Genies and Genocide: Syria, Israel, Russia and Much Oil

The geopolitical stakes in the Middle East have just gotten higher by an order of magnitude. Take a little-known Newark, New Jersey oil company, the contested Golan Heights between Syria and Israel, add a reported major oil discovery there just as Russia's bombing campaign in Syria goes into high gear, shake it vigorously and we have a potential detonator for World War III.

Initially--going back more than a decade when Washington neo-conservative think-tanks and the Bush-Cheney Administration were devising their Greater Middle East regime-change agenda--competing natural gas pipelines through Syria to Turkey or via Lebanon to the Mediterranean played a definite "supporting" role in Washington's war on Syria's Assad. Now oil, lots of oil, comes into the play, and Israel is claiming it's theirs. The only problem is that it isn't. The oil is in the Golan Heights which Israel illegally took from Syria in the 1967 Six Day War.

Genie in a stinky bottle

What do Dick Cheney, James Woolsey, Bill Richardson, Jacob Lord Rothschild, Rupert Murdoch, Larry Summers and Michael Steinhardt have in common? They all are members of the Strategic Advisory Board of a Newark, New Jersey-based oil and gas group with the name, Genie Energy. It's quite a collection of names.

Dick Cheney, before becoming George W. Bush's "shadow president" in 2001, was CEO of the world's largest oilfield services company, Halliburton, also reported to be a CIA-linked company tied to the Bush family cabal. James Woolsey, a neo-con former CIA Director under Bill Clinton, today sits as the chairman of the neo-con think-tank, Foundation for Defense of Democracies, and is a member of the pro-Likud Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP). He was a member of the infamous Project for a New American Century (PNAC), along with Cheney, Don Rumsfeld and a gaggle of neo-cons who later staffed the Bush-Cheney administration. After September 11, 2001 Woolsey referred to the Bush-Cheney War on Terror as "World War IV," counting the Cold War as World War III. Bill Richardson is a former US Secretary of Energy. Rupert Murdoch, owner of major US and UK media including the Wall Street Journal, is the major financier of the neo-conservative Weekly Standard of Bill Kristol, who founded the PNAC. Larry Summers was US Treasury Secretary and drafted the laws that deregulated US banks from the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act, in effect opening the floodgates to the US financial crisis of 2007-2015. Michael Steinhardt the hedge fund speculator, is a philanthropic friend of Israel, of Marc Rich and a board member of Woolsey's neo-con Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. And Jacob Lord Rothschild is a former business partner of convicted Russian oil oligarch, Mikhail Khodorkovsky. Before his arrest Khodorkovsky secretly transferred his shares in Yukos Oil to Rothschild. Rothschild is a part-owner of Genie Energy which in 2013 was granted exclusive oil and gas exploration rights to a 153-square mile radius in the southern part of the Golan Heights by the Netanyahu government. In short, it's quite an eye-popping board.

Golan Heights and international law

The Israeli government gave the concession to Genie in the disputed Golan Heights in 2013 when the US-led destabilization of the Syrian Assad regime was in full force. Conveniently, Israel also began building fortifications at that time to seal off the illegally-occupied Golan Heights from Syria, knowing there was little Assad or Syria could do
In 2013, as Genie Energy began moving into Golan Heights, Israeli military engineers overhauled the forty-five mile border fence with Syria, replacing it with a steel barricade that includes barbed wire, touch sensors, motion detectors, infrared cameras, and ground radar, putting it on par with the Wall Israel has constructed in the West Bank.

Now, as Damascus fights for its life, apparently, Genie has discovered a huge oil field precisely there.

The Golan Heights, however, are illegally occupied by Israel. In 1981, Israel passed the Golan Heights Law, imposing Israeli "laws, jurisdiction and administration" to the Golan Heights. In response the UN Security Council passed Resolution 242 which declared Israel must withdraw from all lands occupied in the 1967 war with Syria, including the Golan Heights.

Again in 2008 a plenary session of the UN General Assembly passed a resolution 161-1 in favor of a motion on the Golan Heights that reaffirmed Security Council resolution 497, which was passed in 1981 after the Israeli de facto annexation, declaring the Golan Heights Law, "null and void and without international legal effect," and called on Israel to desist from "changing the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan and, in particular, to desist from the establishment of settlements...from imposing Israeli citizenship and Israeli identity cards on the Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan and from its repressive measures against the population of the occupied Syrian Golan." Israel was the only nation to vote against the resolution. As recently as June 2007 Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert sent a secret communique to Syrian President Bashar Assad saying that Israel would concede the Golan Heights in exchange for a comprehensive peace agreement and the severing of Syria’s ties with Iran and militant groups in the region.

Energy war has been a significant component of US, Israeli, Qatari, Turkish, and, until recently, Saudi, strategy against Syria’s Assad regime. Before the latest Golan Heights oil discovery, the focus on Assad pivoted on the huge regional natural gas resources of both Qatar and of Iran on opposite sides of the Persian Gulf, comprising the largest known gas discovery in the world to date.

Qatar proposed to Bashar that Syria join in an agreement to allow a transit gas pipeline from Qatar's huge North Field in the Persian Gulf adjacent to Iran's huge South Pars gas field. The Qatari pipeline would have gone through Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and on to Turkey to supply European markets. Most crucially, it would bypass Russia. An Agence France-Presse report claimed Assad’s rationale was "to protect the interests of his Russian ally, which is Europe's top supplier of natural gas." In 2010 Assad instead joined talks with Iran and Iraq for an alternative $10 billion pipeline plan that would also potentially allow Iran to supply gas to Europe from its South Pars field in the Iranian waters of the Persian Gulf. The three countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding in July 2012 - just as Syria’s civil war was spreading to Damascus and Aleppo.

Now an apparent discovery of huge volumes of oil by a New Jersey oil company whose board includes Iraq war architect, Dick Cheney, neo-con ex-CIA head James Woolsey, and Jacob Lord Rothschild, business partner of one of
Vladimir Putin's most bitter critics, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, bring the stakes of the Russian intervention on behalf of Syria's Assad against ISIS, Al Qaeda and other CIA-backed "moderate" terrorists" to a new geopolitical dimension. The US coup in Ukraine in 2014, and its financing and training of ISIS and other "moderate" terrorist gangs in Syria all have one prime target--Russia and her network of allies, a network, ironically, which Washington and Israeli policies are expanding almost by the hour.

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