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**The foreign policy of regime change can trigger World War 3**

*By Michael Lee*

It's September, 2099. Time Magazine is bringing out a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Retrospective issue which will hit the newsagents and book stores worldwide in December. The senior news editor has commissioned a leading historian, Dr Joe White, head of the Stanford department of history, to write a political overview for the news magazine's special edition.

White knows immediately what his essay's main theme will be. On the way back to his office he begins dictating into his smartphone.

"Title: Why did we let 9/11 lead to World War 3. Question mark. First paragraph. In looking back over the century that's rapidly drawing to a close, I can do no other than attempt to answer the one troubling question that has dominated my thoughts for so long. Stop."

Stop.

Indeed, we're back in 2014 and it's surely time to press the Pause button on the machine of living history. We must urgently reflect on what kind of geopolitical world we're busy creating and, in particular, where precisely the West is going with its infinitely dangerous obsession with regime change in the Middle East, Africa and, now, Eastern Europe. Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Egypt and, now, it seems, the Ukraine, have all been subject in recent years to some form of attempted, externally aided, regime change foreign policy actions, ranging from full-scale invasion, as in the Iraq war which began in 2003, to the engineered deposing of elected leaders such as Mohamed Morsi, the first democratically elected head of state in the whole history of Egypt (and who was removed by the military in the Egyptian Revolution of 2013), and, more recently, the ousting of Viktor Yanukovich who was elected in 2010 as Ukrainian president.

I'm not sure which short-termist policy adviser first came up with the concept of regime change as a foreign policy but the end to which it will inevitably lead is a world war.

Why do I say that?

Let's take the current Ukraine crisis as an example. This could easily represent the return of the Cold War, pitting the West openly against the resurgent power of energy-rich, cash-rich Russia. That's how far along the road of "world peace" the policy of regime change has brought us since 9/11. Global geopolitics should be detoxified of this high-risk/low-reward foreign policy doctrine, which, more than any other international strategy in recent times, is doomed to undermine the spread of world democracy and expose civilisation to extreme risks of continual war in the next few decades.

But the real reason why the radical interventionist policy of regime change will cause a world war, if left unchecked, is not so much the messes in Ukraine, Iraq, Afghanistan or even the abominable, on-going tragedy of Syria.

It has to do with the cold logic of chain reactions.

Beyond a certain point, no one gets to control chain reactions. Once their power is unleashed, their destruction becomes as impossible for humans to stop as it would be to hold back a Hurricane Katrina or a Super Storm Sandy. On that scale of catastrophe, all we get to do is count the dead and the costs and to clear up afterwards. The same will be true when we one day write the history of regime change.

How peaceful and prosperous are Iraq, Libya, Syria and Egypt today? What are their medium and long-term prospects? And what have their recent turbulent histories meant for the wider regions in which they are located? Greater peace? Better economic prospects? In whose dreams?

Dictionary.com defines a chain reaction in physics as "a self-sustaining reaction in which the fission of nuclei of one generation of nuclei produces particles that cause the fission of at least an equal number of nuclei of the succeeding generation." In more general terms, it's "a series of events in which each event is the result of the one preceding and the cause of the one following." (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/chain+reaction>).

Are there such things as political and historical chain reactions? You bet.

In a speech entitled "The Compelling Benefits of a Scientific Approach to SA's Future" on 17th July, 2013 in Sandton, Johannesburg, I shared with the audience the great 20<sup>th</sup> Century political chain reaction which cost the lives of 81.7 million people between 1914-1989, a 75 year period of interconnected conflict which had a rate of well over 1 million deaths per year, or 2740 deaths per day (see <http://www.futurology.co.za/code/knowning.htm>).

What happened was that just before 11 am on Sunday, 28 June 1914, near Sarajevo's Latin Bridge, a 24 year-old Serbian radical called Gustavo Princip fired two shots which assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and his wife Sophie. This terrorist act triggered a complex chain reaction of political events. As heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, the archduke's death could not go unanswered. In response, this empire soon declared war on Serbia. But allies of both sides reacted and became embroiled in the conflict which escalated into World War I. Then in 1918, the peace of Versailles which ended this war has been widely seen as one of the causes of World War 2 due to the severe conditions it imposed on the defeated Germany. After the Second World War, the two new superpowers emerging from that international conflict, the USA and the USSR, entered into a Cold War between communism and capitalism which lasted until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. So between 28th June 1914 and the 9th November, 1989, when the guards at the checkpoints of East Berlin first allowed East Germans to freely pass into West Berlin, there had been two world wars, followed by a Cold War, all triggered in one chain reaction by two bullets from a young Eastern European assassin. Totting up the military and civilian deaths during this period looks like this:

World War 1 - About 17 million.

World War II - About 60 million.

Cold War:

About 2 million – Vietnam War/Second Indochina War (1955-1975)

About 1,2 million – Korean War (1950–1953)

About 1.5 million – Soviet war in Afghanistan (1979–1989)

Now flash forward to 2099 from the end of the First Cold War in 1989.

“Just as the two bullets of 24 year-old Serbian radical Gustavo Princip on Sunday, 28 June 1914, near Sarajevo's Latin Bridge, triggered mass scale conflicts stretching through most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,” Dr. White continued, his electric car gliding into the parking area near the humanities faculty of Stanford University, “so the tragedy of 9/11 set in motion foreign policy overreactions, stimulating the development of a decade and a half of ill-advised regime changes in Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Stop. These conflicts eventually led to the Second Cold War, which started in the Crimea in 2014-2015 and escalated until full-scale global war broke out between Western and Eastern powers during the period 2020-2025. Stop.”

Stop. Indeed.