

# The Coming Democratic Crackup

**Exclusive:** Though the mainstream media is focused on Republican divisions, a more important story could be the coming Democratic crackup, as anti-war Democrats resist Hillary Clinton's pro-war agenda, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

If the Democratic Party presses ahead and nominates hawkish Hillary Clinton for President, it could recreate the conditions that caused the party to splinter in the late 1960s and early 1970s when anti-war and pro-war Democrats turned on one another and opened a path for decades of Republican dominance of the White House.

This new Democratic crackup could come as early as this fall if anti-war progressives refuse to rally behind Clinton because of her neoconservative foreign policy – thus infuriating Clinton's backers – or it could happen in four years if Clinton wins the White House and implements her militaristic agenda, including expanding the U.S. war in Syria while continuing other wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya – and challenging Russia on its borders.

Clinton's neocon policies in a prospective first term could generate a "peace" challenge similar to the youth-driven uprising against President Lyndon Johnson and the Vietnam War in 1968.

Indeed, in 2020, anti-war elements of the Democratic Party might see little choice but to seek a candidate willing to challenge an incumbent President Clinton much as Sen. Eugene McCarthy took on President Johnson, leading eventually to the chaotic and bloody Chicago convention, which in turn contributed to Richard Nixon's narrow victory that fall.

A difference between Johnson and Clinton, however, is that in 1964, LBJ ran as the "peace candidate" against the hawkish Republican Barry Goldwater (who incidentally was supported by a young Hillary Clinton), whereas in 2016, Clinton has made clear her warlike plans (albeit framing them in "humanitarian" terms).

After winning a landslide victory against Goldwater, Johnson reversed himself and plunged into the Vietnam War, fearing he otherwise might be blamed for "losing" Indochina. With Clinton, there's no reason to expect a reversal since she's made no secret about her plans for invading Syria under the guise of creating a "safe zone" and for confronting nuclear-armed Russia along its western borders, from Ukraine through the Baltic States. In her belligerent rhetoric, she has compared Russian President Vladimir Putin to Hitler.

## **Courting Bibi**

Clinton also has vowed to take the U.S.-Israeli relationship to “the next level” by embracing right-wing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who expects to convince President Hillary Clinton to end any détente with Iran and put the prospect of bombing Iran back on the table. Clinton would seem to be an easy sell.

Another feature of the LBJ-Hillary comparison is that the Democratic Party’s turn against the Vietnam War in the 1968 and 1972 campaigns prompted a collection of pro-war intellectuals to bolt the Democratic Party and align themselves with the Republicans, especially around Ronald Reagan in 1980.

Those Democratic hawks became known as the neoconservatives and remained attached to the Republican Party for the next 35 years, eventually emerging as Official Washington’s foreign policy establishment. However, in some prominent cases (such as Robert Kagan), neocons are now switching over to Clinton because of the rise of Donald Trump, who rejects the neocon passion for interventionism.

In other words, just as Johnson’s Vietnam War escalation – and the resulting fierce opposition from anti-war Democrats – set in motion the neocons’ defection from the Democrats to the Republicans, Clinton’s enthusiasm for the Iraq War, her support for escalation of the Afghan War, and her scheming for “regime change” wars in Libya and Syria are bringing some neocon hawks back to their first nesting place in the Democratic Party.

But a President Clinton’s transformation of the Democratic Party into “an aggressive war party,” whereas under President Barack Obama it has been “a reluctant war party,” would force principled anti-war Democrats to stop making excuses and to start trying to expel Clinton’s neocon pro-war attitudes from the party.

Such an internecine battle over the party’s soul could deeply divide the Democrats between those supporting Clinton – as “the first woman president” and because of her liberal attitudes on gay rights and other social issues – and those opposing Clinton because of her desire to continue and expand America’s “perpetual wars.”

## **The Sanders Resistance**

Some of that hostility is already playing out as Clinton backers express their anger at progressives who balk at lining up for Clinton’s long-delayed coronation parade. The stubborn support for Sen. Bernie Sanders, even after Clinton has seemingly locked up the Democratic nomination, is a forewarning of the nasty fight ahead.

The prospects are that the animosities will get worse if Clinton loses in November – with many anti-war Democrats defecting or staying home thus infuriating the Hillary Democrats – or if Clinton were to win and begin implementing her neocon foreign policy agenda which will involve further demonizing “enemies” to justify “regime changes.”

If anti-war Democrats begin to resist, they can expect the Clinton-45 administration to stigmatize them as (fill-in-the-blank) “apologists” and “stooges” of “enemy” powers, much as happened to protesters against the Vietnam War and, more recently, to Americans who objected to such U.S. interventions as the Iraq War in 2003 and the Ukraine coup in 2014.

Yet, few Democratic strategists seem to be aware of this looming chasm between anti-war and pro-war Democrats. Many of these insiders seem to believe that the anti-war Democrats will simply fall in line behind Hillary Clinton out of fear and loathing for Donald Trump. That may be the case for many, but my conversations with anti-war activists suggest that a significant number will vote for a third party or might even go for Trump.

Meanwhile, most mainstream media commentators are focused on the divisions between the pro-Trump and anti-Trump Republicans, giving extensive TV coverage to various stop-Trump scenarios, even as many establishment Republicans begin to accommodate to Trump’s populist conquest of the party.

But it’s clear that some prominent Republicans, especially from the neocon camp, are unalterably opposed to Trump’s election in November, fearing that he will turn the GOP away from them and toward an “America First” perspective that would repudiate “regime change” interventions favored by Israel.

Thus, for many neocon Republicans, a Trump defeat is preferable to a Trump victory because his defeat would let them reclaim command of the party’s foreign policy infrastructure. They also could encourage President Clinton to pursue their neocon agenda – and watch as pro- and anti-war stresses rip apart the Democratic Party.

So, the establishment Democrats – with their grim determination to resuscitate Hillary Clinton’s nearly lifeless campaign – may be engaging in the political equivalent of whistling past the graveyard, as the ghosts of the party’s Vietnam War crackup hover over Election 2016.

[For more on this topic, see Consortiumnews.com’s [“Neocons and Neolibs: How ‘Dead’ Ideas Kill”](#); [“Yes, Hillary Clinton Is a Neocon”](#); and [“Would a Clinton Win Mean More Wars?”](#)]

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for**

The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).

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## Seeing Humanity in 'Enemy' States

Official Washington's propagandistic view of the world sees "good guys" and "bad guys," a simplistic and dangerous dichotomy that ignores the common human elements, as ex-State Department official Matthew Hoh observes.

By Matthew Hoh

Last month, I had the privilege of answering an interview request from an [Iranian research agency](#) dedicated to studying acts of terror carried out against the Iranian people. By their count 17,000 Iranians have been killed in acts of terror over the last 3 1/2 decades. Quite an astounding number, isn't it?

I have no reason to believe this number is inflated or exaggerated, but, even if the real count is only a tenth of the pronounced figure of 17,000, it would still signify a horrendously systematic attack of political violence on a people that, as recent [elections](#) in Iran have displayed, possess a desire for progress, civility, toleration and modernity.

Just as many of us do not embody in our personal lives, in our beings and in our souls the worst aspects of our American government, our wars overseas and our mass incarceration at home, so too are the Iranian people not representative of their government's acts of militarism and repression. I know, I know. Such a trite and cliched thing to say.

But then why would so many in the U.S. not know of the thousands killed by terrorism in Iran and why would many Americans say that those dead Iranians and their devastated families deserve it? If not for such a binary and Manichean way of looking at the world, we are good and they are bad, we could understand and communicate with one another better, and then, maybe, as a united and common people we could lead this world to prosperity and health, rather than to war, climate change and poverty.

The interview can be found [here](#) and is copied below:

**Full text of Habilian's interview with Matthew Hoh, Ex-US State Department Official**

**Sunday, 01 May 2016 09:51 Habilian**

*"...in 2001, al-Qaeda only had about 200 members and the Islamic State did not exist. The United States validated the propaganda and the doctrine of the terrorists with our response to 9/11 and provided many thousands of young men with a rationale for leaving their homes and joining terror groups."*

In an exclusive interview with Habilian Association, Iranian Center for Research on Terrorism, Matthew Hoh has answered the questions about the U.S. military interventions in the Middle East following 9/11 attacks in the name of "fighting against terrorism" and its implications for the people of the region, terrorism developments in the Middle East after 2001, America's role in the empowerment of terrorist groups in the region, U.S. imperialism around the world, relationships between the media and government in the U.S., and Machiavellian view of American leaders to terrorist groups such as MeK. Below is the full text of the Habilian Association's interview with Hoh:

**Habilian:** At the beginning of the interview, please tell us when you did join the Army? Would you speak about your motives in wearing the Army Uniform?

**Hoh:** I joined the United States Marine Corps in 1998 for a number of reasons. I was bored with the work I was doing (I was working for a publishing company in New York City), I wanted adventure, I wanted to prove myself while serving others, I wanted to be involved in something bigger than I was, and I wanted to take part in history. In short I possessed the motives of many bored and unchallenged young men.

**Habilian:** Following the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, George W. Bush delivered a speech at joint session of Congress, in which "War on Terror" was declared. In that speech, Bush raised some questions quoted from American peoples, including who attacked the US and why; and how Americans can punish them. Now, after more than 15 years of American interventions in the region that led to death of more than one million civilians, if you, as an American journalist, have an interview with Bush, what questions will you ask him about the war?

**Hoh:** The first question I would ask President Bush is why he is not remorseful. Does his desire for a positive view of his legacy preclude his ability to empathize with the millions who have suffered because of these wars? Secondly, I would ask him why can he not be humble and admit his policies were wrong and counter-productive. I would not be asking him to say the terror of 9/11 was not horrific and I am not asking him to compare himself with Osama bin Laden or al-Qaeda, but to simply recognize that the wars he launched and the wars that are still ongoing have made the world worse and not better. Two simple truths: the number of dead in the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Pakistan,

Somalia, Libya and other places number well past one million since September 12, 2001. Millions more have been wounded and are refugees from their homes. Those who suffer the horribly debilitating psychiatric and moral effects of the wars number in the tens of millions. And none of those wars are close to ending. The second truth is that, according to the American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and based upon documents found in Afghanistan in 2001 and 2002, al Qaeda only consisted of approximately two hundred members in 2001. Now the organization has thousands of members in countries across the globe. Of course the Islamic State didn't even exist in 2001 and only came into existence because of the United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003. Clearly American policy in the Middle East has failed. I would ask President Bush how he ignores such truths. To be fair, I would ask President Obama the same.

**Habilian:** In the mentioned speech, George Bush had said that Americans are asking him what is expected of them, then listed his expectations of American people: "to live your lives, and hug your children", "to uphold the values of America", "to continue to support the victims of this tragedy with your contributions" and "continued participation and confidence in the American economy". If we go back to September 20, 2001 and you had an opportunity to speak in Congress and announce your expectations from the government, what would you said?

**Hoh:** I am not sure if anything anyone said would be listened to. In 2001, we did have people in the United States counseling against acting on fear and anger. In Congress, however, we had only one member, Barbara Lee, from California, who voted against giving the President unlimited authority to carry out war, an authority that President Obama still utilizes nearly 15 years later. Out of 535 members of Congress only one had the wisdom, the intelligence and the courage to say that war was not just the wrong approach to terrorism, but that it would be foolhardy and prove to be counter-productive. Americans at that time were scared and angry. Politicians were scared and angry as well, but, more so, they were eager to capitalize on the public's emotions for their own political advantage and security. So, sadly, I don't think my stating my expectations of my government to follow the dictates of morality, justice and rule of law would have been listened to.

**Habilian:** On February 14, 2003, George W. Bush released "The United States' strategy for combating terrorism" in which the US administration's objectives in the War on Terror had been listed. The core of that strategy were weakening and isolating terror networks such as Al Qaeda. Regarding the rise of ISIS in Iraq and Syria and its violent ambitions, do you believe that the announced goals of these wars have been achieved? In your opinion, are Al Qaeda typed groups stronger or weaker now?

**Hoh:** Terror groups are much stronger now than in 2001. The greatest recruitment for al-Qaeda and affiliated groups was not the murders of Americans in the 9/11 attacks, but the invasion of Iraq by the US in 2003, the continued occupation of Afghanistan, torture of prisoners by American guards, and the bombing of Muslim peoples throughout the world by the West. Remember, in 2001, al-Qaeda only had about 200 members and the Islamic State did not exist. The United States validated the propaganda and the doctrine of the terrorists with our response to 9/11 and provided many thousands of young men with a rationale for leaving their homes and joining terror groups. Of course, this is all a consequence of American military and diplomatic involvement in the Middle East since the end of the Second World War. As an American I have to understand that much of what we are seeing now in the Middle East is a consequence of decades of American backed coups, American backed dictatorships, American military interventions, American backed wars, unlimited American support for Israel, American arms sales and the American formation of religiously inspired cadres to fight the Soviet Union in the 1980s, one of which famously became al-Qaeda. However, I do not believe the wisest among us in the United States, of which I must admit I was not a part of in 2001, ever thought our policies would prove to be so disastrous.

**Habilian:** Why despite the American intelligence agencies' estimation that the ISIS poses no immediate threat to the United States, Obama administration decided to send the country on a military campaign against that group, knowing that such a war may take several years?

**Hoh:** There are a few different reasons for this. I think there are some in the US government that do believe the United States has an interest in trying to bring about stability to Iraq and Syria and that military means are the only, or the predominant, manner of doing so. I believe those assertions to be wrong, that those assumptions are not based on history or experience, but I do understand them to be sincere.

Unfortunately, there are a number of other reasons why President Obama is intervening militarily in Syria and Iraq. The most important is political. President Obama, and the Democratic Party, is afraid of being viewed as weak. It is that simple. Additionally, it is nearly impossible for an American politician to say he or she is wrong or made a mistake. American politicians would rather see more American soldiers killed, more American families devastated as a result of those losses, and more innocent civilians destroyed than to admit they are wrong. Again, it is just that simple.

There are those who believe that these wars in the Middle East can simply be broken down into terms of good people versus bad people and we, the US, are on the side of the good people. There are philosophical, religious, nationalist,

racist, and other reasons for such beliefs, but simple binary thinking, much like the thinking that underlay the assumptions of the Cold War, is prevalent in Washington, DC and throughout America.

There is a lot of money involved in Iraq. American companies have a good deal of interest in the oil fields of northern Iraq and the US government is keen to see those oil fields in Kurdish control, while projected sales of weapons to the Iraqi government range from 15-30 billion dollars over the next one or two decades. Such money has enormous influence in Washington, DC and the fear of the loss of such money would motivate an American President to act militarily.

Finally, the United States has an empire around the world that it must maintain. This is different in appearance or in kind than say the British or Roman Empires of the past, but it is nonetheless an empire. The United States has over 800 military bases around the world, has client states across the globe, many of which are the worst human rights violators in power, depends upon weapons sales as one of the leading aspects of the American export economy, and spends approximately one trillion dollars a year in total in support of this complex. Any threat or challenge to this established system must be confronted. In this established system in Washington, DC, as well as in American universities and corporations, it is seemingly impossible to understand any other option for the world; in fact this world view of the United States being "responsible" for the rest of the world is taken as a praiseworthy virtue and any deviance from this view is considered naïve, ignorant or silly. Combine that with America's cultural and religious view of itself as an "exceptional nation" or as a nation with divine purposes and you can understand why America is so quick to use its military tens of thousands of miles from its borders. It is worth noting only the Western allies of the US act similarly so far from the borders; no other nation behaves this way, with the exception of the recent limited Russian involvement in Syria.

**Habilian:** Daniel Benjamin, who served as the State Department's top counterterrorism adviser during Mr. Obama's first term, said the public discussion about the ISIS threat has been a "farce". Why the US media are advertising this story?

**Hoh:** Terrorism scares and angers people, and fear and anger make for good audiences for the US media. The media in the US depends on ratings for advertising revenue (US media is privately funded) and so stories about terrorism get people's attention causing more people to watch, listen or read, which brings in more money for the media.

There are also informal relationships between the media, the US government and politicians that lead all three to work together to support one another. The

media needs the support of people in the government and politicians to get the best stories and get the best interviews, while the government and politicians need the media to present the best views of themselves and their policies. It is a mutually supportive relationship between many members of the media, the government and politicians that many in the United States see to be corrupt. That is why the American public has incredibly low opinions of the media, government and politicians in the US (recent opinion polls show that only about 10% of the public trusts these institutions).

Finally, there is the ongoing narrative of the United States being a morally correct and righteous nation that is on the side of "good" overseas. I believe the media feels it would cost them their audiences, and so their revenue, if they tried to explain world events, including terrorism and the wars, in a more complex yet accurate manner.

I must say that there are many good media sources in the US, but they tend to be small and independent of the larger corporate media that most Americans depend upon for their news. These men and women are often unfairly characterized as un-American, ideological or overly politically partisan, yet they are often the ones with the journalistic integrity the larger corporate media lacks.

**Habilian:** To this day MEK terrorists have been carrying out attacks inside of Iran killing political opponents, attacking civilian targets, as well as carrying out the US-Israeli program of targeting and assassinating Iranian scientists. In your opinion, how America's government came to the conclusion that MeK no longer should be in the Terrorist List?

**Hoh:** The MeK has been very successful in the United States in paying American politicians and former government officials to represent the MeK. Along with the demonization with which the American government has colored Iran with since 1979, these political efforts by the MeK have succeeded in making many American leaders believe the MeK can be useful to US interests in the Middle East. Whether or not they know or care that the MeK has made many, many innocent Iranian people suffer is not something American leaders consider. I am quick to denounce the violent actions of my government, just as many Iranians are quick to denounce the violent actions of the Iranian government. Groups like the MeK and actions like the assassination of Iranian scientists serve only to prolong hostilities between the United States and Iran, hostilities that have gone on for far too long and which only serve the elites who hold power in both countries and which cause both the American and Iranian people to suffer.

**Matthew Hoh is a Senior Fellow at the Center for International Policy. A former State Department official, Hoh resigned in protest from his post in Afghanistan over U.S. strategic policy and goals in Afghanistan in September 2009. Prior to**

his assignment in Afghanistan, Hoh served in Iraq. When not deployed, Hoh worked on Afghanistan and Iraq policy and operations issues at the Pentagon and State Department from 2002-8.

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## Inciting Iran's 'Bad Behavior'

Washington's neocon foreign policy establishment follows the Israeli-Saudi line on Iran, denouncing its every move, an approach that brings out the worst in the Iranians and raises the risk of war, notes ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

Psychologists have observed that most of us favor a self-serving way of explaining the good and bad conduct of others with whom we interact. While we are quite comfortable with attributing some of the good to our own benign influence, we attribute all of the bad to the other person's character and refuse to accept that our own conduct may have influenced what the other person is doing.

This phenomenon arises frequently in foreign affairs. It is common with, for example, American perceptions of anti-U.S. international terrorism. The dominant popular concept is that terrorists do what they do because of their own malign nature. To the extent that terrorists focus on the United States, we like to think this is because, as former President George W. Bush put it, they hate our democratic values.

This view refuses to accept that what the United States does overseas has anything to do with motivating the terrorism – even though countless interrogations of captured terrorists, statements by groups, and other evidence strongly indicate that U.S. actions abroad have indeed had much to do with such motivations.

A variation on this pattern that also arises in international relations involves logical inconsistency not only between attributions of desirable and undesirable conduct but also between explanations of the conduct of states we consider friends and the conduct of those we consider foes. This variation was visible in a [panel discussion](#) last week organized by the Middle East Institute and in which I participated.

The subject of the event was policy toward Iran, and much of the discussion

concerned intra-regional rivalries involving Iran, of which the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia is the most prominent. Those who favor taking the side of the Saudis in this rivalry need to deal with the reality that the interests of the participants in this contest are different from U.S. interests, and there is no good reason for the United States to take sides in such a local quarrel.

Moreover, if what we are worried about is destructive and destabilizing behavior in the region, Saudi Arabia has been doing more of that lately than Iran, most conspicuously with its highly destructive military intervention in Yemen. Those who nonetheless want the United States to tilt even more in favor of the Saudis and against Iran than it already is thus need to be creative in contriving their arguments.

### **Ross's Misguided Analysis**

An argument that Dennis Ross has constructed is that “the Saudis acted in Yemen in no small part because they feared the United States would impose no limits on Iranian expansion in the area, and they felt the need to draw their own lines.”

Even setting aside how far divorced from reality is a perception that the United States is imposing “no limits on Iranian expansion” and how much more such a perception would say about Saudi paranoia than about U.S. policy, the argument is implausible – especially in view of the entire history of the Saudi perspective toward, and handling of, Yemeni affairs.

The Saudis have long had much angst, for reasons that don't necessarily have anything to do with Iran, about its poorer and more densely populated neighbor to the south. Back in the 1960s they got involved in an earlier civil war in Yemen, when the other major external protagonist was Egypt. [See Consortiumnews.com's "Yemen as Vietnam or Afghanistan.”]

The Houthi rebels who are engaged in the current civil war have received some Iranian aid but they certainly are not Iranian proxies; they even reportedly rejected Iranian advice *not* to move into the capital Sana.

The biggest changes pertinent to the more aggressive Saudi conduct in the past couple of years have been the accession of King Salman, with a determination to throw Saudi weight around the region more assertively than under his predecessor, and the accumulation of power by his young son Mohammed bin Salman, for whom the Yemeni war has been one of the biggest ways of making his mark.

If there have been any Saudi thoughts about U.S. limit-drawing, they haven't had to do with Yemen, where the United States has very much taken sides and supported the Saudi military offensive.

Note what Ross's argument, implausible though it is, says about the presumed relationship between U.S. policy or action and a regional state's conduct. The presumption is that the state is hypersensitive to what the United States does and that U.S. policy is a big influence on the other state's conduct, even if the only variation in U.S. policy that is in question is between slightly greater or lesser degrees of favoritism in what already is a substantial U.S. tilt in that same state's favor.

Such a view is greatly different from the view, propounded by many of the same people, of how U.S. words and actions do or do not influence the conduct of Iran. With Iran, the presumption is instead that the sources of undesirable Iranian conduct are to be found in Iran itself.

### **Generating Bad Behavior**

It is the psychologist's classic example of attributing bad behavior entirely to bad character on the part of the other party. Iran gets routinely described as led by hateful religious fanatics who don't think like ourselves or like other statesmen, who are out to destroy other countries, and who are so incorrigible in their bad traits that moderation over time is not to be expected.

Some of this view was heard at last week's panel, with bills of particulars about Iranian conduct (the relevance of which rests on that implicit assumption about how the Islamic Republic of Iran will never change significantly) stretching back many years.

Missing from this view is recognition of how Iranian conduct or comments that we do not like may be at least partly in response to our own conduct or comments that Iranians not only do not like but have good reason to perceive as threatening. Certainly the United States has given the Iranians plenty of material of this sort to which to react – and this goes well beyond the most salient historical episodes such as the 1953 coup and the 1988 shooting down of a civilian airliner (accidental, but still perceived as intentional by probably most Iranians).

There have been all the many references to a possible military attack on Iran as if that would be just another policy option, the forward deployments of U.S. military forces, the continued economic warfare against Iran and threats to wage still more of it, the cyberwarfare, the torrent of rhetoric filled with enmity, and all the other continuing indications of hostility.

Obviously there is gross inconsistency here in interpretations of the conduct of states in the Persian Gulf region. The interpretation applied to a state on one side of the Gulf assumes hypersensitivity to what the U.S. says and does, with

even just some disappointment in the amount of gusto with which the United States takes that state's side supposedly being enough to stimulate that country to bomb the heck out of some other neighboring country.

The interpretation applied to the state on the other side of the Gulf is vastly different, giving no role to the influence of what the United States says or does, even when most of what the United States says and some of what it does is patently hostile.

To the extent that the effect of U.S. policy on the actions of others really does vary, between the responses of states commonly labeled as friends and those of states commonly labeled as foes, the difference is more likely in the opposite direction from the set of inconsistent interpretations described above.

With regard to those perceived as friends, the kind of unquestioned side-taking the Saudis would like to see from the United States is as likely to excuse and enable destructive behavior as it is to prevent it. The U.S. support for the Saudi offensive in Yemen has been as clear an example of this as anything.

### **Enabling Israel**

Another, more long-running, example in the Middle East has been how the unquestioned U.S. financial and diplomatic support for Israel has enabled the destructive (and self-destructive) Israeli policies regarding occupation of the Palestinian territories.

With regard to foes, hostile words and actions engage mechanisms that amplify the hostility of the response. There is, for example, a tendency in such relationships to make worst-case assumptions about the other side's intentions. That is involved in what political scientists call a security dilemma, in which even measures that are taken for purely defensive reasons are interpreted by the other side as offensive and threatening.

There also are other ways in which, as psychologists would explain, threats and fear lead to destructive striking back. This phenomenon is not even unique to our species; it is shared by some normally docile herbivorous creatures that become aggressive and dangerous when they feel threatened.

Moreover, some conduct we consider undesirable on the part of states that are ostracized and punished is almost forced on them by the ostracism and punishment. A state is naturally going to resort to irregular and asymmetric tactics if it has been denied more regular means of pursuing its interests.

In the panel discussion last week there was disapproving reference made to money laundering and other irregularities involving Iranian banks, but as a member of

the audience correctly noted, we should not be surprised to see this kind of thing when Iran is denied full access to the regular global banking system.

Similar phenomena have arisen with other countries besides Iran. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. wrote about how “if you shape policy to what you regard as a predestined result, chances are that you will get the result you predestine.” Using an example from the 1980s, Schlesinger noted, “Having decided *a priori* that the Nicaraguan revolution was a Soviet-Cuban conspiracy, Washington gave the Sandinistas no alternative but the Cubans and Russians.”

None of this is to deny the genuinely bad traits and tendencies that are present in some of the entities involved, regardless of the policies of others toward those entities. There are some valid reasons to consider leaders of the Sandinistas as bad dudes, and there certainly have been bad dudes, and still are, with significant influence inside the Iranian regime.

But good statesmanship involves not just taking broader badness as predestined, but instead using one’s own policies to encourage what is desirable and to discourage what is undesirable in the policies of others.

It would be nice if the kind of uber-empathetic approach toward the Saudis that is embodied in Ross’s assertion about Saudi policy toward Yemen would lead to applying even a fraction of such how-others-see-us awareness to how the Iranians see and respond to U.S. policies, rhetoric, and actions.

But unfortunately much American debate about Iran reflects a determination based on other reasons to take sides and to keep Iran ostracized forever, no matter the logical inconsistencies.

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## In Case You Missed...

Some of our special stories in April focused on the global troubles made worse by U.S. “endless war,” the unorthodox 2016 presidential race, and the crisis in the American mainstream news media.

[“Cleaning Up Hillary’s Libyan Mess”](#) by Robert Parry, Apr. 1, 2016

"The 'Hybrid War' of Economic Sanctions" by Alastair Crooke, Apr. 1, 2016

"Behind Brazil's 'Regime Change'" by Dan Steinbock, Apr. 3, 2016

"Fear and Loathing in Ukraine" by James W Carden, Apr. 4, 2016

"'Corruption' as a Propaganda Weapon" by Robert Parry, Apr. 4, 2016

"Killing the US Republic – and Empire" by Chas W Freeman Jr., Apr. 5, 2016

"When Donald Trump Makes Sense" by Mike Lofgren, Apr. 5, 2016

"The Mystery of Shakespeare's Tomb" by Peter W Dickson, Apr. 5, 2016

"Bush-41's October Surprise Denials" by Robert Parry, Apr. 6, 2016

"A Media Unmoored from Facts" by Robert Parry, Apr. 7, 2016

"Covering Up Hillary's Libyan Fiasco" by Jonathan Marshall, Apr. 8, 2016

"Is Hillary Clinton 'Qualified'" by Robert Parry, Apr. 8, 2016

"Why We're Never Told Why We're Attacked" by Joe Lauria, Apr. 9, 2016

"Would a Clinton Win Mean More Wars?" by Robert Parry, Apr. 10, 2016

"Behind Ukraine's Leadership Shake-up" by Gilbert Doctorow, Apr. 11, 2016

"'Yats' Is No Longer the Guy" by Robert Parry, Apr. 11, 2016

"Sanders Annoys Democratic Establishment" by Rick Sterling, Apr. 11, 2016

"How an Iran War Was Averted" by Ray McGovern, Apr. 12, 2016

"The Victory of 'Perception Management'" by Robert Parry, Apr. 13, 2016

"The New Propaganda War" by Jonathan Marshall, Apr. 13, 2016

"Pope Francis Reinforces Sexual Taboos" by Daniel C. Maguire, April 14, 2016

"The 'Credibility' Illusion" by Robert Parry, Apr. 14, 2016

"Learning to Love the Bomb – Again" by Michael Brenner, April 15, 2016

"Hillary Clinton's Gender Argument" by Ray McGovern, Apr. 15, 2016

"Yes, Hillary Clinton Is a Neocon" by Robert Parry, Apr. 16, 2016

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