

How Trump's Iran Decision Invites War

By decertifying the Iran-nuke deal, President Trump opts for another Mideast war of choice, but war on Iran is really the choice of Israel and Saudi Arabia wanting the U.S. to do the killing and dying, as Trita Parsi explains.

By Trita Parsi

Make no mistake: We do not have a crisis over the Iran nuclear deal. It is working and everyone from Defense Secretary James Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to the U.S. and Israeli intelligence services to the International Atomic Energy Agency agree: Iran is adhering to the deal.

But President Trump is about to take a working deal and turn it into a crisis – an international crisis that very likely can lead to war. While the decertification of the Iran deal that Trump is scheduled to announce on Friday in and of itself doesn't collapse the deal, it does trigger a process that increases the risk of war in the following five ways.

1. If the deal collapses, so do the restrictions on Iran's nuclear program

The nuclear deal, or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) took two very bad scenarios off the table: It blocked all of Iran's paths to a nuclear bomb and it prevented war with Iran. By killing the deal, Trump is putting both of those bad scenarios back on the table.

As I describe in my book *Losing an Enemy – Obama, Iran and the triumph of Diplomacy*, it was the very real danger of a military conflict that drove the Barack Obama administration to become so dedicated to find a diplomatic solution to this crisis. In January 2012, then-Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta stated publicly that Iran's breakout – the time it would take from making the decision to build the bomb to having the material for a bomb – was 12 months. In spite of massive sanctions on Iran aimed at both retarding the nuclear program and convincing the Iranians that the nuclear program was too costly to continue, the Iranians aggressively expanded their nuclear activities.

By January 2013, exactly a year later, a new sense of urgency dawned on the White House. Iran's breakout time had shrunk from 12 months to a mere 8-12 weeks. If Iran decided to dash for a bomb, the United States might not have enough time to stop Tehran militarily.

According to former CIA deputy director Michael Morell, Iran's shrinking breakout time caused the U.S. to be "closer to war with the Islamic Republic than at any time since 1979." Other countries realized the danger as well. "The

actual threat of military action was almost felt as electricity in the air before a thunderstorm," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov told me.

If nothing changed, President Obama concluded, the U.S. would soon face a binary option: Either go to war with Iran (due to pressure from Israel, Saudi Arabia and some elements inside the U.S.) to stop its nuclear program or acquiesce to Iran's nuclear fait accompli. The only way out of this lose-lose situation was a diplomatic solution. Three months later, the U.S. and Iran held a pivotal secret meeting in Oman where the Obama administration managed to secure a diplomatic breakthrough that paved the way for the JCPOA.

The deal prevented war. Killing the deal prevents the peace. If Trump collapses the deal and the Iranians restart their program, the U.S. will soon find itself facing the same dilemma that Obama did in 2013. The difference is that the President is now Donald Trump, a man who doesn't even know how to spell diplomacy, let alone conduct it.

2. Trump is planning to take on the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps

Decertification is only half the story. Trump also plans to significantly escalate tensions with Iran in the region, including taking a measure that both the Bush and Obama administrations rejected: Designate the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization. Make no mistake, the IRGC is far from an army of saints. It is responsible for much of the repression against the population inside of Iran and it fought the U.S. military indirectly in Iraq through Shia militias. But it has also been one of the most critical fighting forces against ISIS.

In real terms, the designation does not add much to the pressure the U.S. already is or can impose on the IRGC. But it ratchets things up in a very dangerous way without any clear benefits to the United States. The drawbacks, however, are crystal clear.

IRGC commander Mohammad Ali Jafari issued a stern warning last week: "If the news is correct about the stupidity of the American government in considering the Revolutionary Guards a terrorist group, then the Revolutionary Guards will consider the American army to be like Islamic State [ISIS] all around the world." If the IRGC acts on its warning and targets U.S. troops – and there are 10,000 such targets in Iraq – we will only be a few steps away from war.

3. Trump is escalating without having any exit-ramps

Escalation is under all circumstances a dangerous game. But it is particularly dangerous when you do not have diplomatic channels that ensure that the other side reads your signals correctly and that provide mechanisms for de-escalation.

Not having such exit-ramps is like driving a car without a brake. You can accelerate, you can crash, but you can't brake.

Military commanders understand this. That's what former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen warned about prior to the Obama administration investing in diplomacy. "We've not had a direct link of communication with Iran since 1979," Mullen said. "And I think that has planted many seeds for miscalculation. When you miscalculate, you can escalate and misunderstand... We are not talking to Iran, so we don't understand each other. If something happens, it's virtually assured that we won't get it right – that there will be miscalculation which would be extremely dangerous in that part of the world."

Mullen issued this warning when Obama was president, a man often criticized for being too restrained and too unwilling to use military power. Imagine how nervous and worried Mullen must be today with Trump calling the shots in the situation room.

4. Some U.S. allies want the U.S. to fight their war with Iran

There is no secret that Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been pushing the U.S. for years to go to war with Iran. Israel in particular was not only making threats of preemptive military action itself, its ultimate aim was to convince the United States to conduct the attack on Iran's nuclear facilities for Israel.

"The intention," former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak admitted to the Israeli paper Ynet in July of this year, "was both to make the Americans increase sanctions and to carry out the operation."

While the Israeli security establishment today opposes killing the nuclear deal (Barak himself said as much in an interview with the New York Times this week), there are no indications that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has changed his mind on this matter. He has called on Trump to "fix or nix" the deal, though his criteria for how to fix the deal is so unrealistic it virtually ensures the deal will collapse – which in turn would put the U.S. on a path to war with Iran.

The only person who arguably has a worse sense of judgment than Trump is Netanyahu. After all, this is what he told U.S. lawmakers in 2002 as he lobbied them to invade Iraq: "If you take out Saddam, Saddam's regime, I guarantee you that it will have enormous positive reverberations on the region."

5. Trump's donors are obsessed with starting war with Iran

Some have suggested that Trump is pursuing the decertification of the Iran deal

– in spite of the near consensus advice of his top advisors to not go down this path – as a result of pressure from his base. But there is no evidence that his base cares much about this issue.

Rather, as Eli Clifton meticulously had documented, the most dedicated force behind Trump's obsession with killing the Iran deal is not his base, but a tiny group of top Republican donors. "A small number of his biggest campaign and legal defense donors have made extreme comments about Iran and, in at least one case, advocated for the use of a nuclear weapon against the Islamic Republic," Clifton wrote last month.

The billionaire Home Depot founder Bernard Marcus, for instance, has given Trump \$101,700 to help pay Trump and Donald Trump Jr.'s legal fees following the probe into Russian election interference. Hedge-fund billionaire Paul Singer is another major donor to pro-war groups in Washington who Trump has relied upon for financial support. The most famous billionaire donor, of course, is Sheldon Adelson who has contributed \$35 million to pro-Trump Super PAC Future 45. All of these donors have pushed for war with Iran, though only Adelson has gone as far as to suggest the U.S. should strike Iran with nuclear weapons as a negotiating tactic.

Thus far, Trump has gone with the advice of these billionaires on Iran over that of his Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense and Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff.

None of the above five scenarios were realistic a few months ago. They have become plausible – even likely – because Trump has decided to make them so. Just like with George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq, Trump's confrontation with Iran is a war of choice, not a war of necessity.

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Trump's Scary Nuclear Doctrine

Pleasing Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and terrifying almost everybody else, President Trump is threatening nuclear war against North Korea and, by implication, war with Iran, as ex-British diplomat Alastair Crooke explains.

By Alastair Crooke

There are acres of print analyzing “will he, or won’t he” in respect to President Trump taking military action in North Korea. And equally, volumes on what Trump may intend to do in respect of Iran: Is he engaged primarily in rhetorical “theatre” to please his base, and earn press plaudits; or is he girding up for attrition (hot or cold) against Iran?

The unanswered question is: does President Trump regard North Korea and Iran as somehow connected (albeit that Iran has no nuclear weapons, and no nuclear weapons program)? Certainly one person – one who talks to the Trump family a lot – does think the two are directly linked.

Jeffrey Sachs, who listened to Trump’s speech at the United Nations, in which the President said he was ready to “totally destroy” North Korea, tells us about the audience reaction: “Well, you could hear shuffling, chuckles, amazement, gasps, a few applause. *There was Netanyahu enthusiastically applauding.* It was a very odd scene. I am still a bit shaken by it.”

Of course, for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and some neoconservatives, a U.S. attack on the Korean nuclear program sets a wonderful precedent for Iran – for now or for the future.

We just do not know. Trump’s former career as a reality TV host has left him with a predilection for teasing and hype (“just tune in again next week, to learn more”). What is increasingly plain is that those on the inside – such as the Chair of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee – are equally unsure whether President Trump is about to unleash “World War III” – or not.

We do know, however, that Trump regards himself as an expert on nuclear conflict: in an 1984 interview with the *Washington Post*, Trump said that he hoped one day to become the United States’ chief negotiator with the Soviet Union for nuclear weapons. Trump claimed that he could negotiate a great nuclear arms deal with Moscow. Comparing crafting an arms accord with cooking up a real estate deal, Trump insisted he had innate talent for this mission.

In a 1990 interview with *Playboy*, Trump said, “I think of the future, but I refuse to paint it. Anything can happen. But I often think of nuclear war.” He explained: “I’ve always thought about the issue of nuclear war; it’s a very important element in my thought process. It’s the ultimate, the ultimate catastrophe, the biggest problem this world has, and nobody’s focusing on the nuts and bolts of it.”

Five years on, Trump was asked where he would be in five years. “Who knows?” he replied. “Maybe the bombs drop from heaven, who knows? This is a sick world,

we're dealing here with lots of sickos. And you have the nuclear and you have the this, and you have the that."

Foreseeing Nuclear Annihilation

Trump continued expressing the notion that nuclear annihilation could be on the horizon: "Oh absolutely. I mean, I think it's sick human nature. If Hitler had the bomb, you don't think he would have used it? He would have put it in the middle of Fifth Avenue. He would have used Trump Tower, 57th and Fifth. Boom."

In another *Playboy* interview – this one in 2004 – Trump once more conveyed his nuclear despondency. He was asked, "Do you think Trump Tower and your other buildings will bear your name a hundred years from now?" Trump responded, "I don't think any building will be here – and unless we have some very smart people ruling it, the world will not be the same place in a hundred years. The weapons are too powerful, too strong."

During a Republican presidential debate in December 2015, candidate Trump said: "The biggest problem this world has today is not President Obama with global warming. ... The biggest problem we have is nuclear – nuclear proliferation, and having some maniac, having some madman go out and get a nuclear weapon. That's in my opinion, that is the single biggest problem that our country faces right now. ... I think – I think, for me, nuclear is just the power, the devastation is very important to me."

"So for decades, it seems" David Corn writes in *Mother Jones*, "Trump has been haunted by the feeling that nuclear war may be inescapable. Now he is in a position to do something about the matter."

And, as former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper remarked, "[If] in a fit of pique he [Trump] decides to do something about Kim Jong Un, there's actually very little to stop him. ...The whole [nuclear weapons] system is built to ensure rapid response if necessary. So there's very little in the way of controls over exercising a nuclear option, which is pretty damn scary."

In short, should a fatalistically inclined U.S. President order nuclear tactical weapons strikes – possibly believing that nuclear conflict is somehow inevitable – there is almost nothing to stop him.

So, what might all this mean for Iran? The Iranian leadership is no more likely to know whether Trump intends to attack North Korea than Senator Bob Corker, but it must plan for the worst case – and that is, if North Korea is attacked, the case will be made by Israel, and by Iran hawks in America, that Iran will be in a position to weaponize when the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) has run its course – and that this threat must be pre-empted. (This argument is

something of a canard, since Iran is committed to signing the NPT's Additional Protocol – which provides for intrusive IAEA inspections – even when the JCPOA is complete).

During a meeting with military leaders earlier this month, Trump specifically linked North Korea and Iran, saying his administration was focused on “challenges that we really should have taken care of a long time ago, like North Korea, Iran, Afghanistan, ISIS, and the revisionist powers that threaten our interests all around the world. ... We cannot allow this dictatorship [North Korea] to threaten our nation or our allies with unimaginable loss of life. ... We will do what we must do to prevent that from happening. And it will be done, if necessary – believe me.”

Iran's Alarm

But Iran must also prepare for the other possibility, too. Iran is not threatening the U.S. with nuclear weapons, and Trump's reference to Iran – as a regional bad actor – may be to please his base, play to American Irano-phobia generally, and to gratify a (vulnerable-feeling) Israel and Saudi Arabia.

In the latter case, Trump may hope to have his cake – and to eat it, too. He can de-certify Iran as being in non-compliance with the JCPOA. (De-certification is a purely U.S. domestic matter, which throws the burden of what to do next onto Congress. The latter must decide whether or not to re-impose the nuclear-related sanctions on Iran – after a 60-day period of cogitation. Should Congress reinstate sanctions, the U.S. would be in default on the JCPOA agreement – though the agreement would still legally stand, until and if, the United Nations Security Council should jointly, resolve otherwise).

There is some circumstantial evidence to suggest that this maybe what Trump plans: to have his cake and eat it, too. The Republican majority in the Senate is wafer thin. Trump's bitter humiliation of Sen. Bob Corker, head of the Foreign Relations Committee, and someone with influence over Democratic senators, makes little sense, were he, Trump, to want Congress to threaten re-imposed sanctions on Iran – should the latter not agree either to tougher JCPOA terms, or to (separate) restrictions on the Iranian missile program.

Congress will be well aware of the difficulties – with gaining support of U.S. allies; in cajoling the U.N. Security Council; and of the U.S. global reputation for serial inconstancy. Even in Washington, it is understood that the triumvirate of White House generals is opposed to igniting a conflagration with Iran, and that Iran too, will never agree to renegotiate the JCPOA.

Indeed, Iran will want no truck with White House talks. Trump can nevertheless

“spin” it as Trump, the “hard man,” while setting up Congress to be seen publicly again, as the “weak” component, buckling under the various (real) *impedimenta*. It will be difficult for Congress, nonetheless – given the wide antipathy in America towards Iran – not to sanction Iran further on whatever pretext.

These thoughts might give Iran *some* reassurance, but not much. Iran cannot count on the Europeans, whose banks and financial institutions are already succumbing to sanctions fright. Europe talks of countering any US imposed sanctions on Iran, but does it have the necessary grit?

But more significantly, the Iranian leadership will be aware that Israel is attempting to bully the U.S. into committing to “red lines” for Syria, concerning the Iranian, Hezbollah and Iraqi militia presence there – in the wake of ISIS’s defeat in Syria. Israel will be looking for those “red lines” to have the backing of U.S. military force.

For, as Israeli commentators have made plain, Israel has only limited capacity to sustain civilian casualties in any future conflict involving Hezbollah in Lebanon – let alone across an extended front of confrontation extending from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates River. There is a sense building that Israel is coaxing its “prize bull” towards intervening first, in Syria and then, secondly, in Iran.

Iran cannot count on Defense Secretary (and retired General) Jim Mattis holding the line against a new Middle East major intervention (though he is known to oppose it). Iran has no choice, it must be tough. Which is why Iran is busy constructing a new “resistance” front with Turkey and Iraq (Syria is already there) – and with building military structures of deterrence against Israel. Iran, too, has set its own “red line”: “designate the IRGC as a terrorist group, and Iran will do similar for U.S. forces” – a “red line” that permits Iran flexibility of response, depending on how it judges events. But just to be clear, unless somehow arrested, the configuration of events is converging towards new tensions across the Middle East.

All of which takes us the full circle back to our initial (Rumsfeldian) “known unknowns”: How far has Bibi Netanyahu, through his Jared Kushner conduit, convinced President Trump of the inevitability of having to take action against North Korea and Iran – and of the inexorability of the use of nuclear weapons. (During the 2016 campaign, *MSNBC’s* Joe Scarborough reported that Trump had thrice asked a national security adviser why a president couldn’t use nuclear weapons.)

We just don’t know what Trump might order – and, nor it seems, does anyone

else – least of all, in Washington.

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Why North Korea Wants Nuke Deterrence

Exclusive: The revelation that North Korea hacked into South Korea's military secrets and found U.S. plans for a preemptive "decapitation" of Pyongyang's leadership explains its rush to build a nuclear deterrent, says Nicolas J S Davies.

By Nicolas J S Davies

The Western media has been awash in speculation as to why, about a year ago, North Korea's "crazy" leadership suddenly launched a crash program to vastly improve its ballistic missile capabilities. That question has now been answered.

In September 2016, North Korean cyber-defense forces hacked into South Korean military computers and downloaded 235 gigabytes of documents. The BBC has revealed that the documents included detailed U.S. plans to assassinate North Korea's president, Kim Jong Un, and launch an all-out war on North Korea. The BBC's main source for this story is Rhee Cheol-Hee, a member of the Defense Committee of the South Korean National Assembly.

These plans for aggressive war have actually been long in the making. In 2003, the U.S. scrapped an agreement signed in 1994 under which North Korea suspended its nuclear program and the U.S. agreed to build two light water reactors in North Korea. The two countries also agreed to a step-by-step normalization of relations. Even after the U.S. scrapped the 1994 Agreed Framework in 2003, North Korea did not restart work on the two reactors frozen under that agreement, which could by now be producing enough plutonium to make several nuclear weapons every year.

However, since 2002-03, when President George W. Bush included North Korea in his "axis of evil," withdrew from the Agreed Framework, and launched an invasion of Iraq over bogus WMD claims, North Korea once again began enriching uranium and making steady progress toward developing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles to deliver them.

By 2016, the North Koreans also were keenly aware of the horrific fate of Iraq and Libya and their leaders after the countries did surrender their unconventional weapons. Not only did the U.S. lead bloody “regime change” invasions but the nations’ leaders were brutally murdered, Saddam Hussein by hanging and Muammar Gaddafi sodomized with a knife and then summarily shot in the head.

So, the discovery of the U.S. war plan in 2016 sounded alarm bells in Pyongyang and triggered an unprecedented crash program to quickly expand North Korea’s ballistic missile program. Its nuclear weapons tests established that it can produce a small number of first-generation nuclear weapons, but it needed a viable delivery system before it could be sure that its nuclear deterrent would be credible enough to deter a U.S. attack.

In other words, North Korea’s main goal has been to close the gap between its existing delivery systems and the missile technology it would need to actually launch a retaliatory nuclear strike against the United States. North Korea’s leaders see this as their only chance to escape the same kind of mass destruction visited on North Korea in the first Korean War, when U.S.-led air forces destroyed every city, town and industrial area and General Curtis LeMay boasted that the attacks had killed 20 percent of the population.

Through 2015 and early 2016, North Korea only tested one new missile, the Pukkuksong-1 submarine-launched missile. The missile launched from a submerged submarine and flew 300 miles on its final, successful test, which coincided with the annual U.S.-South Korean military exercises in August 2016.

North Korea also launched its largest satellite to date in February 2016, but the launch vehicle seemed to be the same type as the Unha-3 used to launch a smaller satellite in 2012.

However, since the discovery of the U.S.-South Korean war plans a year ago, North Korea has vastly accelerated its missile development program, conducting at least 27 more tests of a wide range of new missiles and bringing it much closer to a credible nuclear deterrent. Here is a timeline of the tests:

–Two failed tests of Hwasong-10 medium-range ballistic missiles in October 2016.

–Two successful tests of Pukguksong-2 medium-range ballistic missiles, in February and May 2017. The missiles followed identical trajectories, rising to a height of 340 miles and landing in the sea 300 miles away. South Korean analysts believe this missile’s full range is at least 2,000 miles, and North Korea said the tests confirmed it is ready for mass production.

–Four medium-range ballistic missiles that flew an average of 620 miles from the

Tongchang-ri space center in March 2017.

–Two apparently failed missile tests from Sinpo submarine base in April 2017.

–Six tests of Hwasong-12 medium-range ballistic missiles (range: 2,300 to 3,700 miles) since April 2017.

–A failed test of a missile believed to be a “KN-17” from Pukchang airbase in April 2017.

–Test of a Scud-type anti-ship missile that flew 300 miles and landed in the Sea of Japan, and two other tests in May 2017.

–Several cruise missiles fired from the East coast in June 2017.

–A test of a powerful new rocket engine, maybe for an ICBM, in June 2017.

–North Korea tested two Hwasong-14 “near-ICBMs” in July 2017. Based on these tests, the Hwasong-14 may be capable of hitting city-sized targets in Alaska or Hawaii with a single nuclear warhead, but cannot yet reach the U.S. West Coast.

–Four more missiles tested in August 2017, including a Hwasong-12 that flew over Japan and travelled 1,700 miles before breaking up, maybe as a result of a failure in a “Post Boost Vehicle” added to improve range and accuracy.

–Another ballistic missile flew 2,300 miles over the Pacific on September 15, 2017.

An analysis of the two tests of the Hwasong-14 in July by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (BAS) concluded that these missiles are not yet capable of carrying a 500 kg payload as far as Seattle or other U.S. West Coast cities. BAS notes that a first generation nuclear weapon based on the Pakistani model that North Korea is believed to be following could not weigh less than 500 kg, once the weight of the warhead casing and a heat shield to survive reentry into the Earth’s atmosphere are taken into account.

Global Reaction

Awareness of the role of the U.S. war plan in spurring the dramatic escalation of North Korea’s missile program should be a game changer in the world’s response to the crisis over Korea, since it demonstrates that the current acceleration of the North Korean missile program is a defensive response to a serious and potentially existential threat from the United States.

If the United Nations Security Council was not diplomatically and militarily intimidated by the United States, this knowledge should trigger urgent action in

the Security Council to require all sides to make a firm commitment to peaceful and binding diplomacy to formally end the Korean War and remove the threat of war from all the people of Korea. And the whole world would unite politically and diplomatically to prevent the U.S. from using its veto to avoid accountability for its leading role in this crisis. Only a unified global response to potential U.S. aggression could possibly convince North Korea that it would have some protection if it eventually halted its nuclear weapons program.

But such unity in the face of a threat of U.S. aggression would be unprecedented. Most U.N. delegates quietly sat and listened on Sept. 19 when President Donald Trump delivered explicit threats of war and aggression against North Korea, Iran and Venezuela, while boasting about his missile strike against Syria on April 6 over dubious and disputed claims about a chemical weapons incident.

For the past 20 years or more, the United States has swaggered about as the “last remaining superpower” and the “indispensable nation,” a global law unto itself, using the dangers of terrorism and weapons proliferation and highly selective outrage over “dictators” as propaganda narratives to justify illegal wars, CIA-backed terrorism, its own weapons proliferation, and support for its favored dictators like the brutal rulers of Saudi Arabia and other Arab monarchies.

For even longer, the United States has been two-faced about international law, citing it when some adversary can be accused of a violation but ignoring it when the U.S. or its allies are trampling on the rights of some disfavored country. When the International Court of Justice convicted the United States of aggression (including acts of terrorism) against Nicaragua in 1986, the U.S. withdrew from the ICJ’s binding jurisdiction.

Since then, the U.S. has thumbed its nose at the entire structure of international law, confident in the political power of its propaganda or “information warfare” to cast itself as the guardian of law and order in the world, even as it systematically violates the most basic rules spelled out in the U.N. Charter and the Geneva Conventions.

U.S. propaganda treats the U.N. Charter and the Geneva Conventions, the world’s “Never again” to war, torture and the killing of millions of civilians in the Second World War, as relics of another time that it would be naive to take seriously.

But the results of the U.S. alternative – its lawless “might makes right” war policy – are now plain for all to see. In the past 16 years, America’s post-9/11

wars have already killed at least two million people, maybe many more, with no end in sight to the slaughter as the U.S.'s policy of illegal war keeps plunging country after country into intractable violence and chaos.

An Ally's Fears

Just as North Korea's missile programs are a rational defense strategy in the face of the threat Pyongyang faces from the U.S., the exposure of the U.S.'s war plan by American allies in South Korea is also a rational act of self-preservation, since they too are threatened by the possibility of war on the Korean peninsula.

Now maybe other U.S. allies, the wealthy countries that have provided political and diplomatic cover for the U.S.'s 20-year campaign of illegal war, will finally reassert their humanity, their sovereignty and their own obligations under international law, and start to rethink their roles as junior partners in U.S. aggression.

Countries like the U.K., France and Australia will sooner or later have to choose between forward-looking roles in a sustainable, peaceful multi-polar world and a slavish loyalty to the ever-more desperate death throes of U.S. hegemony. Now might be a good moment to make that choice, before they are dragged into new U.S. wars in Korea, Iran or Venezuela.

Even Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tennessee, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is afraid that Donald Trump will lead humanity into World War III. But it might come as a surprise to people in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Libya and parts of a dozen other countries already engulfed by U.S.-driven wars to learn that they are not already in the midst of World War III.

Perhaps what really worries the Senator is that he and his colleagues may no longer be able to sweep these endless atrocities under the plush carpets of the halls of Congress without a genteel Barack Obama in the White House to sweet-talk U.S. allies around the world and keep the millions being killed in U.S. wars off U.S. TVs and computer screens, out of sight and out of mind.

If politicians in the U.S. and around the world need the ugliness of Donald Trump as a mirror for their own greed, ignorance and temerity, to shame them into changing their ways, so be it – whatever it takes. But it should not escape anyone anywhere that the signature on this diabolical war plan that now threatens to kill millions of Koreans was not Donald Trump's but Barack Obama's.

George Orwell might well have been describing the partisan blindness of the West's self-satisfied, so easily deluded, neoliberal society when he wrote this

in 1945,

“Actions are held to be good or bad, not on their own merits, but according to who does them, and there is almost no kind of outrage – torture, the use of hostages, forced labor, mass deportations, imprisonment without trial, forgery, assassination, the bombing of civilians – which does not change its color when it is committed by our side... The Nationalist not only does not disapprove of atrocities committed by his own side, but he has a remarkable capacity for not even hearing about them.”

Here’s the bottom line: The United States has been planning to assassinate Kim Jong Un and to launch an all-out war on North Korea. There. You’ve heard it. Now, can you still be manipulated into believing that Kim Jong Un is simply “crazy” and North Korea is the gravest threat to world peace?

Or do you now understand that the United States is the real threat to peace in Korea, just as it was in Iraq, Libya and many other countries where the leaders were deemed “crazy” and U.S. officials (and the Western mainstream media) promoted war as the only “rational” alternative?

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