

Israel's Involvement in Libya's Civil War

For several reasons, Israel has joined various Arab powers to back a strongman in Libya, explains Giorgio Cafiero.

By [Giorgio Cafiero](#)

Special to Consortium News



Since mid-2014, Libya has been mired in civil war, pitting the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli against a rival administration in Tobruk, the House of Representatives (HoR), which is allied with [General Khalifa Haftar](#)'s Libyan National Army (LNA). Despite lacking UN legitimacy, Haftar and his forces have received backing from a host of powerful states whose leaders view the Benghazi-based commander as Libya's only alternative to the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist actors in the war-torn North African country. Among these nations is Israel.

Tel Aviv, along with Cairo, Paris, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi support Haftar, whose opponents [suspect](#) him of wanting to become a "new Gaddafi" who seeks to establish an Egyptian-style military dictatorship in Libya.

Israeli backing of the Benghazi-based commander illustrates the regional geopolitical dynamics which have led Sunni Arab states—specifically Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE—to find themselves in the same boat with Israel, sharing the same perceptions of security threats.

Coordination between Haftar and the Israelis, which has been conducted through the UAE, began in 2015, if not sooner.

Initially, Israel's interests in post-Qaddafi Libya were from the perspective of its interests in the Sinai Peninsular. Links between various jihadist forces in Libya and the Sinai have been well-documented.

In 2015 and 2016, Haftar met Mossad agents in Jordan in "strict secrecy". One military source told *The New Arab* that Israel began providing the LNA with sniper rifles and night vision equipment at that time. This source suggested that the Israeli military began carrying out air raids in Libya in coordination with the LNA after Haftar launched Operation Dignity in 2014. By mid-2017, Algerian media outlets reported that officials in Algiers warned Haftar against receiving Israeli military support.

Last year, *al-Araby al-Jadeed* explained that Haftar held another meeting in Amman "to deepen security coordination between him and Israel" and that Haftar sought a stronger Israeli presence in southern Libya to thwart Italy from asserting significant influence throughout the Fezzan, the southwest region of Libya. *Middle East Monitor* quoted an unnamed source claiming that Haftar promised Israel "safe centers" in Libya's desert, and that the commander's connection with Israel is Oren Hazan, a member of Israel's Likud party who has Libyan roots.

MEMO's source also said that while the Egyptian government backs Haftar's tacit and covert partnership with Israel, authorities in Cairo have not wanted Haftar's communication with Tel Aviv to become direct.

In May, *Al Jazeera Arabic* published an investigation which uncovered Israeli support for Haftar's offensive on Tripoli,

which the LNA launched on April 4. A joint Emirati-Kazakh firm, Reem Travel, had an aircraft registered to its name which was flying between Egypt, Israel, and Jordan prior to arriving in LNA-controlled territory in Libya shortly before Haftar's westward assault began, according to *al Jazeera*.

Why Did Israel Take Sides in Libya?

Israel's intervention in the Libyan civil war on the side of Haftar is understandable from its point of view, given a host of factors. First, when it comes to coordinating with actors in the Middle East and North Africa, Israel's clear preference is for strongmen regardless of ideology. Like Hosni Mubarak and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Egypt, or King Abdullah II in Jordan, Haftar is perhaps the type of Arab leader whom the Israelis can engage with on intelligence sharing.

Second, Israeli support for Haftar brings Israel into greater *de facto* alignment with the Sunni Arab states that have been backing the eastern commander for years, namely Egypt and the UAE, and more recently Saudi Arabia too. Thus, by supporting Haftar, Tel Aviv can further cement its role in this emerging bloc of regional Sunni states, which share Israel's perception of a threat from both Iran and Iranian-backed militias, as well as certain Sunni Islamist groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood. As one Israeli Defense Forces source told *Middle East Eye*, "A friend of our friend – and an enemy of our enemy – is our friend, and Haftar is a friend of Egypt, Jordan, and UAE. He also fights ISIS."

Third, the opportunities to secure money through lucrative weapons sales also help explain Israel's interest in backing

Haftar. As a leading arms dealer, Israel has made billions by selling arms and leasing Israeli military advisers to different conflict-plagued countries in Africa, such as South Sudan. Israel is expanding its clout in Africa, where it is seeking to deepen its role and strengthen its relations with a host of countries. Israel's Africa foreign policy reached a watershed in January when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu travelled to Chad to meet President Idriss Deby and renew bilateral relations. Tel Aviv's closer relationship with Haftar can further advance Israel's grander geopolitical interests in the region.

Fourth, Libya's natural resources are a factor too. Constantly looking for oil-rich allies to sell it oil, Israel may expect to secure access to Libya's petroleum after backing Haftar in the country's ongoing civil war. As the eastern commander's forces have demonstrated, their capacity to take control of virtually all onshore oil fields in Libya means Israel likely sees a tacit alliance with Haftar as a prudent move in regard to its energy needs.

France Also Backs Haftar

France's support for Haftar, which has been based on Paris' view of the LNA as a bulwark against Islamist extremism, has created a major division within Europe with respect to Libya. This division has had a remarkably negative impact on French-Italian relations. Unquestionably, Paris and Rome's different ideas about Libya have been another factor contributing to the North African country's crisis, while France and Italy compete for influence in this part of the Maghreb. (The U.S. officially supports the GNA, yet Trump has praised Haftar, so the U.S. position is unclear on

Libya).

Turkey and its own interests are in play too. Tension is heating up between the LNA and its external supporters on the one side, and the GNA-allied militias with Turkey on the other. To counter the LNA's advance on Tripoli, the Turks have provided GNA-aligned factions with armored vehicles and drones, including one shot down by Haftar's forces late last month. By siding with Haftar, Israel has firmly positioned itself with Abu Dhabi, Cairo, and other capitals, which view Haftar as the strongest leader in Libya capable of taking on "terrorists," while returning stability to the country.

With the further regionalization of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) crisis, which has been a driver of greater instability in Libya and other countries in Africa, Israel's position is unambiguous in the Abu Dhabi-Doha clash. By supporting the Emirati and Egyptian positions on Libya—firmly placing Israel at odds with both Ankara and Doha—Tel Aviv is making clear it prefers Arab figures representing the model of Western-backed authoritarian stability and secular dictatorships, rather than those who advance the Muslim Brotherhood's vision for the region.

For the Libyan people, a dismal future is most likely. The proxy war has been fueled by many external actors, which have come into the country seeking to fill the power vacuum that emerged after Moammar Qaddafi's fall in 2011. With GNA-allied fighters recently pushing back against the LNA offensive, it is unclear how the civil war will evolve as Haftar's forces continue to shell Tripoli.

The growing danger for Libya, torn apart by various militias

fighting with the support of Israel and the other external actors, is long-term fragmentation.

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THE ANGRY ARAB: The First Elected Egyptian President? The Death of Mohammad Morsi

There were Egyptian elections before Mohammed Morsi, who underestimated the anti-democratic impulses of Arab tyrannies, and assumed Western governments wouldn't stand for an overthrow of a democratically-elected president.

By [As`ad AbuKhalil](#)

Special to Consortium News



The death of Mohamed Morsi, former Egyptian President, in an Egyptian court two weeks ago focused attention—albeit briefly—on the nature of

the tyrannical regime of Gen. Abdul-Fattah el-Sisi. El-Sisi's coup in 2013 was largely the work of the UAE-Saudi alliance and was quickly blessed by the Obama administration.

el-Sisi has done everything possible to endear himself to the U.S.: he has brought his security coordination with Israel to an unprecedented level and has even allowed Israeli fighter jets to conduct raids on Egyptian territory (in the Sinai). He also has tightened the grip of his regime on Gaza, reinforcing the Israeli siege. Those are the priorities of the U.S. in Egypt, along with political subservience to U.S. dictates.

The Muslim Brotherhood is now the object of state and regional harassment in most countries under Saudi and UAE influence. Western governments, which for decades supported or indulged the Brotherhood in the long years of the Cold War, have come under pressure from the Saudi and UAE regimes to outlaw their organizations and declare them terrorist groups. Qatar and Turkey, who are now the official sponsors of the Brotherhood, lobby Western governments to keep the Brotherhood off the terrorism list.

But there is a paradox in the UAE-Saudi-Israeli campaign against the Brotherhood: the few cases where there were elections in the era of Arab uprisings (in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen), the Brotherhood proved that they are a powerful political force who command support from a substantial segment of the population. Banning the Brotherhood in the Gulf merely pushes them underground.

The bitter campaign against the Brotherhood in the UAE and

Saudi Arabia is a testimony to their political salience, not to their irrelevance; both regimes are concerned that the domestic opposition prefers the Brotherhood to the ruling dynasties. A recent Arab public opinion survey (with very questionable methodology and phraseology conducted by the Arab Barometer, which is partly funded by the U.S. government) reveals a wide popularity for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan among the Arab population. (One notices in talking to Saudi students abroad that Turkey constitutes the most attractive model for young educated Saudis because its version of Islam is more palatable than the House of Saud's).

Morsi's Miracle Run

Morsi became president of Egypt in 2012, and lasted almost a year. It was a miracle that he lasted that long given the Gulf regimes' insistence on imposing tight control over the Arab state system. The West, especially the U.S., learned to live with the Brotherhood, particularly its branches in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, who all proved willing to abandon past slogans in relation to Israel. Their economic policies were also congruent with Western lending agencies. But Morsi underestimated the anti-democratic impulses of Arab tyrannies, and he also assumed that Western governments would not stand for an overthrow of a democratically-elected president.

The era of Morsi in Egypt was an interesting one; it is said that he was the first democratically elected president of Egypt. But who can question that Gamal Abdul-Nasser (who ruled from 1952-1970), was the most popular Arab leader since Saladin, capturing the hearts and minds of Egyptians

from at least 1956 until his death? Egyptians continued to be loyal to Nasser even after the 1967 defeat to Israel, and his funeral remains the most massive Arab funeral in history (and one of the biggest ever worldwide). There were elections in Egypt under Nasser and wide sections of the social classes were represented in ways that parliaments under capitalism aren't. (Nasser broke the monopoly of the upper classes over political representation).

Elections in Nasser's time were not held in the context of a multiplicity of political parties, but that does not cast doubt on the legitimacy of the successive elections of Nasser as president. Even if the Brotherhood were allowed to field their own candidates during the 1950s and 1960s, they did not stand a chance in that secular era.

The election of Morsi took place in a different context. There was a multiplicity of political parties but the elections were not entirely free (assuming that you can have free elections per se, especially in developing countries where foreign money and foreign embassies play a big role in influencing and determining results). The state apparatus clearly intervened to support the candidacy of [Ahmad Shafiq](#) against Morsi, and Gulf and Western governments most likely funneled money to the campaign of Shafiq, just as Qatar and Turkey intervened on the side of Morsi, who probably won with a larger margin than the one announced by the state.

The year of Morsi was an interesting period in contemporary Egyptian history. It was by far the freest political era, where political parties and media flourished and the state tolerated more criticisms against the ruler than before or since. But young Egyptians who participated in the 2011

revolt stress the point that freedoms under Morsi were not so much a gift from the leader to the people as they were the result of insistence on their rights by the revolutionary masses. They had just managed to oust the 30-year rule of Hosni Mubarak and they were not going to settle for less than an open political environment.

But that also did not last, and the rise of el-Sisi was entirely an affair hatched by foreign governments and the security apparatus of the state. Secular, liberal, Nasserists, and even some progressives were accomplices of the coup of 2013; they were alarmed with the Islamic rhetoric of the Brotherhood and some even resented the political rise of poorer Egyptians with an Islamist bend. el-Sisi knew how to appeal to a large coalition and to pretend that he would carry on the democratization of Egypt. But the signs were on the wall: the blatant role of the Saudi and UAE regime in his coup were not disguised, and el-Sisi was an integral part of the Egyptian state military-intelligence apparatus, whose purpose is to maintain close relations with the Israeli occupation state, and to crush domestic dissent and opposition.

Morsi's fate was sealed when he decided to coexist with the same military council that had existed in the age of Mubarak. He could have purged the entire top brass, and replaced them with new people who were not tainted with links to the Mubarak regime. Worse, Morsi made the chief of Egyptian military intelligence—the man who is in charge of close Israeli-Egyptian security cooperation—his minister of defense (that was el-Sisi himself). Morsi assumed that the military command would quickly switch their loyalty to the

democratic order instead of the old tyrannical regime.

Not Dead Yet

It is too premature to write the obituary of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is still a force to be reckoned with in many Arab countries, and whenever the people are given a chance to express themselves in the ballot boxes, the Brotherhood will be represented. But it is tainted: in the experience of Tunisia and the brief experience of Egypt under Morsi, the Brotherhood proved to be quite unprincipled, in both foreign and domestic policies. It has also engaged in armed combat in Libya, Syria, and Yemen.

Morsi was mocked and condemned mercilessly for a formal congratulatory letter that the then Egyptian president wrote to then Israeli President Shimon Peres. The Brotherhood's old rhetoric about "Jihad against Israel" was quickly discarded to win approval from the U.S. The Brotherhood had semi-formal deals with the Israel lobby in Washington and with the late Sen. John McCain to prove its good intentions if allowed to reach power.

The death of Morsi did not so much create sympathy for his person as much as it underlined the cruel repression under el-Sisi. Political satire flourished under Morsi and Bassem Yousef owed his career to him (Morsi was quite easy to mock). The Brotherhood in Egypt are not finished; they will come back, and their return will unlikely be peaceful.

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THE ANGRY ARAB: How to Bring Down a Regime in the Arab World

Protesters in the Sudan and Algeria have learned from the counter-revolutions and know it is not enough to oust a single tyrant, writes As`ad AbuKhalil.

Leaders May Fall But US Maintains Tyrannies

By [As`ad AbuKhalil](#)

Special to Consortium News



The persistence of protests in the Sudan and Algeria reveals a change in the tactics of demonstrators and protesters since the beginning of the era of Arab uprisings in 2011.

Those early uprising had a simple but basic slogan: “The people want the downfall of the regime.” But the people soon discovered that while it is difficult to overthrow an individual ruler – given that the tyrannical system in the Arab region is sponsored and protected by Western

governments and Israel – it is much harder to overthrow the whole regime.

Within months of the Arab uprisings' launch, counter-revolutionary forces mounted their assault to restore the tyrannical order: in Egypt by installing military dictator General Abdel el- Sisi; in Yemen by replacing `Ali `Abdullah Saleh with his deputy; in Bahrain by sending Saudi troops in to preserve the regime by force; and in Tunisia by interfering in an election to maintain the regime, while putting new and old faces in the facade.

The Arab counter-revolution is a movement sponsored by the U.S. comprised of two branches: the Saudi-UAE branch and the Qatari branch. The first branch wishes to maintain the old regime system while the Qatari branch (aided by Turkey) wishes to install the Muslim Brotherhood or its affiliates. In Libya, the civil war is a manifestation of the conflict between the two branches. The Saudi-UAE is backing the army of Khalifah Hifter, while Qatar is supporting the government, which is recognized by the UN.

Overall, the counter-revolution wants to reverse the tide of popular uprising while guaranteeing the longevity of the regional state system – with the exception of those regimes not aligned with the U.S. and Israel.

Complicated Picture

Because the regimes were so closely associated with the face of the tyrant, Arab protesters wrongly assumed that the ouster of the leader would easily institute the formation of a new regime. Yet, the picture has proven to be more complicated. While Arab regimes are led by tyrants, they

don't rule on their own, but with a social-class alliance of beneficiaries. Furthermore, the U.S. and Western governments in general fund and/or arm Arab regimes to guarantee longevity of rule. When Western governments speak about the stability of the Middle East they merely mean the stability of their economic and political interests – and the political and military interests of their ally, Israel.

The U.S. has built a complex network of local clients whose survival are not tied entirely to the despot. The U.S. now has organic links with the entire top brass of Arab militaries and with the leaders of the intelligence services. Those prove valuable to the U.S., and to Israeli occupation and the aim of peace between it Arab countries.

When Mohammad Morsi, who [collapsed and died June 17](#) during a session in court, became the first freely elected president in the entire history of Egypt in 2012, he was not really in charge of Egyptian foreign policy and defense. That remained in the hands of the military command and the intelligence services. For that, the relationship between Egypt and Israel remained unchanged during the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood – partly because the Brotherhood cared more about political power than its own agenda, and partly because the military-intelligence apparatus insisted on preserving control over the national security and foreign policy files of the country. The U.S. continued to work closely with the apparatus throughout the uprising and forced the Egyptian army to send its special forces to help protect the Israeli occupation embassy after it was set ablaze by angry Egyptian protesters.

US Military Pervades Region

The U.S. Central Command deploys troops throughout the Middle East region (in known and unknown military bases – even, according to Israeli and Saudi media, in Lebanon, which is ostensibly under the control of Hizbullah).

In the name of “the war on terrorism,” the U.S. supervises the training and arming of most Middle East armies and either sells arms to the regimes (like in the Gulf) or donates useless military equipment and antiquated weapons to countries such as Lebanon to appease the local military command, while preserving Lebanese military weakness vis-à-vis Israel. Similarly, the U.S. also has close relations with the regional intelligence services. Then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton – who steadfastly refused to respond to the popular demand to oust Hosni Mubarak in 2011 – famously suggested that the head of Egyptian intelligence, Omar Suleyman, succeed Mubarak (of course the Egyptian people did not fall for the ploy).

The U.S. has invested heavily in the Middle East and would not countenance the swift downfall of its client regimes. It maintains a complicated network of spies and military advisers to protect the tyrants. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the U.S. represents the biggest impediment to democracy and (real) free elections in the region.

Upper Class Social Interests

But the regimes also represent upper class social interests. The U.S. is tied to capitalist regimes in the Middle East which are under constant neoliberal pressures (from the U.S., World Bank and IMF) to engage in more

privatization, and to dismantle the public sector and decrease social programs. Those policies (from Egypt to Tunisia) have produced a class of millionaires and billionaires who are closely tied to the fortunes of the ruling regimes and often control the media.

You know it is not a revolution when the ruling social classes have stayed in their places after the uprisings in various Arab states.

Protesters in Sudan and Algeria have learned from the lessons of the Arab uprisings and know full well that getting rid of the tyrant is not enough. They are now pushing for the full transfer of power into the political hands of civilians, and are calling for a delay in elections (which Saudi Arabia is seeking because it can manufacture the results).

Elections should be the last priority for Arab activists for change: elections serve as a golden opportunity for Gulf regimes and Western governments to influence outcomes through direct funding of candidates and parties and through massive propaganda campaigns for the preservation of the regime. The last Tunisian election was largely a Western-Gulf counter-revolution intended to save the regime from the tide of the uprising. It succeeded in installing as president a leftover from the Ancien Régime whose hands are soiled with previous bloody repression.

To have meaningful free elections in the Arab world one needs to control the banking and financial system and monitor the flow of foreign money and interference by Gulf regimes and by Western governments. You need to end foreign

Western hegemony before you can have free elections. Furthermore, in the capitalist economies of the Middle East, elections are increasingly an opportunity for billionaires to ascend to political power. In the North Lebanon region alone, four billionaires have reached the Lebanese parliament through their wealth in the last two decades.

For the process of the dismantlement of the regime to be completed, there has to be a complete change in the military leadership and the leadership of all intelligence services. Protesters should also insist on putting them on trial because they all have served as instruments of the regime for the purposes of repression and surveillance. This has not happened in any of the countries that underwent the so-called Arab uprisings. There has to be accountability and trials for all members of existing regime, if one is to achieve a full break from the past.

The Arab world has not had a revolution in many decades. Egypt had a real revolution in 1952 but it did not happen overnight. It took Gamal Abdel Nasser many decades to initiate a thorough-going overthrow of the existing regime and the ruling class. His revolution against the ruling class was logically accompanied by a campaign against all Western foreign influence in Egypt. Egypt was changed over a decade-long period, during which the average Egyptian worker's income rose by 44 percent.

We have not had that kind of change in any Arab country since. The West and Gulf regimes don't want that to happen. If the Algerians and the Sudanese keep pushing for real liberation, they could shake the power system in their own

countries and in the region as a whole. But the counter-revolutionary forces are not sitting idly by. The U.S. has just appointed a special envoy for Sudan.

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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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THE ANGRY ARAB: Camp David and the Ongoing Crisis of Palestine

Recently published book by Carter official says the president was initially hostile to Sadat's initiative toward

Israel because Carter saw it as “the end of any hope of a comprehensive peace,” says As`ad AbuKhalil in this review.

Carter Worried Bilateral Israel- Egypt

Deal Would Undermine Regional Peace

By **As`ad AbuKhalil**

Special to Consortium News

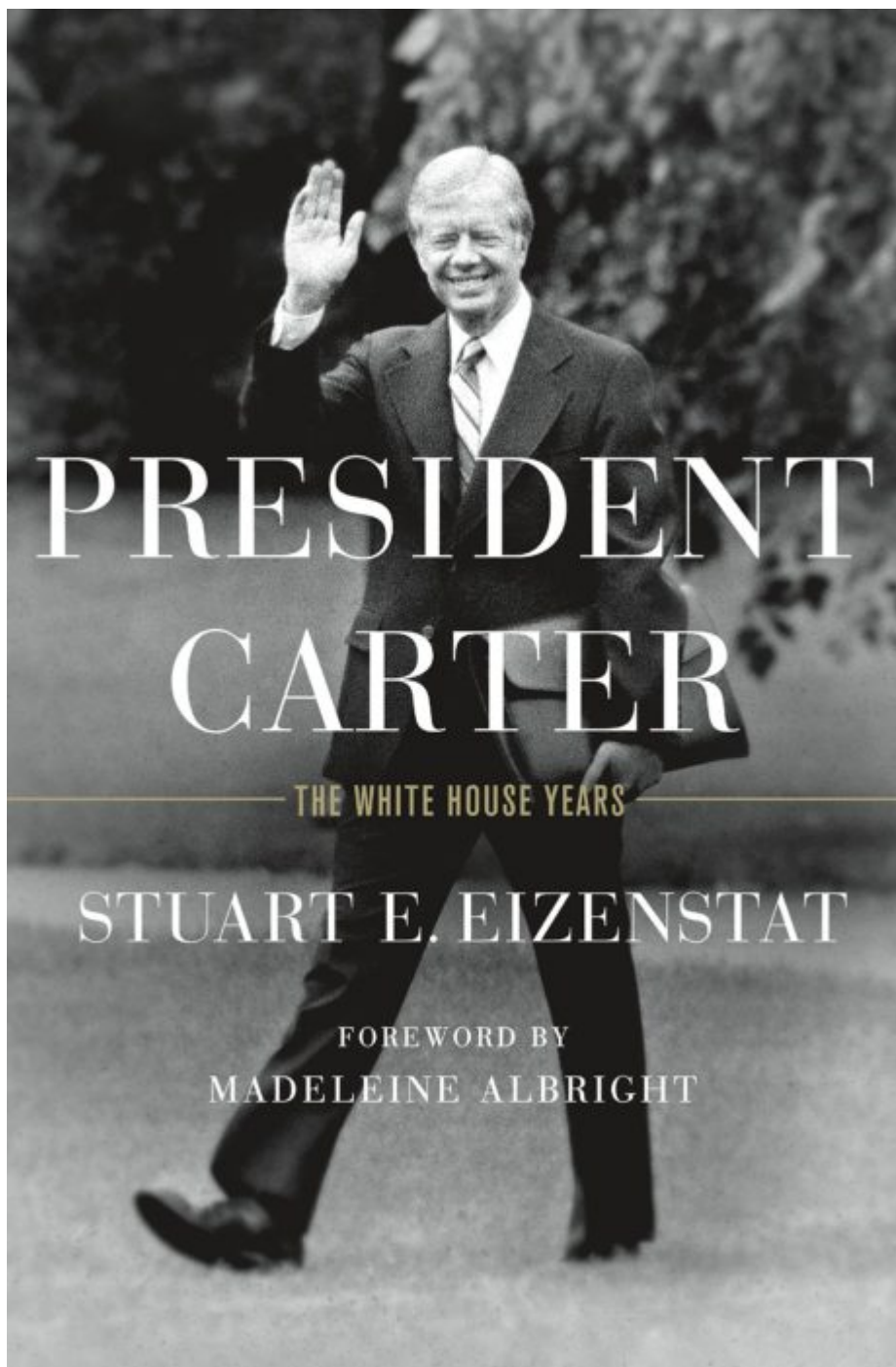


One would think there isn't anything new to be said about the Camp David negotiations of 1978. There are enough books about the accords and about Egyptian-Israeli peace to fill a book case.

But the recent book by Stuart Eizenstat, *President Carter: the White House Years* (Thomas Dunne Books, 2018), adds information and insights to the plethora of works on the subject. It's clear Eizenstat, a domestic policy advisor to Jimmy Carter, kept copious notes (as detailed as the notes of H. R. Haldeman in Nixon's White House) during his years of service. And he supplemented his account by conducting interviews with Carter and other U.S. and foreign officials.

This book could emerge as one of the definitive accounts (in over a 1000 pages) of the Carter White House years, as far as the Middle East is concerned. Eizenstat was heavily involved in Mideast policy making though he wasn't a specialist in foreign policy. But the administration relied on him as a liaison with U.S. Jewish organizations and as a back channel to the Israeli government.

Eizenstat admits “there is no other issue in American foreign policy where domestic politics intrudes more directly than the Middle East” (p. 409). While Eizenstat has a record of staunch support for Israel and hostility to its enemies—whoever they are—he does offer a few criticisms of the Israeli lobby and of the Israeli government.



At a time when Rep. Ilhan Omar has been accused of anti-Semitism merely for suggesting that AIPAC uses its financial

muscle to promote its congressional agenda, Eizenstat's statements in this regard would have been characterized as anti-Semitic if articulated by Omar or her other fellow Muslim representative, Rashida Tlaib.

He says he helped draft a speech on Arab-Israeli issues to be delivered in "New Jersey," he wrote, "because it would be crucial to Jews in key northeastern states, as well as Florida and California" (p. 412). Of course, one can't today speak of a "Jewish lobby." It could be perceived as anti-Semitic. It's also inaccurate because the pro-Israeli lobby extends far beyond the Jewish community.

Evangelical Christians, on the whole, appear to be more fanatical supporters of Israel than Jewish Americans. On the subject of Israel, there is more diversity of opinion inside the Jewish community than there is among Southern Baptists.

Carter Camp Divisions

The book explains clearly that the administration was divided between two camps: National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. Vance was motivated more by human rights while Brzezinski spoke for a less pro-Israeli foreign policy, largely from the standpoint of securing Arab support against the USSR.

Domestic policy advisors were solidly in support of the traditional pro-Israel line because they feared the impact on Carter's prospects for re-election. Carter wavered between the two groups, Eisenstat writes. But he eventually surrendered to Israeli dictates in the negotiations. Even that wasn't sufficient politically: Carter was perceived as hostile to Israeli interests and his support among Jewish

voters, according to the author, plummeted to 40 percent in 1980.

Eizenstat reveals that Carter was initially hostile to Sadat's initiative toward Israel in November 1977 because the president saw it as "the end of any hope of a comprehensive peace and will result only at best in a bilateral agreement between Egypt and Israel." (p. 472). Carter was right but he went along with the initiative anyway.

Eizenstat's account reflects the typical American bias of favoring pro-U.S. despots over despots who are not aligned with the U.S. Egyptian dictator, Anwar Sadat, receives glowing treatment by the author—who bizarrely insists on referring to him as "general" (p. 430) when Sadat never commanded troops in his life and his military role in his youth was rather minimal. It is possible that Eizenstat was deceived by Sadat's fancy and elaborate military uniform, which was designed for him by Pierre Cardin.

Worse, he glosses over, or ignores, the anti-Semitism of Sadat, who referred to the Israeli lobby as "US Jews lobby" (p. 482), and who designed his overture toward Israel purely out of his "perception of the political influence of American Jews." (p. 471) But what is disturbing is that Eizenstat justifies Sadat's famous admiration for Hitler by maintaining that it was "less for his violent anti-Semitism than his opposition to the British." (p. 430).

But that lame excuse could apply to the meeting between Hajj Amin Husseini (leader of the Palestinian national movement prior to the founding of the state of Israel) and Hitler,

which has been used for decades to discredit the Palestinian national movement and to frame it as anti-Semitic. If the opposition to the British was the motive for Sadat's admiration for Hitler, could that factor not also apply to Hajj Amin too? Surely, Hajj Amin could not admire the Nazi ideology where Arabs were perceived as an inferior race, described by Hitler as "painted half-apes." And if the author describes Hafidh Al-Asad of Syria as a "brutal dictator"—which he was—he should have used the same term for Sadat.

3-Way Special Relationship

The author does not shy away from underlining the role of the Israeli lobby. He refers to the "special triangular relationship among Israel, the American Jewish leadership, and the Congress in effectively applying pressure on the presidency to modify U.S. policy to Israel's benefit." (p. 437). If Ilhan Omar or another Arab member of Congress were to offer such an explanation of the role of the lobby there would have been a hue and cry and calls for resignation. And Eisenstat was wrong in referring exclusively to the Jewish leadership in this regard when Evangelical Christians have become the guardians of Likud interests in the Republican Party.

Eisenstat, however, does not shy away from expressing outrage at Israeli interference in U.S. domestic politics; he writes about Moshe Dayan's offer to help Carter with his domestic problems, "This was an amazing intrusion into domestic politics by a foreign minister, even from a friendly country," Eisenstat writes (p. 466).

The author reinforces the view that then Israeli prime minister, Menachem Begin fiercely defended the interests of the occupation state during the Camp David negotiations, while Sadat was casual about the whole process and disregarded his own advisors when they tried to defend Egyptian interests and sovereignty.

It also becomes clear that the PLO's stance against Sadat and the talks was correct and that neither Sadat nor Begin were serious about offering meaningful sovereignty to the Palestinian people. While Carter initially sought to offer political rights to the Palestinians, he quickly abandoned the goal once he saw that Sadat and Begin were only interested in a bilateral agreement.

Eisenstat confirms that Begin did indeed lie to Carter: that he initially offered a settlement freeze for 5 years not for 3 months—as Begin later claimed. The author says that Carter took this lie as a personal insult and it affected his view of Israel, although he never spoke about that while president. What is disturbing about this book is that Eisenstat confirms what we have known all along: that the idea of a Holocaust museum (which came out of the office of Eisenstat during Carter's administration) was not motivated by a desire to inform Americans of the horrific tragedy, but was instead a cynical manipulation of "Jewish American voters" who were disenchanted with Carter(p. 487).

This book underlines the devastation that the Camp David accords afflicted on the Middle East region. The U.S. secured the withdrawal of Egypt and its army from the Arab-Israeli conflict in order to permit Israel to commit more aggression and occupation against a variety of Arab

territories without worrying about retribution from the Egyptian army. Far from being proud of his peace achievement, Carter should be ashamed of his role in brokering an expensive bilateral treaty—against the wishes of the Egyptian people, and contrary to the vision of a Palestinian “homeland”—which Carter had promised back in March 1977.

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Telling Only Part of the Story of Jihad

A CNN star reporter should not be shocked to learn that U.S. allies are consorting with Yemeni terrorists, writes Daniel Lazare.

By [Daniel Lazare](#)

Special to Consortium News



A recent *CNN* report about U.S. military materiel finding its way into Al Qaeda hands in Yemen might have been a valuable addition to Americans' knowledge of terrorism.

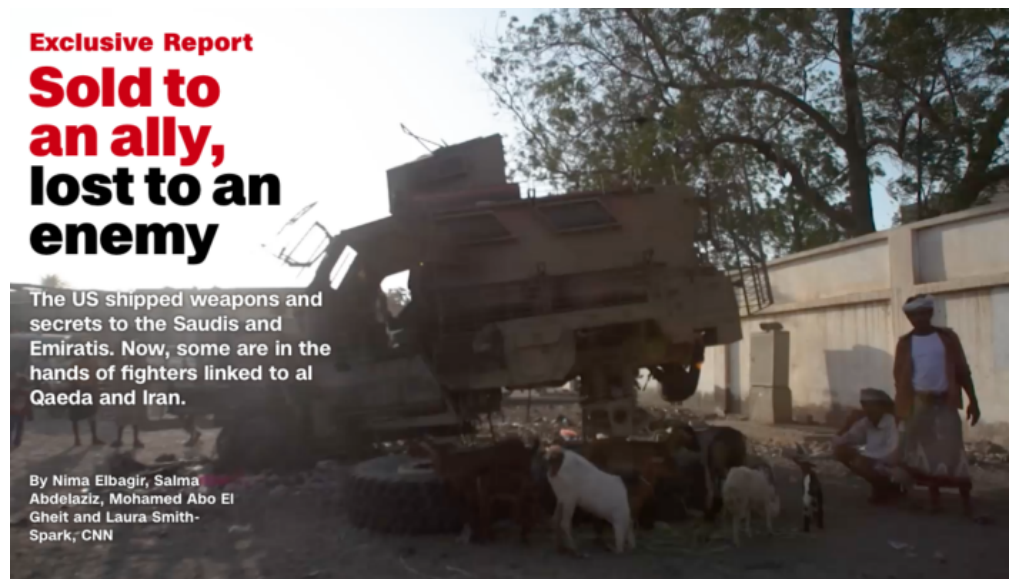
Entitled "[Sold to an ally, lost to an enemy](#)," the 10-minute segment, broadcast on Feb. 4, featured rising *CNN* star [Nima Elbagir](#) cruising past sand-colored "Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected" armored vehicles, or MRAPs, lining a Yemeni highway.

"It's absolutely incredible," she says. "And this is not under the control of [Saudi-led] coalition forces. This is in the command of militias, which is expressly forbidden by the arms sales agreements with the U.S."

"That's just the tip of the iceberg," she adds.

"*CNN* was told by coalition sources that a deadlier U.S. weapons system, the

TOW missile, was airdropped in 2015 by Saudi Arabia to Yemeni fighters, an air drop that was proudly proclaimed across Saudi backed media channels." The TOWs were dropped into Al Qaeda-controlled territory, according to *CNN*. But when Elbagir tries to find out more, the local coalition-backed government chases her and her crew out of town.



U.S.-made TOWs in the hands of Al Qaeda? Elbagir is an effective on-screen presence. But this is an old story, which the cable network has long soft-pedaled.

In the early days of the Syrian War, Western media was reluctant to acknowledge that the forces arrayed against the Assad regime included Al Qaeda. In those days, the opposition was widely portrayed as a belated ripple effect of the Arab Spring pro-democracy uprisings elsewhere in the region.

However, in April-May 2015, right around the time that the Saudis were air-dropping TOWs into Yemen, they were also supplying the same optically-guided, high-tech missiles to pro-Al Qaeda forces in Syria's northern Idlib province. Rebel leaders were exultant as they drove back Syrian government troops. TOWs "flipped the balance," one [said](#), while another [declared](#): "I would put the advances down to one word – TOW."

CNN reported that story very differently. From rebel-held territory, *CNN*'s Nick Paton Walsh [described](#) the missiles as a "possible game-changer ... that may finally be wearing down the less popular side of the Shia-Sunni divide." He conceded it wasn't all good news: "A major downside for Washington at least, is that the often-victorious rebels, the Nusra Front, are Al Qaeda. But while the winners for now are America's enemies, the fast-changing ground in Syria may cause to happen what the Obama administration has long sought and preached, and that's changing the calculus of the Assad regime."

[Foreign Policy](#), [The Washington Post](#), [The Guardian](#), and [The](#)

[New York Times](#) all reacted the same way, frowning their brows at the news that Al Qaeda was gaining, but expressing measured relief that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was at last on the ropes.

But now that Elbagir is sounding the alarm about TOWs in Yemen, *CNN* would do well to acknowledge that it has been distinctly more blasé in the past about TOWs in the hands of al Qaeda.

The network appears unwilling to go where Washington's pro-war foreign-policy establishment doesn't want it to go. Elbagir shouldn't be shocked to learn that U.S. allies are consorting with Yemeni terrorists.

U.S. History with Holy Warriors

What *CNN* producers and correspondents either don't know or fail to mention is that Washington has a long history of supporting jihad. As Ian Johnson notes in ["A Mosque in Munich"](#) (2010), the policy was mentioned by President Dwight Eisenhower, who was eager, according to White House memos, "to stress the 'holy war' aspect" in his talks with Muslim leaders about the Cold War Communist menace." [See ["How U.S. Allies Aid Al Qaeda in Syria,"](#) Consortium News, Aug. 4, 2015.]

Britain had been involved with Islamists at least as far back as 1925 when it helped establish the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and both the U.S. and Britain worked with Islamists in the 1953 coup in Iran, according to Robert Dreyfus in ["Devil's Game"](#) (2006).

By the 1980s a growing Islamist revolt against a left-

leaning, pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan brought U.S. support. In mid-1979, President Jimmy Carter and his national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, armed the Afghan mujahideen – not at first to drive the Soviets out, but to lure them in. Brzezinski intended to deal Moscow a Vietnam-sized blow, as he put it in a 1998 interview.

Meanwhile, a few months after the U.S. armed the mujahideen, the Saudis were deeply shaken when Islamist extremists seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca and called for the overthrow of the royal family. While Saudi Arabia has been keen to repress jihadism at home, it has been a major supporter of Sunni extremists in the region, particularly to battle the Shi'ite regime that came to power in Tehran, also in 1979.

Since then, the U.S. has made use of jihad, either directly or indirectly, with the Gulf oil monarchies or Pakistan's notoriously pro-Islamist Inter-Services Intelligence agency. U.S. backing for the Afghan mujahideen helped turn Osama bin Laden into a hero for some young Saudis and other Sunnis, while the training camp he established in the Afghan countryside drew jihadists from across the region.

U.S. backing for Alija Izetbegovic's Islamist government in Bosnia-Herzegovina brought al-Qaeda to the Balkans, while U.S.-Saudi support for Islamist militants in the Second Chechen War of 1999-2000 enabled it to establish a base of operations there.

Downplaying Al Qaeda

Just six years after 9/11, according to investigative reporter Seymour Hersh, the U.S. downplayed the fight

against Al Qaeda to rein in Iran – a policy, Hersh wrote, that had the effect of “bolstering ... Sunni extremist groups that espouse a militant vision of Islam and are hostile to America and sympathetic to Al Qaeda.”

Under Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, policy toward Al-Qaeda turned even more curious. In March 2011, she devoted nearly two weeks to persuading Qatar, the UAE and Jordan to join the air war against Libya’s Muammar Gaddafi, only to stand by and watch as Qatar then poured hundreds of millions of dollars of aid into the hands of Islamist militias that were spreading anarchy from one end of the country to the other. The Obama administration thought of remonstrating with Qatar, but didn’t in the end.

Much the same happened in Syria where, by early 2012, Clinton was organizing a “Friends of Syria” group that soon began channeling military aid to Islamist forces waging war against Christians, Alawites, secularists and others backing Assad. By August 2012, the Defense Intelligence Agency reported that “the Salafist, the Muslim Brotherhood, and AQI [Al Qaeda in Iraq] are the major forces driving the [anti-Assad] insurgency”; that the West, Turkey, and the Gulf states supported it regardless; that the rebels’ goal was to establish “a declared or undeclared Salafist principality in eastern Syria,” and that “this is exactly what the supporting powers want in order to isolate the Syrian regime...”

Biden Speaks Out

Two years after that, Vice President Joe Biden declared at Harvard’s Kennedy School:

“Our allies in the region were our largest problem in Syria. ... The Saudis, the Emiratis, etc. what were they doing? They were so determined to take down Assad and essentially have a proxy Sunni-Shia war, what did they do? They poured hundreds of millions of dollars and tens of thousands of tons of military weapons into anyone who would fight against Assad, except the people who were being supplied were al Nusra and al Qaeda and the extremist elements of jihadis coming from other parts of the world.” (Quote starts at [53:25.](#))

The fact that Obama ordered the vice president to [apologize](#) to the Saudis, the UAE and Turkey for his comments provided [back-handed confirmation](#) that they were true. When TOWs turned up in the hands of pro-Qaeda rebels in Syria the following spring, all a senior administration official would say was: “It’s not something we would refrain from raising with our partners.”

It was obvious that Al Qaeda would be a prime beneficiary of Saudi intervention in Yemen from the start. Tying down the Houthis – “Al Qaeda’s most determined foe,” according to the [Times](#) – gave it space to blossom and grow. Where the State Department [said](#) it had up to 4,000 members as of 2015, a [UN report](#) put its membership at between 6,000 and 7,000 three years later, an increase of 50 to 75 percent or more.

In early 2017, the International Crisis Group [found](#) that Al Qaeda was “thriving in an environment of state collapse, growing sectarianism, shifting alliances, security vacuums and a burgeoning war economy.”

In Yemen, Al Qaeda “has regularly fought alongside Saudi-led

coalition forces in ... Aden and other parts of the south, including Taiz, indirectly obtaining weapons from them," the ICG added. "...In northern Yemen ... the [Saudi-led] coalition has engaged in tacit alliances with AQAP fighters, or at least turned a blind eye to them, as long as they have assisted in attacking the common enemy."

In May 2016, a *PBS documentary* showed Al Qaeda members fighting side by side with UAE forces near Taiz. (See "[The Secret Behind the Yemen War](#)," *Consortium News*, May 7, 2016.)

Last August, an *Associated Press* investigative team found that the Saudi-led coalition had cut secret deals with Al Qaeda fighters, "paying some to leave key cities and towns and letting others retreat with weapons, equipment, and wads of looted cash." Saudi-backed militias "actively recruit Al Qaeda militants," the *AP* team added, "...because they're considered exceptional fighters" and also supply them with armored trucks.

If it's not news that U.S. allies are providing pro-Al Qaeda forces with U.S.-made equipment, why is *CNN* pretending that it is? One reason is that it feels free to criticize the war and all that goes with it now that the growing human catastrophe in Yemen is turning into a major embarrassment for the U.S. Another is that criticizing the U.S. for failing to rein in its allies earns it points with viewers by making it seem tough and independent, even though the opposite is the case.

Then there's Trump, with whom *CNN* has been at war since the moment he was elected. Trump's Dec. 19 decision to withdraw

U.S. troops from Syria thus presented the network with a double win because it allowed it to rail against the pullout as “[bizarre](#)” and a “[win for Moscow](#)” while complaining at the same time about administration policy in Yemen. Trump is at fault, it seems, when he pulls out *and* when he stays in.

In either instance, *CNN* gets to ride the high horse as it blasts away at the chief executive that corporate outlets most love to hate. Maybe Elbagir should have given her exposé a different title: “Why arming homicidal maniacs is bad news in one country but OK in another.”

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](#).

Mike Pompeo’s Deranged Foreign Policy

The U.S. secretary of state is a Christian zealot who sees the U.S. as incapable of doing ill, writes Lawrence Davidson.

By [Lawrence Davidson](#)

[TothePointAnalysis.com](#)



U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo started out the new year—the date was Jan. 10—preaching “the truth” about U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, and for reasons we will get to below, he

chose to do so at the American University in Cairo. He implied that he was particularly capable of discerning the truth because he is “an evangelical Christian” who keeps a “Bible open on my desk to remind me of God and His Word, and The Truth.” This confession indicates that Pompeo is wearing ideological glasses through which he cannot possibly see the world, much less the Middle East, in an objective fashion. We can assume that the decidedly unthinking and amoral president he serves has no problem with this prophet in the State Department because Pompeo is one of the few cabinet ministers whom President Donald Trump has not fired.

So what are Pompeo’s versions of foreign policy truth? In terms of his Cairo pronouncements, they are twofold. First, as is to be expected of a man of his temperament (he declared: “I am a military man” who learned his “basic code of integrity” at West Point), he has identified the true enemy of the civilized world. And, again not unexpectedly given his Christian zealotry, the enemy is of Muslim origin. It is the “tenacious and vicious” cabal of “radical Islamism, a debauched strain of the faith that seeks to upend every other form of worship or governance.”

Notable Omissions

This initial “truth” is noteworthy for what it does not take into consideration, such as traditional U.S. alliances with brutal and corrupt military or monarchical dictatorships. Any move to reduce support for such regimes in the Middle East is, in Pompeo’s view, a “misjudgment” that must have “dire results.” As long as these dictatorships oppose what Pompeo opposes, their brutality and corrupt nature can be judged acceptable. For example, Pompeo praised his host, the

military dictator of Egypt, Abdel Fattah Saeed Hussein Khalil El-Sisi, who is an archetypical example of this murderous breed of ruler. He praised El-Sisi exactly because he has joined the U.S. in the suppression of “Islamists.” The Egyptian dictator, in Pompeo’s words, is “a man of courage.”

Pompeo’s second “truth” is the self-evident fact of American exceptionalism. He told his listeners that “America is a force for good in the Middle East.” Pompeo does not articulate the reference, but his claim taps into the Christian image of the U.S. as “a shining city on the hill”—a God-blessed light unto the nations. This was one of Ronald Reagan’s favorite themes.

As proof of American’s alleged beneficence, Pompeo makes a series of dubious claims about the behavior of the United States government. Here are a few. Comments within brackets are those of this author:

“For those who fret about the use of American power, remember this: (No.1) America has always been, and always will be, a liberating force.” [Since World War II we have been liberating dictators from their own rebelling people.] (No.2) “We assembled a coalition to liberate Kuwait from Saddam Hussein.” [The subsequent two Gulf Wars plus the U.S. imposed sanctions regime killed at least half-a-million Iraqis.] (No.3) “And when the mission is over, when the job is complete, America leaves.” [Unless the “liberated” countries’ government wants Washington to establish bases which, it seems, they almost always do. The U.S. now has some 800 military bases in 70 countries

around the world.] (No. 4) The U.S. and its allies helped destroy most of ISIS, and in the process “saved thousands of lives.” [There is no official number for the civilians killed in the so-called war on terror, of which the campaign against ISIS is but a part. However, there is no doubt that, to date, it is at least in the high hundreds of thousands.] (No.5) “Life is returning to normal for millions of Iraqis and Syrians.” [Unless you have a really perverse definition of “normal,” this is a total fantasy.]

Rescuing Foreign Policy

According to Pompeo, achievements No. 4 and No. 5 are due to the “fact” that President Donald Trump rescued U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. Rescued? Rescued from what? From the foreign policy of Barack Obama, of course.

“America, your long-time friend, was absent too much. Why? Because our leaders gravely misread our history, and your historical moment. These fundamental misunderstandings, were set forth in this city in 2009.”

That claim was a direct reference to former President Obama’s speech calling for a “new relationship with the Muslim world” delivered on June 4, 2009, at nearby Cairo University. That is why Pompeo came to Egypt to make his speech, which is in essence, an indictment of Obama’s foreign policy.

In brief, in 2009 Obama, who also claimed in his Cairo talk to be speaking the truth, had referenced the negative impact of Western imperial and colonial history toward the Middle East, and then took a pro-democracy stance that, if carried

into policy, would have weakened support for traditional dictatorships in places like Egypt. Obama saw a connection between the brutality of such dictatorships and the spread of religious fanaticism—a connection that was stronger than “radical Islamist” ideology alone. Obama also implied that President George W. Bush’s post 9/11 policy, which led not only to the unnecessary invasion of Iraq, but also to a policy of official torture, resulted in the United States “acting contrary to our ideals.” In addition, Obama was ready to negotiate with those seen as enemies by Pompeo, as symbolized by his willingness to make a deal with Iran.

Pompeo, the Christian zealot who sees the U.S. as incapable of doing ill, cannot objectively consider or perhaps even understand Obama’s positions. He dismisses them as a “misreading” of history. Obama’s brief and, in truth, largely ineffective, wavering from traditional Middle East foreign policy had, in Pompeo’s view, introduced “the age of self-inflicted American shame.” If Pompeo is short on historical understanding, he is long on hyperbole.

Retreat and Chaos

One of Pompeo’s more disquieting propositions is that “when America retreats, chaos often follows.”

Alas, at least in the Middle East, the exact opposite is true—chaos comes from invasion. This can be demonstrated by the consequences of the actions of President George W. Bush. It was Bush’s invasion of Iraq, the results of which were predictable, that opened the region to chaos, including the growth of ISIS. The Iraq invasion also opened the flood gates of an ongoing refugee crisis (which the Syrian civil

war—arguably prolonged by U.S. involvement—made even worse). Subsequent intervention in Libya, under Obama’s watch, only intensified the turmoil. However, none of these actions, or the misery they inflicted, seems have bothered the Christian sensibilities of Pompeo.

Examining the history of events can give us guides, albeit imperfect ones, for present policies and behaviors. A necessary precondition to making the most of this examination is the ability to do so as objectively as possible. Otherwise, to use Pompeo’s phrasing, we end up “making bad mistakes.” Part of the process is to be able to recognize the actual causes of events and to know when to discard traditional practices that no longer take you where you want to go.

Yet here is Secretary of State Mike Pompeo insisting, on the one hand, on maintaining outworn policies that support dictators. These policies have not produced the stability he thinks they have, but have rather helped bring about the very chaos he attributes to Obama. On the other hand, his Christian fundamentalism has blinded him to any objective understanding of Middle East history and America’s role in that region. That is why he ends up stating contradictions. For instance, toward the end of his talk he tells us (No. 1) “the Trump administration will also continue to press for a real and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians” and (No. 2) “we’ve adhered to our word. President Trump campaigned on the promise to recognize Jerusalem—the seat of Israel’s government—as the nation’s capital. In May, we moved our embassy there.” Those two statements are in direct contradiction to each other. However, Pompeo misses this

fact entirely. This is a product of ideology compounded by ignorance.

This being the case, Mike Pompeo and Donald Trump make for strange bedfellows. Of course, both are ignorant. But, the nearest thing Trump has to an ideology is his egotism and that infamous "gut" of his that ostensibly tells him what is right and wrong. He certainly is not a believing Christian nor even an American chauvinist, but rather he is a personal chauvinist who thinks of himself as a personification of the U.S.

If Pompeo and Trump share anything (besides ignorance), it seems to be a firm dislike for everything connected to Obama. We know that Trump may well be obsessed with Obama, perhaps for racist reasons. As one Democratic Party adviser has noted, "His [Trump's] only guiding principle seems to be to undo what Obama did. His driving motivation seems to be his animosity towards Obama." Mike Pompeo seems in lockstep with his boss in this regard. After all, Pompeo went out of the way to indict Obama, blaming him for the death of thousands, and doing so in the same city where Obama gave his most promising Middle East initiative. Pompeo's actions in this regard were personal and spiteful.

So here we have it. What motivates Secretary of State Mike Pompeo: (No. 1) Christian zealotry (No. 2) American exceptionalism and (No. 3) a personal dislike of the first black president of the United States. In terms of the position he holds in the government, this is a losing combination for the rest of us. Personally, I would not trust this man to guide the ongoing relationships between my own neighbors and me, so you can imagine my horror at having

to put up with him as secretary of state.

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