

# PEPE ESCOBAR: Iran Squeezed Between Imperial Psychos and European Cowards

Berlin, Paris and London assumed Tehran could not afford to leave the JCP0A even if it was not receiving any of the promised economic rewards. Now the EU3 are facing the hour of truth, writes Pepe Escobar.

By **Pepe Escobar**

in Bangkok

*Special to Consortium News*



The Trump administration unilaterally cheated on the 2015 multinational, UN-endorsed JCP0A, or Iran nuclear deal. It has imposed an illegal, worldwide financial and energy blockade on all forms of trade with Iran – from oil and gas to exports of iron, steel, aluminum and copper. For all practical purposes, and in any geopolitical scenario, this is a declaration of war.

Successive U.S. governments have ripped international law to shreds; ditching the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is only the latest instance. It doesn't matter that Tehran has fulfilled all its commitments to the deal – according to UN inspectors. Once the leadership in Tehran concluded that the U.S. sanctions tsunami is fiercer than ever, it decided to begin partially withdrawing from the deal.

President Hassan Rouhani was adamant: Iran has not left the JCP0A – yet. Tehran's measures are legal under the framework of articles 26 and 36 of the JCP0A – and European officials were informed in advance. But it's clear the EU3 (Germany,

France, Britain), who have always insisted on their vocal support for the JCPOA, must work seriously to alleviate the U.S.-provoked economic disaster to Iran if Tehran has any incentive to continue to abide by the agreement.

Russia and China – the pillars of Eurasia integration, to which Iran adheres – support Tehran's position. This was discussed extensively in Moscow by Sergey Lavrov and Iran's Javad Zarif, perhaps the world's top two foreign ministers.

At the same time, it's politically naïve to believe the Europeans will suddenly grow a backbone.

The comfortable assumption in Berlin, Paris and London was that Tehran could not afford to leave the JCPOA even if it was not receiving any of the economic rewards promised in 2015. Yet now the EU3 are facing the hour of truth.

It's hard to expect anything meaningful coming from an enfeebled Chancellor Angela Merkel, with Berlin already targeted by Washington's trade ire; a Brexit-paralyzed Britain; and a massively unpopular President Emmanuel Macron in France already threatening to impose his own sanctions if Tehran does not agree to limit its ballistic missile program. Tehran will never allow inspections over its thriving missile industry – and this was never part of the JCPOA to begin with.

As it stands, the EU3 are not buying Iranian oil. They are meekly abiding by the U.S. banking and oil/gas sanctions – which are now extended to manufacturing sectors – and doing nothing to protect Iran from its nasty effects. The implementation of INSTEX, the SWIFT alternative for trade with Iran, is languishing. Besides expressing lame “regrets”

about the U.S. sanctions, the EU3 are de facto playing the game on the side of U.S., Israel, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates; and by extension against Russia, China and Iran.

### **Rise of the Imperial Psychos**

As Tehran de facto kicked the ball to the European court, both EU3 options are dire. To meaningfully defend the JCP0A will invite a ballistic reaction from the Trump administration. To behave like poodles – the most probable course of action – means emboldening even more the psychopaths doubling as imperial functionaries bent on a hot war against Iran at all costs; [Koch brothers Big Oil asset](#) and enraptured evangelist, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and paid [Mujahideen-e Khalq asset](#) and notorious intel manipulator, National Security Advisor John Bolton.

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The Pompeo-Bolton gangster maneuver is hardly Bismarck's *Realpolitik*. It consists of relentlessly pushing Tehran to make a mistake, any mistake, in terms of “violating” its obligations under the JCP0A, so that this may be sold to gullible American public opinion as the proverbial “threat” to the “rules-based order” doubling as a *casus belli*.

There's one thing the no-holds-barred U.S. economic war against Iran has managed to achieve: internal unity in the Islamic Republic. Team Rouhani's initial aim for the JCP0A was to open up to Western trade (trade with Asia was always on) and somewhat curtail the power of the IRGC, or Revolutionary Guards, which control vast sectors of the

Iranian economy.

Washington's economic war proved instead the IRGC was right all along, echoing the finely-tuned geopolitical sentiment of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, who always emphasized the Americans cannot be trusted, ever.

And as much as Washington has branded the IRGC a "terrorist organization," Tehran replied in kind, branding CENTCOM the same.

Independent Persian Gulf oil traders dismiss the notion that the kleptocrat House of Saud – de facto run by Jared "of Arabia" Kushner's Whatsapp pal Mohammed bin Salman (MbS), the Saudi crown prince – holds up to 2.5 million barrels of oil a day in spare capacity capable of replacing Iran's 2 million barrels of exports (out of 3.45 million of total daily production). The House of Saud seems more interested in hiking oil prices for Asian customers.

### **Faulty Blockade**

Washington's energy trade blockade of Iran is bound to fail.

China will continue to buy its 650,000 barrels a day – and may even buy more. Multiple Chinese companies trade technology and industrial services for Iranian oil.

Pakistan, Iraq and Turkey – all bordering Iran – will continue to buy Iranian high-quality light crude by every method of payment (including gold) and transportation available, formal or informal. Baghdad's trade relationship with Tehran will continue to thrive.

As economic suffocation won't suffice, Plan B is – what else

– the threat of a hot war.

It's by now established that the info, in fact rumors, about alleged Iranian maneuvers to attack U.S. interests in the Gulf was relayed to Bolton by the Mossad, at the White House, with Israeli National Security Adviser Meir Ben Shabbat personally briefing Bolton.

Everyone is aware of the corollary: a “reposition of assets” (in Pentagonese) – from the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group deployment to four B-52 bombers landing in Al Udeid Air base in Qatar, all part of a “warning” to Iran.

A pre-war roaring crescendo now engulfs the Lebanese front as well as the Iranian front.

### **Reasons for Psychotic Rage**

Iran's GDP is similar to Thailand's, and its military budget is similar to Singapore's. Bullying Iran is a geopolitical and geo-economic absurdity. Iran may be an emerging Global South actor – it could easily be a member of the G20 – but can never be construed as a “threat” to the U.S.

Yet Iran provokes psychopathic imperial functionaries to a paroxysm of rage for three serious reasons. Neocons never mind that trying to destroy Iraq cost over \$6 trillion – and it was a major war crime, a political disaster, and an economic abyss all rolled into one. Trying to destroy Iran will cost untold trillions more.

The most glaring reason for the irrational hatred is the fact the Islamic Republic is one of the very few nations on the planet consistently defying the hegemon – for four decades now.

The second reason is that Iran, just like Venezuela – and this is a combined war front – have committed the supreme anathema; trading on energy bypassing the petrodollar, the foundation stone of U.S. hegemony.

The third (invisible) reason is that to attack Iran is to disable emerging Eurasia integration, just like using NSA spying to ultimately put Brazil in the bag was an attack on Latin American integration.

The non-stop hysteria over whether President Donald Trump is being maneuvered into war on Iran by his pet psychopaths –



well, he actually directed Iran to “Call me” – eludes the Big Picture. As shown before, a possible shut down of the Strait of Hormuz, whatever the reasons, would be like a major meteor impact on the global economy. And that would inevitably translate as no Trump reelection in 2020.

The Strait of Hormuz would never need to be blocked if all the oil Iran is able to export is bought by China, other Asian clients and even Russia – which could relabel it. But Tehran wouldn't blink on blocking Hormuz if faced with total economic strangulation.

According to a dissident U.S. intel expert, “the United States is at a clear disadvantage in that if the Strait of Hormuz is shut the U.S. collapses. But if the U.S. can divert Russia from defending Iran, then Iran can be attacked and Russia will have accomplished nothing, as the neocons do not want detente with Russia and China. Trump does want detente but the Deep State does not intend to permit it.”

Assuming this scenario is correct, the usual suspects in the United States government are trying to divert Putin from the Strait of Hormuz question while keeping Trump weakened, as the neocons proceed 24/7 on the business of strangling Iran. It’s hard to see Putin falling for this not exactly elaborate trap.

### **Not Bluffing**

So what happens next? Professor Mohammad Marandi at the Faculty of World Studies of the University of Tehran offers quite a sobering perspective: “After 60 days Iran will push things even further. I don’t think the Iranians are bluffing. They will also be pushing back at the Saudis and the Emiratis by different means.”

Marandi, ominously, sees “further escalation” ahead:

“Iranians have been preparing for war with the United States ever since the Iraq invasion in 2003. After what they’ve seen in Libya, in Syria, Yemen, Venezuela, they know that the Americans and Europeans are utterly brutal. The whole shore of the Persian Gulf on the Iranian side and the Gulf of Oman is full of tunnels and underground high-tech missiles. The Persian Gulf is full of ships

equipped with highly developed sea-to-sea missiles. If there is real war, all the oil and gas facilities in the region will be destroyed, all the tankers will be destroyed.”

And if that show comes to pass, Marandi regards the Strait of Hormuz as the “sideshow”:

“The Americans will be driven out of Iraq. Iraq exports 4 million barrels of oil a day; that would probably come to an end, through strikes and other means. It would be catastrophic for the Americans. It would be catastrophic for the world – and for Iran as well. But the Americans would simply not win.”

So as Marandi explains it – and Iranian public opinion now largely agrees – the Islamic Republic has leverage because they know “the Americans can’t afford to go to war. Crazyies like Pompeo and Bolton may want it, but many in the establishment don’t.”

Tehran may have developed a modified MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) framework as leverage, mostly to push Trump ally MbS to cool down. “Assuming,” adds Marandi, “the madmen don’t get the upper hand, and if they do, then it’s war. But for the time being, I think that’s highly unlikely.”

### **All Options on the Table?**

In Cold War 2.0 terms, from Central Asia to the Eastern Mediterranean and from the Indian Ocean to the Caspian Sea, Tehran is able to count on quite a set of formal and informal alliances. That not only centers on the Beirut-



Damascus-Baghdad-Tehran-Herat axis, but also includes Turkey and Qatar. And most important of all, the top actors on the Eurasian integration chessboard: the Russia and China in strategic partnership.

When Zarif met Lavrov last week in Moscow, they discussed virtually everything: Syria (they negotiate together in the Astana, now Nur-Sultan process), the Caspian, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (of which Iran will become a member), the JCPOA and Venezuela.

The Trump administration was dragged kicking and screaming to meet Kim Jong-Un at the same table because of the DPRK's intercontinental ballistic missile tests. And then Kim ordered extra missile tests because, in his own words, as quoted by KCNA, "genuine peace and security of the country are guaranteed only by the strong physical force capable of defending its sovereignty."

### **Global South Watching**

The overwhelming majority of Global South nations are watching the U.S. neocon offensive to ultimately strangle "the Iranian people", aware more than ever that Iran may be bullied to extinction because it does not possess a nuclear deterrent. The IRGC has reached the same conclusion.

That would mean the death of the JCPOA – and the Return of the Living Dead of "all options on the table."

But then, there'll be twists and turns in the Art of the (Demented) Deal. So what if, and it's a major "if", Donald Trump is being held hostage by his pet psychopaths?

Let The Dealer speak:

“We hope we don’t have to do anything with regard to the use of military force...We can make a deal, a fair deal. ... We just don’t want them to have nuclear weapons. Not too much to ask. And we would help put them back into great shape. They’re in bad shape right now. I look forward to the day where we can actually help Iran. We’re not looking to hurt Iran. I want them to be strong and great and have a great economy... We have no secrets. And they can be very, very strong, financially. They have great potential.”

Then again, Ayatollah Khamenei said: the Americans cannot be trusted, ever.

**Pepe Escobar, a veteran Brazilian journalist, is the correspondent-at-large for Hong Kong-based [Asia Times](#). His latest book is [“2030.”](#) Follow him on [Facebook](#).**

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## THE ANGRY ARAB: The UAE and the Arab Counter-Revolution

As’ad AbuKhalil looks at Gulf rulers vying to play top host to U.S. interests in the Middle East.

By [As`ad AbuKhalil](#)

*Special to Consortium News*



The political role of the United Arab Emirates has changed dramatically since the death of its founding ruler, Shaykh Zayed bin Sultan.

He was officially succeeded by his son, Khalifah bin Zayed, in 2004 but the latter has been largely distant from governmental affairs for health and other reasons. The actual reins are held by Abu Dhabi's highly ambitious Crown Prince Muhammad bin Zayed. Muhammad has been the effective ruler, along with his brothers on his mother's side, Fatimah bint Mubarak, who control all the key posts of government.

The current de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, has largely emulated Muhammad (known commonly as MbZ, while Muhammad bin Salman is commonly known as MbS).

Under Shaykh Zayed, the UAE avoided internal Arab conflicts and steered its foreign policy largely according to the pan-Arab consensus. While the country was chartered by the British colonial powers it smoothly made the transition to a strong alliance with the U.S. Despite tensions with Saudi Arabia it mainly avoided open conflicts.

Shaykh Zayed was a loyal ally, or client, of the U.S. and its interests in the region. And while generally deferring to Saudi hegemony, he paid lip service to the pro-Palestinian sentiment of the Arab population. In the early 1970s he even welcomed Leila Khalid, the famous commander of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, to the UAE and is said to have made a donation to the PFLP (a small subset of which defected after the incident and started

their own small organization).

### **Muslim Brotherhood in Ministries**

Shaykh Zayed was uneducated and was not known for speech-making. His country benefited from the educated Palestinian community. He also invited Muslim Brotherhood functionaries to fill various posts in justice and education ministries.

Zayed, for instance, invited Hasan Al-Turabi, the famous Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood leader, to help draft the UAE constitution. This was a time when both the UAE and Saudi Arabia enthusiastically welcomed Muslim Brotherhood leaders and members to combat the tide of secular Arab nationalism and leftism in the region.

In his last year, Zayed increasingly surrendered power to his sons and his last political role was in 2003 when he proposed an initiative according to which Saddam Husain would relinquish power in return for the U.S. backing away from war with Iraq (an initiative in which neither the U.S. nor Saddam showed any interest).

MbZ has taken the UAE in a very different direction. He has clearly wanted to make the UAE a sort of new Arab Israel, which could serve the interests of the U.S. MbZ was interested in military-intelligence affairs and built up his power from that basis.

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His rule has been characterized by 1) establishment of covert, but strong relations with Israel; 2) an open war

against the Muslim Brotherhood; 3) competition with Qatar and Saudi Arabia for regional dominance, especially after the demise of Saddam's regime; 4) direct involvement in Palestinian affairs through the agency of Muhammad Dahlan, the notoriously shady Palestinian intelligence figure; and 5) heavy lobbying in Washington, with disregard for Arab public opinion on all matters.

MbZ was not satisfied with being one of many loyal allies/clients of the U.S. in the Middle East. He has sought to rival Israel in serving as a strategic partner of the U.S. in the region and outdo Jordan in providing intelligence and military services. His military emphasizes special forces and hosts one of the biggest U.S. intelligence stations in the world. MbZ also invested in buying influence in Washington.

### **Intense D.C. Courtship**

The role of his D.C. ambassador, Yousef Al-Otaiba, who courted journalists, officials, and think tank experts with unprecedented intensity, has become well-known. UAE money flowed into think tanks, and the UAE received favorable coverage in Western media. It also helped that Al-Otaiba established a strong friendship with the Israeli ambassador and the Israeli lobby began to promote both Saudi and UAE regime interests in Washington, after both regimes had abandoned a verbal commitment to the Palestinian cause.

Arab lobbies – no matter what states or interests they represent, no matter how well-funded they are – can't achieve great success without the blessings of the Israeli lobby.

The AWACs sale to Saudi Arabia during the Reagan years was an exception: a time when the Saudi regime – supported by a different Republican Party prior to the rise of the Evangelical Zionists – prevailed against the Israeli lobby.

The Saudi and UAE regime took a back seat to Qatar in 2011 and 2013. For the first few years of the Arab uprisings, Doha was in the driver's seat. The Saudi King, Abdullah, was too feeble to run the affairs of his own government, let alone the affairs of the Arab regional system. Qatari foreign ministers ran the Arab League in the first few years after the Arab uprisings and arranged for the ouster of Syria from the Arab League.

Qatar, after all, was celebrating the victory of its allies in the Muslim Brotherhood in Tunisia, Libya and most importantly Egypt. They also were on the ascendancy in Yemen. The Arab counter-revolution was in Doha's hands during this time: the Qatari regime was making sure that the popular protests didn't get out of hand and didn't disturb the Arab regional system.

The Qatari regime also negotiated a deal between the local Muslim Brotherhoods and the Israeli lobby in Washington, according to which the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood would not challenge the Egyptian-Israeli treaty, and the Tunisian Muslim Brotherhood would stop an article criminalizing normalization with Israel, which was high on the protesters' agenda, from entering the new constitution.

### **Quietly Sponsoring a Coup in Egypt**

But the UAE was not dormant during those times. It was quietly sponsoring a coup in Egypt against the Muslim Brotherhood, and preparing for an open war against it

throughout the Arab world, in every country where the Brotherhood may have had a chance of electoral success.

The UAE created a front (the Egyptian youth movement, Tamarrud) and worked with Egypt's General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to oust the first freely elected president in the country's history.

It also supported the relics of the ancien regime in Tunisia, and sponsored Gen. Khalifa Haftar in Libya. In 2015, when Salman ascended the Saudi throne, MbZ became the chief counsel and advocate for Salman's son MbS in Washington.

The two seemed to agree on the need to expel Qatar from the affairs of Arab politics and to engineer together a tougher war on Iran. They both launched – with Western support – the war on Yemen assuming, wrongly, that it would be over in a few weeks.

The current era in Arab politics is largely the design of MbZ with the enthusiastic support of MbS. But the two personalities are quite different. While MbS is flashy and outspoken, MbZ keeps a low-profile. MbS likes to impress Western audiences (and he succeeded in doing that until the murder of Jamal Khashoggi last year). MbZ, by contrast, only cares about impressing the White House and his interlocutors in Tel Aviv.

MbZ is now trying to influence events in Sudan and Algeria where he maintains close ties to the ruling militaries and wants to prevent democratic rule in both countries. Protest signs against UAE and Saudi intervention were visible in Sudanese demonstrations that led last month to the fall of

President [Omar al-Bashir](#) (MbZ intelligence advisor, Muhammad Dahlan, visited Sudan the other day).

In Yemen, MbZ has been quite assertive and even clashed with the Saudi regime to promote his own clients there. The ability of MbZ to continue playing his leadership role on behalf of the U.S. and Israel may not last forever. In the meantime, however, MbZ has emerged as Israel's enforcer in the region; a role that is bound to earn him accolades in Washington, and especially on Capitol Hill.

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## PEPE ESCOBAR: The Eagle, the Bear and the Dragon

The eagle has conveniently forgotten that the original, Ancient Silk Road linked the dragon with the Roman empire for centuries – with no interlopers outside of Eurasia, muses Pepe Escobar.

By [Pepe Escobar](#)

*Special to Consortium News*





Once upon a time, deep into the night in selected campfires across the deserts of Southwest Asia, I used to tell a fable about the eagle, the bear and the dragon – much to the amusement of my Arab and Persian interlocutors.

It was about how, in the young 21<sup>st</sup> century, the eagle, the bear and the dragon had taken their (furry) gloves off and engaged in what turned out to be Cold War 2.0.

As we approach the end of the second decade of this already incandescent century, perhaps it's fruitful to upgrade the fable. With all due respect to Jean de la Fontaine, excuse me while I kiss the (desert) sky again.

Long gone are the days when a frustrated bear repeatedly offered to cooperate with the eagle and its minions on a burning question: nuclear missiles.

The bear repeatedly argued that the deployment of interceptor missiles and radars in that land of the blind leading the blind – Europe – was a threat. The eagle repeatedly argued that this is to protect us from those rogue Persians.

Now the eagle – claiming the dragon is getting an easy ride – has torn down every treaty in sight and is bent on deploying nuclear missiles in selected eastern parts of the land of the blind leading the blind, essentially targeting the bear.

### **All That Glitters is Silk**

Roughly two decades after what top bear Putin defined as “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”,

he proposed a form of USSR light; a political/economic body called the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

The idea was to have the EAEU interact with the EU – the top institution of the motley crew congregated as the blind leading the blind.

The eagle not only rejected the possible integration; it came up with a modified color revolution scenario to unplug Ukraine from the EAEU.

Even earlier than that, the eagle had wanted to set up a New Silk Road under its total control. The eagle had conveniently forgotten that the original, Ancient Silk Road linked the dragon with the Roman empire for centuries – with no interlopers outside of Eurasia.

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So one can imagine the eagle's stupor when the dragon irrupted on the global stage with its own super-charged New Silk Roads – upgrading the bear original idea of a free trade area “from Lisbon to Vladivostok” to a multi-connectivity corridor, terrestrial and maritime, from eastern China to western Europe and everything in between, spanning the whole of Eurasia.

Facing this new paradigm the blind, well, remained blind for as long as anyone could remember; they simply could not get their act together.

The eagle, meanwhile, was incrementally raising the stakes. It launched what amounted for all practical purposes to a

progressively weaponized encirclement of the dragon.



The eagle made a series of moves that amount to inciting nations bordering the South China Sea to antagonize the dragon, while repositioning an array of toys – nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers, fighter jets – closer and closer to the dragon's territory.

All the time, what the dragon saw – and continues to see – is a battered eagle trying to muscle its way out of an irreversible decline by trying to intimidate, isolate and sabotage the dragon's irreversible ascent back to where it has been for 18 of the past 20 centuries; enthroned as the king of the jungle.

A key vector is that Eurasia-wide players know that under the new laws of the jungle the dragon simply can't – and won't – be reduced to the status of a supporting actor. And Eurasia-wide players are too smart to embark on a Cold War 2.0 that will undermine Eurasia itself.

The eagle's reaction to the dragon's New Silk strategy took some time to swing from inaction to outright demonization – complementing the joint description of both the dragon and the bear as existential threats.

And yet, for all the spinning crossfire, Eurasia-wide players are not exactly impressed anymore with an eagle empire armed to its teeth. Especially after the eagle's crest was severely damaged by failure upon hunting failure in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria. Eagle aircraft carriers patrolling the eastern part of Mare Nostrum are not exactly scaring the bear, the Persians and the Syrians.

A "reset" between the eagle and the bear was always a myth. It took some time – and much financial distress – for the bear to realize there won't be any reset, while the dragon only saw a reset towards open confrontation.

After establishing itself, slowly but surely, as the most advanced military power on the planet, with hypersonic know-how, the bear came to a startling conclusion: we don't care anymore about what the eagle says – or does.

### **Under the Raging Volcano**

Meanwhile, the dragon kept expanding, inexorably, across all Asian latitudes as well as Africa, Latin America and even across the unemployment-infested pastures of the austerity-hit blind leading the blind.

The dragon is firmly assured that, if cornered to the point of resorting to a nuclear option, it holds the power to make the eagle's staggering deficit explode, degrade its credit rating to junk, and wreak havoc in the global financial system.

No wonder the eagle, under an all-enveloping paranoid cloud of cognitive dissonance, feeding state propaganda 24/7 to its subjects and minions, keeps spewing out lava like a

raging volcano – dispensing sanctions to a great deal of the planet, entertaining regime change wet dreams, launching a total energy embargo against the Persians, resurrecting the “war on terra”, and aiming to punish like a Bat Out Of Hell any journalist, publisher or whistleblower revealing its inner machinations.

It hurts, so bad, to admit that the political/economic center of a new multipolar world will be Asia – actually Eurasia.

As the eagle got more and more threatening, the bear and the dragon got closer and closer in their strategic partnership. Now both bear and dragon have too many strategic links across the planet to be intimidated by the eagle’s massive Empire of Bases or those periodic coalitions of the (somewhat reluctant) willing.

To match comprehensive, in-progress Eurasia integration, of which the New Silk Roads are the graphic symbol, the eagle’s fury, unleashed, has nothing to offer – except rehashing a war against Islam coupled with the weaponized cornering of both bear and dragon.

Then there’s Persia – those master chess players. The eagle has been gunning for the Persians ever since they got rid of the eagle’s proconsul, the Shah, in 1979 – and this after the eagle and perfidious Albion had already smashed democracy to place the Shah, who made Saddam look like Gandhi, in power in 1953.

The eagle wants all that oil and natural gas back – not to mention a new Shah as the new gendarme of the Persian Gulf. The difference is now the bear and the dragon are saying No

Way. What is the eagle to do? Set up the false flag to end all false flags?

This is where we stand now. And once again, we reach the end – though not the endgame. There’s still no moral to this revamped fable. We continue to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Our only, slim hope is that a bunch of Hollow Men obsessed by the Second Coming won’t turn Cold War 2.0 into Armageddon.

**Pepe Escobar, a veteran Brazilian journalist, is the correspondent-at-large for Hong Kong-based [Asia Times](#). His latest book is [“2030.”](#) Follow him on [Facebook](#).**

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**PATRICK LAWRENCE: The US Moves on Iran’s Oil Market as an Expression of an Irrational Foreign Policy**

Patrick Lawrence gauges the backfiring potential of Pompeo’s withdrawal on Thursday of U.S. sanction waivers from eight major importers.

**A Decisive Defeat in Long-Running Battle with Foreign Policy Minders**

**By [Patrick Lawrence](#)**

*Special to Consortium News*



Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's announcement last week that no importer of Iranian oil will henceforth be exempt from U.S. sanctions is as risky as it is misguided. The withdrawal of waivers as of this Thursday effectively gives eight importers dependent on Iranian crude – India, Japan, South Korea, China, Turkey, Taiwan, Italy, and Greece – 10 days' notice to adjust their petroleum purchases. This is now a full-court press: The intent is to cut off Iran's access to any oil market anywhere as part of the administration's "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran. "We are going to zero," Pompeo said as he disclosed the new policy.

Nobody is going to zero. The administration's move will further damage the Iranian economy, certainly, but few outside the administration think it is possible to isolate Iran as comprehensively as Pompeo seems to expect. Turkey immediately rejected "unilateral sanctions and impositions on how to conduct relations with neighbors," as Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavusoglu put it in a Twitter message. China could do the same, if less bluntly. Other oil importers are likely to consider barter deals, local-currency transactions, and similar "workarounds." In the immediate neighborhood, Iraq is so far ignoring U.S. demands that it cease purchasing natural gas and electricity from Iran.

### **Insights on Overreach**

There are a couple of insights to be gleaned from this unusually aggressive case of policy overreach.

First, the new turn in the administration's Iran policy appears to mark a decisive defeat for President Donald Trump

in his long-running battle with his foreign policy minders. It is now very unlikely Trump will achieve any of his policy objectives, a number of which represent useful alternatives to the stunningly shambolic strategies advanced by Pompeo, National Security Advisor John Bolton, and other zealots in the administration.

Weakened by relentless “Russia-gate” investigations, for instance, the president has little chance now of improving ties with Moscow or negotiating with adversaries such as Iran and North Korea, as he has long advocated.

In a *Face the Nation* [interview](#) Sunday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Tehran would be open to bilateral talks under the right conditions. It was the second time in a week that Zarif made this point. But those around Trump, not least Bolton and Pompeo, are sure to block any such prospect—or sabotage talks if they do take place, as they did [Trump’s second summit](#) with Kim Jong-un, North Korea’s leader, in late February.

Second, this administration’s foreign policy has steadily assumed an irrational character that may be unprecedented in U.S. history. This is perilous. The administration’s near-paranoiac hostility toward Pyongyang and Moscow are cases in point. So is its evident indifference to alienating longstanding allies across the Atlantic and in Asia. As of this week, however, Pompeo’s “down to zero” policy makes Iran the most immediate danger.

### **Persian Gulf Chokepoint**

Iranian officials, including Zarif, now [threaten](#) to close the Strait of Hormuz, chokepoint of the Persian Gulf, if



Iranian tankers are prevented from passing through it. This is an indirect warning that the Iranian military could confront the U.S. Fifth Fleet, which operates in the Gulf and adjacent waters.

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A sharp spike in oil prices is another danger with which the administration now lands itself. Taken together, U.S. sanctions against Venezuela and Iran are intended to take roughly 2 million barrels of oil a day out of the market.

Saudi Arabia has pledged to make up the lost supply, but many analysts question its ability to sustain an increase in output given the advancing depletion of its long-productive Ghawar field. Spare capacity among producers is already wafer-thin. Do we need to risk another oil crisis, given the flagging global economy?

Trump's foreign policy minders also risk alienating allies – South Korea, Japan, India, the Europeans – whose cooperation the U.S. needs on numerous other policy questions. In the case of China, the administration puts progress on a nearly complete trade deal and Beijing's leverage with North Korea in jeopardy.

There are other cases demonstrating the Trump administration's apparently thorough indifference to collateral damage and the animosity of allies. Since the U.S. abandoned the Paris climate pact and the 2015 accord governing Iran's nuclear program, the Europeans have hardly contained their anger; they are openly furious now about the

tightened sanctions against Iran. The South Koreans, frustrated with Washington's intransigent stance toward Pyongyang, now search for ways to engage the North despite many layers of UN and U.S.-imposed sanctions.

The question is why this administration's foreign policies are so amateurish and discombobulated. Corollary question: Why is the president surrounded by policy advisers so thoroughly at odds with those of his objectives that are worthwhile?

Trump arrived in Washington an outsider: This is where answers to these questions begin. This limited the New York dealmaker to a shallow pool from which to build his administration. His never-ending Russia-gate problem further handicaps him. This administration is among the most opaque in recent history, so certainties as to its internal workings are hard to come by. But Trump may not have chosen his foreign policy team so much as its members have been imposed upon him.

However his advisers arrived in the administration, they are a toxic combination of neoconservatives, many drawn from the Heritage Foundation, and evangelical Christians. Bolton is emblematic of the former, Pompeo of the latter. This is the current complexion of American foreign policy.

### **Zealots and Crusaders**

Both camps are populated with zealots and crusaders; both cultivate irrational world views rooted in extremist ideology and sentiment. Bolton's obsession is the restoration of unchallenged U.S. supremacy. Pompeo is said to view adversaries such as North Korea and Iran as George

W. Bush did: The U.S. is in an “end times” war with Gog and Magog, biblical manifestations of the evil abroad in the world.

To be clear, there is more wrong than right in the president’s foreign policy thinking. He was self-evidently behind the decision to move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem and the announcement in March that Washington recognizes Israeli jurisdiction over the Golan Heights.

“This is very important strategically for victory, heights, because you’re up high, very important,” Trump said over the weekend. “Fifty-two years ago this started [when Israel captured Golan from Syria in the 1967 war] and I did it quickly. Done. It’s all done.”

It is unlikely anything is all done in connection with the embassy move and the Golan Heights decision. Both run diametrically counter to international law and both have significantly damaged U.S. credibility in the Middle East. Trump, in short, makes his own miscalculations, and they are as grave as any made by the Pompeo–Bolton axis. There are few wise heads in this administration.

At the same time, Trump’s desire to negotiate with adversaries – Russia, Iran, North Korea – is entirely defensible. But the “down to zero” Iran policy to take effect this week can be read as a signal of the president’s failure to counter the foreign policy Manicheans who surround him.

There may be skirmishes to come, but the battle is over. We must now watch as extremist ideologues accelerate America’s already evident decline as a global power – along with its

increasing isolation.

Patrick Lawrence, a correspondent abroad for many years, chiefly for the *International Herald Tribune*, is a columnist, essayist, author, and lecturer. His most recent book is “Time No Longer: Americans After the American Century” (Yale). Follow him @thefloutist. His web site is [www.patricklawrence.us](http://www.patricklawrence.us). Support his work via [www.patreon.com/thefloutist](http://www.patreon.com/thefloutist).

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## THE ANGRY ARAB: Deal of the Century? Which Century?

As'ad AbuKhalil explains why Palestinians will see through the latest U.S. illusion of a Middle East “peace process.”

By [As'ad AbuKhalil](#)

*Special to Consortium News*



There is great speculation about the “Deal of the Century” for the Middle East, about which very little is known. What is known is that the Trump administration formulated the plan basically through bilateral talks with the Israeli government, as the Palestinian Authority has refused to talk to the Trump administration since the relocation of the U.S. embassy from occupied Jaffa (Tel Aviv) to occupied Jerusalem.

The release of the plan has been delayed: first until after the Israeli election and now until sometime in the summer. None of the individuals tasked with formulating the plan have expertise in the Middle East, although in Washington, D.C., strong advocacy on behalf of the Israeli occupation often counts as a substitute.

This plan will be the latest attempt by a U.S. administration to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict – once and for all. There was the Nixon administration's famous Rogers' Plan (named after Secretary of State William Rogers, who later resigned after complaining about National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger's usurpation of his authority).

Before the Nixon administration, President John F. Kennedy also tried to deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict only to be rebuffed by strong Zionist figures within the Democratic Party.

The origins of U.S. intervention were initially clear: that the U.S. would push for a deal based on UN Security Council Resolution 242, which calls on Israel to withdraw from "territories" it occupied in the 1967 war in return for Arab recognition and acceptance of the Israeli occupation state within the 1948 occupation. But Kissinger attached a secret appendix to the Sinai II agreement in 1975 (between Egypt and Israel) in which he pledged to boycott and ostracize the PLO, which all Arabs accepted as the legitimate and sole representative of the Palestinian people. This exclusion of Palestinian political representation was consistent with UNSC 242, which did not mention the word "Palestinian" once, although it made a passing reference to the "refugee problem."

## **Zionist Influence**

And while the management of the American-led “peace process” was, during the early decades, handled by Middle East experts (known then as “Arabists,”) strong Zionist influences in successive U.S. administrations and houses of Congress marginalized their influence and slowed down the progress of the “process” – in terms of U.S. pressure on Israel.

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But the American-led “peace process” lived on for decades, not as a testimony of U.S. interest in peace in the Middle East, nor as evidence of American interest in solving the Palestinian problem, but as a way to provide Israeli occupation and aggression with a cloak of international legitimacy and to give Palestinians the illusion of “progress.”

With the Reagan administration a change occurred in the management of the “peace process;” it was taken from the Arabists and given to ardent Zionists who had no background in the Middle East. (Dennis Ross, for example, never studied the Middle East and was in fact a Soviet expert in the 1980s, before he was put in charge of the “peace process.”)

The “peace process” underwent major transformations over the years, largely to accommodate Israeli needs and preferences. The Rogers’ Plan started as a response to Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser’s emphasis on a “comprehensive and just” peace, which clearly precluded

separate deals between Israel and any Arab state. It was this which prevented King Hussein of Jordan from reaching a separate deal with Israel.

Nevertheless, President Jimmy Carter brokered the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel (which basically committed the U.S. to provide the Egyptian despot, President Anwar Sadat and his successors, with an annual large bribe to maintain peace with Israel despite the disapproval of the Egyptian people). With Camp David, the “peace process” was splintered into separate “peace” deals.

The U.S. official ban on contact with the PLO was removed in the Reagan administration when Yasser Arafat agreed to read a statement faxed to him – word-for-word – by the U.S. Department of State. The PLO was allowed into the “peace process” but only on conditions set by Israel: that the agenda would be set by U.S. and Israel and not by any Arab party.

Initially, the U.S. worked for decades to sidestep PLO participation by anointing the Jordanian king (who is remembered by the Palestinians for the massacres of Black September in 1970) as the representative of both Jordan and the Palestinian people. But the Intifada in 1987 finally convinced the U.S. that the Palestinians are determined to insist on their self-determination. And during the George W. Bush administration the idea of a Palestinian state was finally formally advocated by the U.S. but only within boundaries set by Israel.

## **No Mystery**

The new “Deal of the Century” is not a mystery. We can read

the writing on the wall and on the ground in Palestine. The U.S. is working on a formula that does not necessarily operate on the assumption that the creation of a Palestinian state is a prerequisite for peace. Furthermore, the U.S. plans to reduce the size of the Palestinian territory which would be theoretically managed by the Palestinian people. The Palestinians have historically insisted on liberating 100 percent of their homeland, i.e. historic Palestine in which the Palestinians have enjoyed a majority for many centuries, and in which the Jews – as a small minority – were considered part of the local native population.

But the Zionist forces – through terrorism and through Western indulgences – persuaded Western powers that Palestinian rights to 1948 Palestine (what became declared by force as “Israel” in 1948) should never be acknowledged.

With that principle, Western powers worked to convince Palestinians to confine their national aspirations to no more than 45 percent (in the UN Partition plan of 1947) and then to no more than 22 percent since 1967. With the U.S. entry into direct negotiations with Palestinian representatives since the Madrid Conference of 1991 (disguised as non-PL0), the Palestinians were told that they can have a homeland over most –but not all – the West Bank and Gaza and East Jerusalem. But the American stance was not categorical because it always left it to Israel to decide on how much of the 22 percent of Palestine should the Palestinians have control over, and under which juridical conditions.

President Bill Clinton, in the famous Camp David negotiations, wanted the Palestinians to accept 91 percent



of the 22 percent of Palestine, while sovereignty over the “holy sanctuary” would be shared between Israelis and Palestinians, with the Israelis having control over the land and what is underneath it (which Palestinians consider a threat to the very foundations of Al-Aqsa). Camp David fell and Clinton – typical of him – blamed the Palestinians after having promised Yasser Arafat that he would not blame the Palestinians if the talks did not bear fruits.

What will emerge out of the “Deal of the Century” is even less than what the Palestinians have been offered before – and which they rejected. The Palestinians will probably be promised Gaza and Area A (under the Oslo agreement, which basically covers areas that the Palestinians – only in theory–control), and East Jerusalem will be part of a united capital for Israel while the Palestinians will be allowed to name areas outside of Jerusalem as their own “East Jerusalem.”

The Israelis will continue, of course, to maintain control of air, land and sea over all Palestinian areas, and the Israeli occupation army will continue to decide who can enter and who can exit Palestinian areas. And Israeli settlements will be untouched by any of the terms of the “deal.”

Sovereignty over those small Palestinian areas won’t be considered as the U.S. and Israel both have recently reneged on previous promises of statehood. Instead, the plan will revert to what Israel’s Menachem Begin called “autonomy” (under the Camp David negotiations), according to which the Palestinians will exercise limited municipal management of their areas (trash collection, postal service, sewage,

etc).

But it is quite clear that the Palestinians who had rejected such plans in a previous century won't agree to them now, especially that the octogenarian Mahmoud Abbas (who is already despised and detested by his people for his corruption and fealty to the occupation) won't dare agree to what Arafat before him had rejected.

But Trump and his team assume that an infusion of foreign aid and new business in Palestinian areas would serve as a compensation to the Palestinians for the loss of their homeland. But that assumption is based on a false premise: that people live by bread alone.

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## PEPE ESCOBAR: War on Iran & Calling America's Bluff

Vast swathes of the West seem not to realize that if the Strait of Hormuz is shut down a global depression will

follow, writes Pepe Escobar.

By **Pepe Escobar**

*Special to Consortium News*



The Trump administration once again has graphically demonstrated that in the young, turbulent 21<sup>st</sup> century, “international law” and “national sovereignty” already belong to the Realm of the Walking Dead.

As if a deluge of sanctions against a great deal of the planet was not enough, the latest “offer you can’t refuse” conveyed by a gangster posing as diplomat, Consul Minimus Mike Pompeo, now essentially orders the whole planet to submit to the one and only arbiter of world trade: Washington.

First the Trump administration unilaterally smashed a multinational, UN-endorsed agreement, the JCPOA, or Iran nuclear deal. Now the waivers that magnanimously allowed eight nations to import oil from Iran without incurring imperial wrath in the form of sanctions will expire on May 2 and won’t be renewed.

President Trump’s decision to withdraw from the Iran deal upheld his highest obligation: to protect the safety and security of the American people.

Why Iran sanctions are necessary: <https://t.co/YQtmSA9hZX>  
[pic.twitter.com/n5r8mhZTl5](https://pic.twitter.com/n5r8mhZTl5)

– The White House (@WhiteHouse) [August 6, 2018](#)

The eight nations are a mix of Eurasian powers: China, India, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, Italy and Greece.

Apart from the trademark toxic cocktail of hubris, illegality, arrogance/ignorance and geopolitical/geo-economic infantilism inbuilt in this foreign policy decision, the notion that Washington can decide who's allowed to be an energy provider to emerging superpower China does not even qualify as laughable. Much more alarming is the fact that imposing a total embargo of Iranian oil exports is no less than an act of war.

### **Ultimate Neocon Wet Dream**

Those subscribing to the ultimate U.S, neocon and Zionist wet dream – regime change in Iran – may rejoice at this declaration of war. But as [Professor Mohammad Marandi](#) of the University of Tehran has elegantly argued, “If the Trump regime miscalculates, the house can easily come crashing down on its head.”

Reflecting the fact Tehran seems to have no illusions regarding the utter folly ahead, the Iranian leadership – if provoked to a point of no return, Marandi additionally told me – can get as far as “destroying everything on the other side of the Persian Gulf and chasing the U.S. out of Iraq and Afghanistan. When the U.S. escalates, Iran escalates. Now it depends on the U.S. how far things go.”

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This red alert from a sensible academic perfectly dovetails with what's happening with the structure of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) – recently branded a “terrorist organization” by the United States. In perfect

symmetry, Iran's Supreme National Security Council also branded the U.S. Central Command – CENTCOM – and “all the forces connected to it” as a terrorist group.

The new IRGC commander-in-chief is Brigadier General Hossein Salami, 58. Since 2009 he was the deputy of previous commander Mohamad al-Jafari, a soft spoken but tough as nails gentleman I met in Tehran two years ago. Salami, as well as Jafari, is a veteran of the Iran-Iraq war; that is, he has actual combat experience. And Tehran sources assure me that he can be even tougher than Jafari.



In tandem, IRGC Navy Commander Rear Admiral [Alireza Tangsiri](#) has evoked the unthinkable in terms of what might develop out

of the U.S. total embargo on Iran oil exports; Tehran could block the Strait of Hormuz.

## Western Oblivion

Vast swathes of the ruling classes across the West seem to be oblivious to the reality that if Hormuz is shut down, the result will be an absolutely cataclysmic global economic depression.

Warren Buffett, among other investors, has routinely

qualified the 2.5 quadrillion derivatives market as a weapon of financial mass destruction. As it stands, these derivatives are used – illegally – to drain no less than a trillion U.S. dollars a year out of the market in manipulated profits.

Considering historical precedents, Washington may eventually be able to set up a Persian Gulf of Tonkin false flag. But what next?

If Tehran were totally cornered by Washington, with no way out, the de facto nuclear option of shutting down the Strait of Hormuz would instantly cut off 25 percent of the global oil supply. Oil prices could rise to over \$500 a barrel, to even \$1000 a barrel. The 2.5 quadrillion of derivatives would start a chain reaction of destruction.

Unlike the shortage of credit during the 2008 financial crisis, the shortage of oil could not be made up by fiat instruments. Simply because the oil is not there. Not even Russia would be able to re-stabilize the market.

It's an open secret in private conversations at the Harvard Club – or at Pentagon war-games for that matter – that in case of a war on Iran, the U.S. Navy would not be able to keep the Strait of Hormuz open.

Russian SS-NX-26 Yakhont missiles – with a top speed of Mach 2.9 – are lining up the Iranian northern shore of the Strait of Hormuz. There's no way U.S. aircraft carriers can defend a barrage of Yakhont missiles.

Then there are the SS-N-22 Sunburn supersonic anti-ship missiles – already exported to China and India – flying

ultra-low at 1,500 miles an hour with dodging capacity, and extremely mobile; they can be fired from a flatbed truck, and were designed to defeat the U.S. Aegis radar defense system.

### **What Will China Do?**

The full-frontal attack on Iran reveals how the Trump administration bets on breaking Eurasia integration via what would be its weakest node; the three key nodes are China, Russia and Iran. These three actors interconnect the whole spectrum; Belt and Road Initiative; the Eurasia Economic Union; the Shanghai Cooperation Organization; the International North-South Transportation Corridor; the expansion of **BRICS** Plus.

So there's no question the Russia-China strategic partnership will be watching Iran's back. It's no accident that the trio is among the top existential "threats" to the U.S., according to the Pentagon. Beijing knows how the U.S. Navy is able to cut it off from its energy sources. And that's why Beijing is strategically increasing imports of oil and natural gas from Russia; engineering the "escape from Malacca" also must take into account a hypothetical U.S. takeover of the Strait of Hormuz.

A plausible scenario involves Moscow acting to defuse the extremely volatile U.S.-Iran confrontation, with the Kremlin and the Ministry of Defense trying to persuade President Donald Trump and the Pentagon from any direct attack against the IRGC. The inevitable counterpart is the rise of covert ops, the possible staging of false flags and all manner of shady Hybrid War techniques deployed not only against the

IRGC, directly and indirectly, but against Iranian interests everywhere. For all practical purposes, the U.S. and Iran are at war.

Within the framework of the larger Eurasia break-up scenario, the Trump administration does profit from Wahhabi and Zionist psychopathic hatred of Shi'ites. The "maximum pressure" on Iran counts on Jared of Arabia Kushner's close WhatsApp pal Mohammad bin Salman (MbS) in Riyadh and MbS's mentor in Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayed, to replace the shortfall of Iranian oil in the market. But that's nonsense – as quite a few wily Persian Gulf traders are adamant Riyadh won't "absorb Iran's market share" because the extra oil is not there.

Much of what lies ahead in the oil embargo saga depends on the reaction of assorted vassals and semi-vassals. Japan won't have the guts to go against Washington. Turkey will put up a fight. Italy, via Salvini, will lobby for a waiver. India is very complicated; New Delhi is investing in Iran's Chabahar port as the key hub of its own Silk Road, and closely cooperates with Tehran within the INSTC framework. Would a shameful betrayal be in the cards?

China, it goes without saying, will simply ignore Washington.

Iran will find ways to get the oil flowing because the demand won't simply vanish with a magic wave of an American hand. It's time for creative solutions. Why not, for instance, refuel ships in international waters, accepting gold, all sorts of cash, debit cards, bank transfers in rubles, yuan, rupees and rials – and everything bookable on



a website?

Now that's a way Iran can use its tanker fleet to make a killing. Some of the tankers could be parked in – you got it – the Strait of Hormuz, with an eye on the price at Jebel Ali in the UAE to make sure this is the real deal. Add to it a duty free for the ships crews. What's not to like? Ship owners will save fortunes on fuel bills, and crews will get all sorts of stuff at 90 percent discount in the duty free.

And let's see whether the EU has grown a spine – and really turbo-charge their [Special Purpose Vehicle \(SPV\)](#) alternative payment network conceived after the Trump administration ditched the JCPOA. Because more than breaking up Eurasia integration and implementing neocon regime change, this is about the ultimate anathema; Iran is being mercilessly punished because it has bypassed the U.S. dollar on energy trade.

**Pepe Escobar, a veteran Brazilian journalist, is the correspondent-at-large for Hong Kong-based [Asia Times](#). His latest book is ["2030."](#) Follow him on [Facebook](#).**

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## PATRICK LAWRENCE: Trump & the Bolton-Pompeo Axis

Patrick Lawrence eyes the U.S. president's difficulties with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security Advisor John Bolton as he tries to resume peace talks with

Pyongyang.

**By Patrick Lawrence**

*Special to Consortium News*



Moon Jae-in's [Oval Office meeting](#) with President Donald Trump last Thursday marked an important step forward for both leaders. The South Korean president appears to have drawn Trump away from the all-or-nothing “big deal” he proposed when he last met Kim Jong-un – an offer we now know was intended to precipitate the North Korean leader’s rejection. Trump won, too: The encounter with Moon has effectively put the Dealmaker back on his feet after the calamitous collapse of the second Trump–Kim summit in Hanoi two months ago. [A top-down agreement](#) on the North’s denuclearization is once again within reach.

The importance of the Moon–Trump summit, while eclipsed by news of [Julian Assange’s arrest](#) in London the same day, is not to be underestimated. Even before receiving Moon, Trump announced for the first time that he is willing to summit with Kim for a third time. While still stressing the North’s complete denuclearization as the U.S. objective, Trump also said he is open to the incremental diplomacy he precluded with his everything-at-once offer in Hanoi.

“There are various smaller deals that maybe could happen,” Trump said before he and Moon withdrew to the Oval Office. “Things could happen. You can work out step-by-step pieces, but at this moment we are still talking about the big deal.”

**New Stance**

This new stance is a big deal in itself. Moon and Kim – with Chinese and Russian support – have advocated talks based on gradualist reciprocity from the first. “Action for action,” Moon calls it. This strategy is widely accepted at the other end of the Pacific as the only plausible path to a sustainable denuclearization agreement. The U.S. has been the only nation engaged on the Korean question to argue otherwise.

In addition, Trump appeared to signal that Moon may get something he dearly wanted when he arrived in Washington: dispensation to proceed with inter-Korean economic projects – including transport links, an industrial park, and a joint-venture resort in the North – that are now blocked by a plethora of U.S. and UN-imposed sanctions. Moon views these as essential confidence-builders and the first steps toward integrating the North into a Northeast Asian economic hub that will also include South Korea, China, and the Russian Far East.

In Pyongyang, Kim responded to the events in Washington when he addressed the Supreme People’s Assembly last Friday. The speech was carefully balanced between optimism and caution, the latter reflecting Kim’s view that he was betrayed in Hanoi when Trump marshaled an offer he could not possibly embrace. “I am willing to accept if the United States proposes a third North Korea – United States summit,” Kim told North’s legislative body, “on condition that it has a right attitude and seeks a solution that we can share.”

Kim had other things to add. “We don’t like – and we are not interested in – the United States’ way of dialogue, in which it tries to unilaterally push through its demands,” he said.

“We don’t welcome – and we have no intention of repeating–the kind of summit meetings like the one held in Hanoi.” The North Korean leader went on to set a year-end deadline “for the United States to make a bold decision.”

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While Washington and Pyongyang had sharply conflicting versions of what transpired in Hanoi – each blaming the other for the summit’s failure – there is now little question that the U.S. side was at fault. A post-Hanoi Reuters exclusive reports that, prior to their famously canceled lunch, Trump handed Kim a sheet of paper listing, in English and Korean, extensive U.S. conditions that began with “a blunt call for the transfer of Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons and bomb fuel to the United States,” according to the piece filed by Leslie Broughton and David Brunnstrom.

The English-language version of the letter, the *Reuters* team reports, went on to demand “fully dismantling North Korea’s nuclear infrastructure, chemical and biological warfare program and related dual-use capabilities; and ballistic missiles, launchers, and associated facilities.”

### **The Libya Model**

In simple terms, this was a kitchen-sink proposition – effectively a demand for unilateral disarmament – that was intended to prompt Kim to walk away. The *Reuters* reporters suggest that the fatal gambit was the work of John Bolton, Trump’s hyper-hawkish national security advisor. They quote

North Korean officials as also implicating Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, another administration hawk, in what amounts to an act of diplomatic sabotage. The device used was Bolton's "Libya model," a laden reference if ever there was one. When Muammar Gaddafi gave up his chemical and nuclear weapons programs in 2003, he did so by sending Libya's nuclear materials and equipment to the U.S. Eight years later, of course, he was assassinated in the wake of a NATO bombing campaign led by the U.S.

"The document appeared to represent Bolton's long-held and hardline 'Libya model' of denuclearization that North Korea has rejected repeatedly," Broughton and Brunnstrom report. "It probably would have been seen by Kim as insulting and provocative, analysts said." One of those analysts was Jenny Town, a North Korea specialist at the Stimson Center in Washington. "'This is what Bolton wanted from the beginning and it clearly wasn't going to work,'" *Reuters* quotes Town as observing. "'If the U.S. was really serious about negotiations, they would have learned already that this wasn't an approach they could take.'"

### **Formidable Challenges**

As this record of the Hanoi proceedings makes plain, Trump and Moon will assume formidable challenges to the extent they agree to work together toward a resolution of the Korea question on new terms. It is not clear why Trump – who went to Hanoi eager to cut his "big deal" with Kim – accepted the Bolton-inspired design and handed it on to the North Korean leader. But he has now set himself up for another in what appears to be a long line of conflicts with his foreign policy minders, Bolton and Pompeo chief among them.

The outlook in this connection is mixed at best. Trump was able to overrule new sanctions against North Korea that were announced several weeks after the Hanoi debacle. It is a matter of interpretation, but he effectively lost a battle with the Bolton–Pompeo axis when the administration designated the Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps a terrorist organization earlier this month. That move is understood widely to have pushed renewed negotiations with Tehran, for which Trump had been hoping, well beyond the point of no return.

For Moon, the challenges ahead are two. Most immediately, he must keep both Trump and Kim seated at the chess table between now and the end of the year. If no third summit is set by then, Kim has already signaled, he will consider this chapter in the long history of U.S.–North Korean negotiations closed – another story of failure. In such a case, the question facing Moon could hardly be more daunting: Can a South Korean leader determined to end nearly seven decades of enmity between the Koreas decisively wrest control of the diplomatic process from the U.S.?

That would amount to an unprecedented showdown between Seoul and Washington. Despite Moon's admirable dedication, this is unlikely to materialize – not in the near term, in any case. Moon has formidable allies in Beijing and Moscow; Kim is plainly eager to break North Korea out of its isolation. But the U.S., perfectly satisfied to act as “spoiler” in Northeast Asia (as elsewhere), remains too powerful an obstacle despite the many signs that it is in the sunset phase of its global preeminence.

**Patrick Lawrence, a correspondent abroad for many years,**

chiefly for the *International Herald Tribune*, is a columnist, essayist, author, and lecturer. His most recent book is “Time No Longer: Americans After the American Century” (Yale). Follow him @thefloutist. His web site is [www.patricklawrence.us](http://www.patricklawrence.us). Support his work via [www.patreon.com/thefloutist](http://www.patreon.com/thefloutist).

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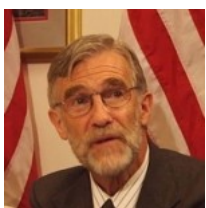
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## RAY McGOVERN: Unaccountable Media Faced with Dilemma in Next Phase of Deep State-gate

Now that the media has been exposed for wrongly siding with the intelligence agencies, how will it handle Devin Nunes’s criminal referrals in Deep State-gate?, asks Ray McGovern.

By [Ray McGovern](#)

*Special to Consortium News*



Readers of *The Washington Post* on Monday were treated to more of the same from editorial page chief Fred Hiatt. Hiatt, who won his spurs by promoting misleading “intelligence” about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and suffered no consequences, is at it again.

This time he is trying to adjust to the fading prospect of a Deus ex Mueller to lessen Hiatt’s disgrace for being among the most shameless in promoting the Trump-Russia collusion narrative.

He is not giving up. When you are confident you will not lose your job so long as you adhere to the agenda of the growing Military-Industrial-Congressional-Intelligence-Media-Academia-Think-Tank complex (MICIMATT if you will), you need not worry about being a vanguard for the corporate media. It is almost as though Hiatt is a tenured professor in an endowed chair honoring Judith Miller, the *New York Times* reporter who perhaps did most to bring us Iraqi WMD.

In his Monday column Hiatt warned: “Trump was elected with the assistance of Russian spies and trolls, which he openly sought and celebrated. But he did not (or so we are told) secretly conspire with them.” In effect, Hiatt is saying, *soto voce*: “Fie on former (now-de-canonized) Saint Robert of Mueller; we at the *Post* and our colleagues at *The New York Times*, CNN et al. know better, just because we’ve been saying so for more than two years.”

*Times* executive editor Dean Baquet said, about the backlash to the *Times*’ “collusion” coverage: “I have no regrets. It’s not our job to determine whether or not there was illegality.” CNN President Jeff Zucker said: “We are not investigators. We are journalists.” (One wonders what investigative journalist Bob Parry, who uncovered much of Iran-Contra and founded this site, would have thought of that last one.)

### **Going in Circles**

Hiatt’s circular reasoning is all too familiar. It is the kind a former director of national intelligence excels at when he’s not lying, sometimes under oath. For instance, James Clapper was hawking his memoir at the Carnegie



Endowment last year when he was confronted by unexpectedly direct questions from the audience.

Asked about the misleadingly labeled, rump “Intelligence Community Assessment” (ICA) of Jan. 6, 2017, which he orchestrated, and which blamed Russia for interfering in the 2016 election, Clapper gave an ipse dixit response: The ICA simply had to be correct because that’s what he had told President Barack Obama and President-elect Donald Trump.

In fact, that “Intelligence Community Assessment” stands out as the most irresponsible, evidence-free and at the same time consequential crock of intelligence analysis since the National Intelligence Estimate of Oct. 2002 claimed there was WMD in Iraq. Recall that that one was shaped by out-and-out fraudulent intelligence to “justify” an attack on Iraq six months later.

Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), as chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, described the main thrust of the committee’s five-year bipartisan report, stating, “In making the case for war, the [Bush] Administration repeatedly presented intelligence as fact when in reality it was unsubstantiated, contradicted, or even non-existent.”

Hiatt was one of the media’s major offenders, feeding on what the Cheney/Bush folks told him. When no “weapons of mass destruction” were found in Iraq, Hiatt conceded during an interview with *The Columbia Journalism Review* that, “If you look at the editorials we write running up [to the war], we state as flat fact that he [Saddam Hussein] has weapons of mass destruction ... If that’s not true, it would have been better not to say it.” [CJR, March/April 2004] As Parry

wryly observed at the time in a piece calling for Hiatt's dismissal, "Yes, that is a common principle of journalism, that if something isn't real, we're not supposed to confidently declare that it is."

## **The Morning After**

The media set the prevailing tone the day after the ICA was published. The banner headline atop page one of the *Times* read: "Putin Led Scheme to Aid Trump, Report Says." That put in motion more than two years of Dick Cheney-like chicanery in the media.

Buried inside the *Times* that same day was a cautionary paragraph written by staff reporter Scott Shane who noted, "What is missing from the public report is what many Americans most eagerly anticipated: hard evidence to back up the [three] agencies' claims that the Russian government engineered the election attack. That is a significant omission." Indeed it was; and remains so.

(Sadly, Shane was then given his marching orders and fell in line with many other formerly reputable journalists in what has been the most miserable performance by the mainstream media since they helped pave the way for war on Iraq.)

Clapper and Hiatt are kindred souls when it comes to the "profound effect" of Russian election interference. In his column, Hiatt asserted as flat fact that: "Trump was elected with the assistance of Russian spies and trolls ..." At the Carnegie event in November, Clapper opined:

"As a private citizen, understanding the magnitude of what the Russians did and the number of citizens in our country

they reached and the different mechanisms that, by which they reached them, to me it stretches credulity to think they didn't have a profound impact on election on the outcome of the election."

### **Hiatt: Captain of Cheerleaders**

Hiatt emulated peppy, preppy cheerleader George W. Bush in leading Americans to believe that war on Iraq was necessary. Appointed *Washington Post* editorial page editor in 2000, he still runs the page – having not been held accountable for gross misfeasance, if not malfeasance, on Iraq. Shades of Clapper, whom President Obama allowed to stay on as director of national intelligence for three and a half years after Clapper lied under oath to the Senate Intelligence Committee about NSA surveillance of U.S. persons.

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That Obama appointed Clapper to lead the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election speaks volumes. Clapper claims to have expertise on Russia and has made no effort to disguise his views on "the Russians." Two years ago, he told Chuck Todd on *Meet the Press*:

"... in context with everything else we knew the Russians were doing to interfere with the election, and just the historical practices of the Russians, who are typically, almost genetically driven to co-opt, penetrate, gain favor, whatever, which is a typical Russian technique ... we were concerned."

It beggars belief that Obama could have been unaware of Clapper's bizarre views on "the Russians." Clearly, Obama was bowing yet again to pressure from powerful Deep State actors arguing that Clapper was the ideal man for the job.

And there is now documentary evidence that, from the Deep State point of view, indeed he was. In the text exchanges between discredited FBI sleuth Peter Strzok and his girlfriend, Lisa Page, a lawyer working for the FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe, it seems clear that Obama wanted to be kept apprised of the FBI's behind-the-scenes machinations. In a Sept. 2, 2016 text to Strzok, Page writes that she was preparing talking points because the president "wants to know everything we're doing."

### **A Sweaty Pate?**

Clapper is aware now that he is going to have to sweat it out. He may believe he can ignore White House press secretary Sarah Sanders, who has said that he and other former intelligence officials should be investigated after special counsel Mueller did not establish collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia.

But recent statements by members of the House and Senate intelligence committees cannot be dismissed so easily. In his media appearances, the supremely confident, hero-of-many-liberals Clapper has been replaced by a squirming (but-Obama-made-me-do-it) massager of facts. He may find it harder this time to avoid being held accountable.

Devin Nunes (R-CA), the House Intelligence Committee ranking member, has gone on the offensive, writing Friday that committee Republicans "will soon be submitting criminal

referrals on numerous individuals involved ... in the abuse of intelligence for political purposes. These people must be held to account to prevent similar abuses from occurring in the future.”

On Sunday, Nunes told Fox News he’s preparing to send eight criminal referrals to the Department of Justice this week concerning alleged misconduct during the Trump-Russia investigation. This will include leaks of “highly classified material” and conspiracies to lie to Congress and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) court. It’s no-holds-barred for Nunes, who has begun to talk publicly about prison for those whom DOJ might indict and bring to trial.

Nunes’s full-speed-ahead offensive is being widely ignored in “mainstream” media (with the exception of Fox), giving the media the quality of “The Dog That Did Not Bark in the Night.” The media has put its ducks in a row, such as they are, to try to rip Attorney General William Barr apart this coming week when he releases the redacted text of the Mueller report that so disappointed the Democratic Party/media coalition.

But how will they cover criminal referrals of the “heroes” who have leaked so much to them, providing grist for their Russia-gate mill? They will likely find a way, eventually, but the media silence about Nunes is depriving oxygen to the story.

On Sunday, Nunes said,

“They [the Democrats] have lied multiple times to the American people. All you have to do is look at their phony

memos. They have had the full support of the media, 90 percent of the media in this country. They all have egg on their face. And so the fact of the matter remains, is there going to be – is justice going to be served or is justice going to be denied? And that’s why we’re sending over these criminal referrals.”

Nunes is, of course, trying to project an image of confidence, but he knows he is fighting uphill. There is no more formidable foe than the MICIMATT, with the media playing *the* crucial role in these circumstances. How will the American people be able to see egg on anyone’s face if the “mainstream media” find ways to wipe it off and turn the tables on Nunes, as they have successfully done in the past?

Though the Democrats now control the House, they have lost some key inside-the-Deep-State allies.

By all appearances, House Democrats still seem to be banking on help from the usual suspects still on duty in the FBI, CIA, and the Justice Department. Lacking that they seem ready to go down with the Schiff–Rep. Adam Schiff of California, perhaps the most virulent Russia-gater that there’s been.

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Clapper is no long in position to help from the inside, and there’s no knowing how his sleepy replacement, Dan Coates, will react, if and when he wakes up long enough to learn chapter and verse about the machinations and dramatic personae of 2016.

Of course, there is a new sheriff in town running the

Department of Justice. Attorney General William Barr, for better or ill, is a far cry from Jeff Sessions, who let himself be diddled into recusing himself. He's not Rod Rosenstein either, whose involvement in this affair may have already earned him a prominent place on Nunes's list of referrals.

## **What Did Obama Know, and When Did He Know It?**

BREAKING: A high-level source tells me it was Brennan who insisted that the unverified and fake Steele dossier be included in the Intelligence Report... Brennan should be asked to testify under oath in Congress ASAP.

– Senator Rand Paul (@RandPaul) [March 27, 2019](#)

On top of this, Sen. Rand Paul (R, KY) has [called](#) for an investigation into the origins of Mueller's probe, including on the dicey question of how witting President Obama was of the Deep State chicanery during the last months of his administration. Page did tell Strzok in that Sept. 2, 2016 text that the president "wants to know everything we're doing."

Sen. Paul has also tweeted information from "a high-level source" that it was former CIA Director John Brennan who "insisted that the unverified and fake Steele dossier be included in the Intelligence Report... Brennan should be asked to testify under oath in Congress ASAP."

## **Vying for Media Attention**

If, as expected, Nunes discloses the names of those being criminally referred to DOJ, and Barr releases a redacted text of the Mueller report, the "mainstream" media will have

a fresh challenge on their hands. The odds would seem to favor the media covering the Democrats' predictable criticism of Barr – and perhaps even of Mueller, now that he has been defrocked.

The *Post's* Hiatt should be counted on, as always, to play a leading role.

At the same time, there are signs the America people are tired of this. It would be difficult though for the media to avoid reporting on criminal referrals of very senior law enforcement and intelligence officials. Given the media's obvious preference for siding with the intelligence agencies and reporting on Russia-gate rather than Deep-State-gate, it would be even harder for the media to explain why these officials would be in trouble.

Things appear to be unraveling but, as always, much will depend on whether the media opts to remain the “dog that didn't bark,” and succeeds again in hoodwinking too many people.

**Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He was a CIA analyst for 27 years and prepared the President's Daily Brief for Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Reagan. He is on the Steering Group of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).**

**We got Russia-gate right. Help us to keep on going.**

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# ANGRY ARAB: Memories and Omissions of the Iraq Wars

The Iraq wars and their consequences have been callous, bipartisan campaigns that have profoundly altered Arabs' views of the United States, says As'ad AbuKhalil.

By **As'ad AbuKhalil**

*Special to Consortium News*



**I**t has been sixteen years since the U.S. invasion of Iraq of 2003. The event barely gets a mention in the U.S. press or is any longer part of American consciousness. Iraq remains a faraway land for most Americans and the remembrance of the Iraq war is only discussed from the standpoint of U.S. strategic blunders. Little attention is paid to the suffering and humiliation of the Iraqi people by the American war apparatus. Wars for Americans are measured in U.S. dollars and American blood: suffering of the natives is not registered in war metrics.

The Iraq calamity is not an issue that can be dismissively blamed on George W. Bush alone. For most Democrats, it is too easy to blame the war on that one man. In reality, the Iraq war and its consequences have been a callous bipartisan campaign which had begun in the administration of George HW Bush and Bill Clinton after him. The war and the tight, inhumane sanctions established a record of punishment of civilians, or the use of civilians as tools of U.S. pressure on foreign governments, which became a staple of U.S. foreign policy.

The U.S. government under Ronald Reagan resisted pressures to impose sanctions on South Africa under the pretext that sanctions would “hurt the people that we want to help”—this at a time when the blacks of South Africa were calling on the world to impose sanctions to bring down the apartheid regime. This was the last

time that the U.S. resisted the imposition of sanctions on a country.

For the Arab people, the successive wars on Iraq—and the sanctions should be counted as part of the cruel war effort of the U.S. and its allies—changed forever the structure of the Middle East regional system. The wars established a direct U.S. occupation of Arab lands and it reversed the trend since WWII whereby the U.S. settled for control and hegemony, but without the direct occupation. (The U.S. only left the Philippines because Japan had awarded independence to the country during the war, long after the U.S. failed to deliver on promises of independence).

Washington succeeded in the political arrangement designed by the Bush-Baker team to create an unannounced alliance between the Israeli occupation state and the reactionary Arab regime system, which included the Syrian regime, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Gulf states in the same sphere. This arrangement served to oppress the Arab population and to prevent political protests from disrupting U.S. military and political plans, and to ensure the survival of the oppressive regimes who are willing to cooperate with the U.S. The Syrian regime, which cooperated with Washington in the 1991 Iraq war was even rewarded with control of Lebanon.

But the war on Iraq altered the regional structure of regimes. They were no more split into progressive and reactionary. Syria in the past was associated with the "rejectionist stance," even though the Syrian regime never joined the "Rejectionist Front" of the 1970s led by Saddam Hussein, the arch enemy of Syrian leader Hafidh Al-Asad.

It was no coincidence that the U.S. invaded Iraq and expelled Saddam's army from Kuwait in the wake of the end of the Soviet Union. The U.S. wanted to assert the new rules just as it asserted the new rules of Middle East politics after WWII when it signaled to Britain in 1956 in Suez that it is the U.S. and not Europe which now controls the Middle East region. Similarly, the Iraq war of

1991 was an opportunity for the U.S. to impose its hegemony directly and without fears of escalation in super power conflict.

The U.S. did not need direct control or colonization after after WWII, with the exception of oil-rich Gulf region. (Historian Daniel Immerwahr makes that argument persuasively in his brand new book, "How to Hide and Empire: A History of the Greater United States.") After the 1973 oil embargo on Western countries because of U.S. support for Israel in that year's war, the U.S. military had plans on the books for the seizure of Gulf Arab oil fields. But the significance of oil has diminished over the decade especially as fracking has allowed the U.S. to export more oil than it imports.

### **Indelible Memory**

Furthermore, the previous reluctance of Gulf leaders to host U.S. troops evaporated with the 1991 war.

But the memory of that first Iraq war remains deep in the Arab memory. Here was a flagrant direct military intervention which relied for its promotion on a mix of lies and fabrications. The U.S. wanted to oppose dictatorship while its intervention relied on the assistance of brutal dictators and its whole campaign was to—in name at least—to restore a polygamous Emir to his throne.

The U.S. also bought about official Arab League abandonment of Israel's boycott, which had been in place since the founding of the state of Israel. As a reward for U.S. convening of the Madrid conference in 1991, Arab despots abandoned the boycott in the hope that Washington would settle the Palestinian problem one way or another. Yet, the precedent of deploying massive U.S. troops in the region was established and the U.S. quickly made it clear that it was not leaving the region anytime soon. Regimes that wanted U.S. protection were more than eager to pay for large-scale U.S. military bases to host U.S. troops and intelligence services. But that war in 1991 was not the only Iraq war; in fact, Washington was also complicit in the 1980-1988 Iraq-Iran war, when it did its best

to prolong the conflict, resulting in the deaths of some half million Iraqis and Iranians.

The invasion of Iraq in 2003 was not about finishing an unfinished business by son toward his father. It certainly was not about finding and destroying WMDs. And no one believed that this was about democracy or freedom. The quick victory in the war of Afghanistan created wild delusions for the U.S. war machine. Bush and his lieutenants were under the impression that wars in the region could be fought and won quickly and on the cheap. The rhetoric of "the axis-of-evil" was a message from the U.S. to all its enemies that the U.S. would dominate the region and would overthrow the few regimes which are not in its camp. The quick "victory" in Kabul was illusory about what had just happened in Afghanistan. Seventeen years later the U.S. is now begging the Taliban—which it had gone to war to overthrow—to return to power to end the agony for U.S. troops and for U.S. puppets in the country who are terrified of the prospect of a country free of U.S. occupation.

Iraq created new images of the U.S.: from Abu Ghraib to the wanton shooting at civilians by U.S. troops or by contractors, to the installation of a puppet government and the issuance of capitalistic decrees and laws to prevent the Iraqi government from ever filing war crime charges against the occupiers. Arabs and Muslims developed new reasons to detest the U.S.: it is not only about Israel anymore but about the U.S. sponsorship of a corrupt and despotic regional order. It is also about Arabs witnessing first hand the callous and reckless forms of U.S. warfare in the region. Policy makers, think tank experts, and journalists in DC may debate the technical aspects of the war and the cost incurred by the U.S.. But for the natives, counting the dead and holding the killers responsible remains the priority. And the carnage caused by ISIS and its affiliates in several Arab countries is also blamed—and rightly so—on U.S. military intervention in the Middle East.

As'ad AbuKhalil is a Lebanese-American professor of political science at California State University, Stanislaus. He is the author of the "Historical Dictionary of Lebanon" (1998), "Bin Laden, Islam and America's New War on Terrorism (2002), and "The Battle for Saudi Arabia" (2004). He tweets as [@asadabukhalil](#)

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## Anti-Semitism and Double Standards

Criticizing Israel is considered bad form, writes Daniel Lazare, but keeping mum about Saudi crimes is fine as long as the donations continue to flow.

By [Daniel Lazare](#)

*Special to Consortium News*



In a week when the GOP flaunted its [legislative attacks on](#) anti-Semitism at the annual meeting of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, and brought AIPAC loyalties [into the 2020 campaign](#), let's remember that plenty of people in the liberal establishment play the same two-faced game. While pretending to oppose bigotry, they are in bed with the most anti-Semitic governments on Earth.

Tony Blair, British prime minister from 1997 to 2007, is a prime example. Blair may be gone, but his Labour Party followers are leading the charge against such targets as the party's current leader, Jeremy Corbyn, and Afro-Jewish socialist [Jackie Walker](#). Margaret Hodge, a Labour member of

parliament who reportedly called Corbyn “a fucking anti-Semite and a racist” in a closed-door meeting, was an early Blair backer who supported his decision to invade Iraq in 2003. Luciana Berger, who said last year that “anti-Semitism is very real and alive in the Labour Party,” is another Blairite with a hawkish foreign-policy record. Labour’s Deputy Leader Tom Watson, who has defended Berger, also backed the Iraq invasion. Ditto Ann Coffey, who has assailed the “Corbyn culture of antisemitism” and began her political ascent as Blair’s parliamentary private secretary, a kind of junior whip, in the late 1990s.

All want voters to think Labour is now riddled with anti-Semitism and that criticism of Israel should be circumspect at best lest it open the door to western society’s oldest hatred. Evidently, they miss the Blair days, when Labor was high-minded and decent.

But these Blairites are silent on their hero’s partnership with PetroSaudi. This company, which described itself as a “vehicle of the Saudi royal family,” put Blair’s now-defunct firm, Tony Blair Associates, on a \$65,000-a-month retainer to help it drum up business in China. Although Tony Blair Associates closed amid controversy, the connections apparently lived on. Last September, *The Financial Times* reported that Blair’s personal foundation, the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, has benefited from Saudi largesse in the form of a £9 million donation – about \$12 million – from the Saudi Research & Marketing Group, a company controlled by Prince Badr bin Abdullah, the kingdom’s minister of culture.

**Beholden to Saudis**

Thus, Blair's new "global change institute" – on a self-proclaimed mission to "make globalization work for the many, not the few" – is beholden to a kingdom that is a byword for torture, autocracy and extreme religious intolerance. Saudi Arabia bans all faiths other than Islam and persecutes Muslims who fail to adhere to the official brand of Sunni fundamentalism known as Wahhabism (after an 18th-century mullah named Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab). Saudi police in 2011 arrested 35 Ethiopian Christians, mainly women, for the "crime" of participating in an underground prayer meeting. Shi'ites in the kingdom's oil-rich Eastern Province suffer "pervasive discrimination" according to Human Rights Watch.

Saudi textbooks distributed widely throughout the *Dar al Islam* teach that judgment day "will not come until the Muslims fight the Jews, and the Muslims will kill them," according to a U.S. government study. One 10th-grade text declares: "Feelings of arrogance and superiority inhabit the Jews. They claim they are the chosen people even though God himself has denied that, humiliated them, misled them, and made them into swine and apes."

ISIS used Saudi textbooks in schools it controlled in Syria and Iraq back when it still had a caliphate, while Saudi texts have cropped up in weekend school programs in the United Kingdom and Belgium. Training manuals in Brussels's Grand Mosque – until recently Saudi-funded and controlled – teach that Jews are "traitors, infidels, and impostors ... obscene and vulgar ... cruel and insensible ... greedy, avid, and avaricious" and "use violence, power, and terror to control the world."

This goes back centuries. In 1810, a French explorer named

Louis Alexandre Olivier de Corncez wrote that Wahhabists display “the cruelest intolerance towards Christians and Jews,” as Simon Ross Valentine recounts in his book, “Force and Fanaticism: Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia and Beyond.”

Robert Vitalis, in his “America’s Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier,” gives the more recent example of an American Airline executive describing a meeting, in the late 1940s, with Deputy Foreign Minister Yusuf Yassin: “As for Jews, a Jew is a Jew in the eyes of the Saudis, regardless of what passport he may be carrying. As Yusuf explained to us in no uncertain terms, Saudi Arabia is a holy Moslem country and no Jew is going to be allowed to pass through it and to contaminate it. They realize such an attitude is tough on international carriers but they just don’t care – they don’t want any Jews setting foot on Saudi Arabian soil, ‘period!’”

This is the history and present-day culture with which Tony Blair aligns.

### **Longing for Clinton Days**

The same goes for Clintonites on the other side of the pond. The three Democrats who led the charge last month against U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar for her alleged anti-Semitism were Representatives Nita Lowey, Eliot Engel and Jerrold Nadler, all from New York and all early backers of fellow New Yorker Hillary Clinton’s 2016 presidential bid. The implicit assumption in their attack was that things were better when centrist Democrats held sway and rambunctious upstarts like Omar were still stuck in Minneapolis.

What goes unmentioned is that Hillary and her former-



president husband have partnered with the Saudis in a way that Blair can only envy. Since 1997, the Clinton Foundation has raked in between \$10 million and \$25 million from the Saudi government, according to the foundation's [website](#) (which only gives ranges of contribution) while individual Saudi businessmen have donated between \$8 million and \$25 million. Five other Persian Gulf petro-monarchies have donated between \$9 million and \$30 million. And the Saudi royal family has given [\\$10 million](#) to Bill Clinton's presidential library in Little Rock, Arkansas. All told, it's a dazzling sum that, had Hillary become president, would undoubtedly have served to steer Mideast policy in an even more pro-Saudi direction. When Saudi King Abdullah died in early 2015, Bill and Hillary [praised](#) his peacemaking activities and "personal friendship and kindness toward our family."

But they didn't mention less-savory aspects of his reign. These include not only bigoted textbooks but terrorism. As Hillary confided a year earlier in a 2014 [email](#), "the governments of Qatar and Saudi Arabia ... are providing clandestine financial support to ISIL and other radical Sunni groups in the region."

Other atrocities, also unmentioned, include South Asian servants sentenced to death on flimsy, trumped-up charges (examples [here](#) and [here](#)), a gay man sentenced to [450 lashes](#) in 2014 for using Twitter to arrange dates, a young woman sentenced to [200 lashes](#) for the crime of being gang raped, and the persecution of liberal blogger [Raif Badawi](#), who has been in a Saudi prison since 2012 for daring to challenge Wahhabist bigotry.

All took place under Abdullah's reign. Just as we're supposed to turn a blind eye to Israel's sins, we're expected to keep mum about Saudi crimes – as long as the donations continue to flow, that is.

### **Anti-Semitism, U.S.-Style**

The Saudis are not alone in spreading anti-Semitism. The U.S. has failed to criticize President Petro Poroshenko for permitting neo-Nazis militias to run riot in the Ukraine, attacking feminists, gays, and Roma and holding torchlight parades in honor of World War II collaborator Stepan Bandera in which they chant "Jews out." Washington is silent about the Baltics, where demonstrations in honor of Hitler's SS units are now an annual occurrence. Last April, 57 lawmakers signed a letter by California Democrat Ro Khanna calling on the Ukraine to "unequivocally reject Holocaust distortion and the honoring of Nazi collaborators." Lowey and Engel were conspicuously absent among the signatories. Apparently, Omar's tweet about "the Benjamins baby" is more offensive than thousands of fascists marching through the streets of Kiev.

And then there's Israel. It might be expected to be in the forefront of combatting anti-Semitism. The opposite is the case. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is cultivating the support of hard-right nationalists in Central Europe while hailing Hungarian strongman Viktor Orbán as a "true friend of Israel" even as Orbán wages a classic anti-Semitic campaign against Jewish philanthropist George Soros. Netanyahu's government has sold weapons to Ukraine's neo-Nazi Azov militia and has whitewashed the Polish government's efforts to "disappear" the Polish role

in the Holocaust, thereby earning an unprecedented [rebuke](#) from Israel's own Yad Vashem Holocaust museum. In America, his chief allies include evangelical Christians who believe that, come the apocalypse, Jesus will institute [a divine kingdom](#) which Jews must either submit to or be killed.

While allying with [Jewish neo-Nazis](#) at home, Netanyahu draws ever closer to rightwing nationalists abroad. Even George Orwell would have been taken aback by the spectacle of Zionists embracing anti-Jewish bigots while smearing leftists, many of them Jews, as anti-Semites for standing up for Palestinian rights. War is peace, freedom is slavery, and anti-racists are racist whenever bigots like Netanyahu say so. While leveling phony charges of anti-Semitism, Blairites and Clintonites are helping to spread the real article farther and farther afield.

Daniel Lazare is the author of "The Frozen Republic: How the Constitution Is Paralyzing Democracy" (Harcourt Brace, 1996) and other books about American politics. He has written for a wide variety of publications from *The Nation* to *Le Monde Diplomatique* and blogs about the Constitution and related matters at [Daniellazare.com](#).

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