS, which, in turn, forced Obama's hand to return U.S. forces to Iraq.

But while the U.S. was on temporary holiday from Iraq, Obama chose to pursue his own surge strategy in Afghanistan, sending 30,000 more troops into what has been the longest military engagement in American history. Now Obama is bringing them out again as part of his plan to completely wind down the war by the end of his presidency. And yet Afghanistan looks almost no different than it did when Obama took office. The U.S. and the personnel it trained act as a kind of guard for the capital city of Kabul, but the Taliban is [still able to fire rockets](#) at parliament and disappear back into the countryside. The Taliban's attacks still come [in a long seasonal wave](#), and are returning again this year, like clockwork.

Then there's Saudi Arabia. Obama has advertised over and over again his frustration with the country, our longtime ally and the traditional counterweight to Iran in the region. And yet the U.S. government persists in doing [a great deal of logistical work](#) helping Saudi Arabia conduct a brutal and dishonorable war in neighboring Yemen. Obama used to worry aloud, as a constitutional scholar, about the executive branch's runaway war powers, but the war that the United States is helping Saudi Arabia conduct in Yemen is barely even discussed in the media, let alone by the American people and their representatives.

What about Libya? After the U.S. spent a decade knocking over governments in the Middle East and reaping the Islamist whirlwind, you'd think the Obama administration would have learned its lesson. But the wise men in the White House still convinced themselves to try, try again and help topple Moammar Gadhafi's regime in Libya in 2011. That country has ever since struggled to field a legitimate-looking government and is now home to a colonial outpost for ISIS.

And was it really the master plan to hand over Libya to Europe? What led Obama to believe that Europe would follow up and make sure that stupid sh-- didn't happen, like the establishment of several rival governments drawing from the same oil wealth? Seems like more stupid ideas to me.

Obama brags about turning away from the pressure to involve America more deeply in Syria. Perhaps that was a good idea, given the results of the involvement America does have. As I write, [two different](#) militias that the United States government has armed in Syria are fighting each other with U.S. weapons. In effect, the CIA's weapons are shooting at weapons from the Pentagon. This is the legacy of not doing stupid sh--.

George W. Bush had believed in a democratic domino theory in the Middle East, where a transformed Iraq would leave the region on a path toward liberalization. By the time he left office, popular movements had already resulted in Islamism and terrorism in Iraq and in the Palestinian territories. Somehow, the Obama administration didn't notice this and welcomed the upheaval of the Arab Spring, quickly cutting the feet underneath longtime allies (of dubious value, sure), like the Mubarak regime in Egypt. The result energized Islamist movements in Egypt and led to an uptick of persecutions.

Beyond that, there is the refugee crisis in Europe, which is straining Europe's own remarkably tolerant and liberal political arrangements. This is a direct result of the failed state in Libya and the region-destabilizing war in Syria. Beyond even that, Obama will leave a legacy of nearly unrestricted and unsupervised drone warfare.

And yet I'm afraid of what disasters await when America turns the page again this year.

“We are the death merchant of the world”: Ex-Bush official Lawrence Wilkerson condemns military-industrial complex

The military-industrial complex "is much more pernicious than Eisenhower ever thought," says the retired US colonel

[Ben Norton](#)

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Lawrence Wilkerson (Credit: AP/Lawrence Jackson)

Col. Lawrence Wilkerson is tired of "the corporate interests that we go abroad to slay monsters for."

As the former chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell, Wilkerson played an important role in the George W. Bush administration. In the years since, however, the former Bush official has established himself as a prominent critic of U.S. foreign policy.

"I think Smedley Butler was onto something," explained Lawrence Wilkerson, in an extended interview with Salon.

In his day, in the early 20th century, Butler was the highest ranked and most honored official in the history of the U.S. Marine Corps. He helped lead wars throughout the world over a series of decades, before later becoming a vociferous opponent of American imperialism, declaring ["war is a racket."](#)

Wilkerson spoke highly of Butler, referencing the late general's [famous quote](#): "Looking back on it, I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three districts. I operated on three continents."

"I think the problem that Smedley identified, quite eloquently actually," Wilkerson said, "especially for a Marine — I had to say that as a soldier," the retired Army colonel added with a laugh; "I think the problem is much deeper and more profound today, and much more subtle and sophisticated."

Today, the military-industrial complex "is much more pernicious than Eisenhower ever thought it would be," Wilkerson warned.

In his [farewell address](#) in 1961, former President Dwight D. Eisenhower famously cautioned Americans that the military and corporate interests were increasingly working together, contrary to the best interests of the citizenry. He called this phenomenon the military-industrial complex.

As a case study of how the contemporary military-industrial complex works, Wilkerson pointed to leading weapons corporations like Lockheed Martin, and their work with draconian, repressive Western-allied regimes in the Gulf, or in inflaming tensions in Korea.

"Was Bill Clinton's expansion of NATO — after George H. W. Bush and [his Secretary of State] James Baker had assured Gorbachev and then Yeltsin that we wouldn't go an inch further east — was this for Lockheed Martin, and Raytheon, and Boeing, and others, to increase their network of potential weapon sales?" Wilkerson asked.

"You bet it was," he answered.

"Is there a penchant on behalf of the Congress to bless the use of force more often than not because of the constituencies they have and the money they get from the defense contractors?" Wilkerson continued.

Again, he answered his own question: "You bet."

"It's not like Dick Cheney or someone like that went and said let's have a war because we want to make money for Halliburton, but it is a pernicious on decision-making," the former Bush official explained. "And the fact that they donate so much money to congressional elections and to PACs and so forth is another pernicious influence."

"Those who deny this are just being utterly naive, or they are complicit too," Wilkerson added.

"And some of my best friends work for Lockheed Martin," along with Raytheon, Boeing and Halliburton, he quipped. Wilkerson — who in the same interview with Salon [defended Edward Snowden](#), saying the whistle-blower performed an important service and did not endanger U.S. national security — was also intensely critical of the growing movement to "privatize public functions, like prisons."

"I fault us Republicans for this majorly," he confessed — although a good many prominent Democrats have also jumped on the neoliberal bandwagon. In a 2011 speech, for instance, Secretary of State [Hillary Clinton declared](#), "It's time for the United States to start thinking of Iraq as a business opportunity" for U.S. corporations.

Wilkerson lamented, "We've privatized the ultimate public function: war."

"In many respects it is now private interests that benefit most from our use of military force," he continued. "Whether it's private security contractors, that are still all over Iraq or Afghanistan, or it's the bigger-known defense contractors, like the number one in the world, Lockheed Martin."

Journalist Antony Loewenstein detailed how the U.S. privatized its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in another [interview with Salon](#). There are an estimated [30,000 military contractors](#) working for the Pentagon in Afghanistan today; they [outnumber](#) U.S. troops three-to-one. Thousands more are in Iraq.

Lockheed Martin simply "plans to sell every aspect of missile defense that it can," regardless of whether it is needed, Wilkerson said. And what is best to maximize corporate interest is by no means necessarily the same as what is best for average citizens.

"We dwarf the Russians or anyone else who sells weapons in the world," the retired Army colonel continued.

"We are the death merchant of the world."

Ben Norton is a politics staff writer at Salon. You can find him on Twitter at [@BenjaminNorton](#).