Mali? Libya? The Phillippines? Somalia? Yemen? Iraq? Afghanistan? Pakistan? Haven't we been here before?

(excerpts below from Glenn Greenwald writing in The Guardian, Jan 14th [1])

As **French war planes bomb Mali**, there is one simple statistic that provides the key context: **this west African nation of 15 million people is the eighth country in which western powers - over the last four years alone - have bombed and killed Muslims - after Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Libya, Somalia and the Philippines** (that does not count the numerous lethal tyrannies propped up by the west in that region). For obvious reasons, the rhetoric that the west is not at war with the Islamic world grows increasingly hollow with each new expansion of this militarism. But within this new massive bombing campaign, one finds most of the vital lessons about western intervention that, typically, are ignored.

First, as this NY Times' account makes clear, **much of the instability in Mali is the direct result of Nato's intervention in Libya.** [...] As Owen Jones wrote in an excellent column in the Independent:

> "This intervention is itself the consequence of another. The Libyan war is frequently touted as a success story for liberal interventionism. Yet the toppling of Muammar Gaddafi's dictatorship had consequences that Western intelligence services probably never even bothered to imagine. Tuaregs – who traditionally hailed from northern Mali – made up a large portion of his army. When Gaddafi was ejected from power, they returned to their homeland: sometimes forcibly so as black Africans came under attack in post-Gaddafi Libya, an uncomfortable fact largely ignored by the Western media. . . . [T]he Libyan war was seen as a success . . . and here we are now engaging with its catastrophic blowback."

Over and over, western intervention ends up - whether by ineptitude or design - sowing the seeds of further intervention. Given the massive instability still plaguing Libya as well as enduring anger over the Benghazi attack, how long will it be before we hear that bombing and invasions in **that** country are - once again - necessary to combat the empowered "Islamist" forces there: forces empowered as a result of the Nato overthrow of that country's government?

Second, **the overthrow of the Malian government was enabled by US-trained-and-armed soldiers who defected.** From the NYT: "commanders of this nation's elite army units, the fruit of years of careful American training, defected when they were needed most — taking troops, guns, trucks and their newfound skills to the enemy in the heat of battle, according to senior Malian military officials." Then: "**an American-trained officer overthrew Mali's elected government**, setting the stage for more than half of the country to fall into the hands of Islamic extremists." [...]

Third, western bombing of Muslims in yet another country will obviously provoke even more anti-western sentiment, the fuel of terrorism. Already, as the Guardian reports, French fighter jets in Mali have killed "at least 11 civilians including three children". France's long history of colonialization in Mali only exacerbates the inevitable anger. In December, after the UN Security Council authorized the intervention in Mali, Amnesty International's

researcher on West Africa, Salvatore Saguès, underlined: "An international armed intervention is likely to increase the scale of human rights violations we are already seeing in this conflict." ...

Indeed, at the same time that the French are now killing civilians in Mali, a joint French-US raid in Somalia caused the deaths of "at least eight civilians, including two women and two children". **To believe that the US and its allies can just continue to go around the world, in country after country, and bomb and kill innocent people - Muslims - and not be targeted with "terrorist" attacks is, for obvious reasons, lunacy.**

Fourth, for all the self-flattering rhetoric that western democracies love to apply to themselves, it is extraordinary how these wars are waged without any pretense of democratic process. […] **The Obama administration has, of course, draped its entire drone and global assassination campaign in an impenetrable cloth of secrecy, ensuring it remains beyond the scrutinizing reach of media outlets, courts, and its own citizens.** The US and its western allies do not merely wage endless war aimed invariably at Muslims. They do so in virtually complete secrecy, without any transparency or accountability. Meet the western "democracies".

Finally, the propaganda used to justify all of this is depressingly common yet wildly effective. **Any western government that wants to bomb Muslims simply slaps the label of "terrorists" on them, and any real debate or critical assessment instantly ends before it can even begin.** […] There is no doubt that the Malian rebels have engaged in all sorts of heinous atrocities ("amputations, flogging, and stoning to death for those who oppose their interpretation of Islam"), but so, too, have Malian government forces - including, as Amnesty chronicled, "arresting, torturing and killing Tuareg people apparently only on ethnic ground." As Jones aptly warns: "**don't fall for a narrative so often pushed by the Western media: a perverse oversimplification of good fighting evil, just as we have seen imposed on Syria's brutal civil war.**" […]

(and, from a Jan 22nd article by Seumas Milne, also in The Guardian[2])

[…] **All this is anyway about a good deal more than terrorism.** Underlying the growing western military involvement in Africa – from the spread of American bases under the US Africa Command to France's resumption of its post-colonial habit of routine armed intervention – is **a struggle for resources and strategic control, in the face of China's expanding economic role in the continent.** In north and west Africa, that's not just about oil and gas, but also uranium in countries like Niger – and Mali. **Terrorism has long since become a catch-all cover for legitimizing aggressive war.**

[1] http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/jan/14/mali-france-bombing-intervention-libya
[2] http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/jan/22/mali-fastest-blowback-war-on-terror/

It doesn't have to be this way. Let your elected representatives know you oppose the pattern of endless intervention and war.   In this area: **US Rep. Rodney Davis** (R IL-13)**, (202) 224-3121, and US Senators Richard Durbin** (D-IL) (202) 224-2152, and **Mark Kirk** (R-IL) (202) 224-2854.

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