

# How Netanyahu Outsmarted Himself

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's brash intervention into U.S. politics to frighten Americans about Iran's alleged pursuit of a nuclear bomb created an unintended dynamic that led to the recent Iran agreement and now to a historic strain on U.S.-Israeli relations, writes ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

Those paying attention both to the Israeli government's implacable opposition against the agreement restricting Iran's nuclear program and to the issue of Iran's other activity in the Middle East might take note of some background that several analysts, including [Shibley Telhami](#) and [Aaron David Miller](#), have noted: that Israeli agitation about the Iranian nuclear program was a principal impetus for negotiating the agreement on that subject that was finalized in Vienna last month.

Miller goes so far as to suggest (presumably with tongue firmly in cheek) that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ought to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his activism that motivated other governments to negotiate the deal that he now is doing his utmost to shoot down.

Daniel Levy, a former Israeli official and current director of the Middle East program at the European Council on Foreign Relations, in [an especially insightful article](#) that explains positions on these issues both of Netanyahu's government and of other Israeli political leaders, adds additional detail to this background. He notes that it was Israel's government that had insisted at least as strongly as anyone that the nuclear file must be dealt with first and dealt with separately, without talking to the Iranians about regional issues or anything else.

That earlier Israeli position directly contradicts, of course, current complaints from Netanyahu's government and other opponents of the agreement that the deal does not address non-nuclear issues of Iranian policy and behavior, things the agreement never was intended to address. But this contradiction is no more nonsensical than the overall set of Israeli government positions on the nuclear issue if those positions are taken at face value.

The positions have included incessantly ringing an alarm bell about how Iran's nuclear program could lead to a weapon and then trying to destroy the very measures designed to ensure that the program does not lead to a weapon. Things make sense, from the Israeli government's point of view, only if they are not taken at face value.

An objective of that government, rather than achieving a nuclear agreement, has been instead to *avoid* any agreements with Iran, on nuclear matters or anything else. A calculation that there could be plenty of agitation on the nuclear issue without any agreement emerging was by no means crazy. U.S.-Iranian diplomacy, after all, was virtually nonexistent as recently as three years ago.

Serious questions were being raised elsewhere about whether, when U.S. and Iranian diplomats did sit down to talk, there would be enough bargaining space to reach an agreement on the nuclear question. And even if a deal started to emerge, the Israeli government still would have a traditional and trusty weapon, its political lobby in the United States, to shoot it down.

Meanwhile all that agitation about a nonexistent Iranian nuclear weapon served a purpose somewhat akin to the neocon agitation a decade earlier about the nonexistent Iraqi nuclear weapons: it helped to scare people to get them in line to achieve other objectives. Nuclear weapons are inherently scary and therefore useful for that sort of thing, even when they are nonexistent.

In the case of Iraq, the neocon objective was to get public support for launching an offensive war. In the case of Iran an Israeli objective is to get people to be deathly afraid of Iran and to view the Middle East the way Israel wants them to view it: as a region in which Iran is the source of instability and evil, in which Iran thus should only be shunned and never partnered, and in which Israel is the most reliable and effective partner for anyone who wants to be on the side of good against evil, and especially for the United States.

Now it appears that the calculation about being able to agitate without bringing about an agreement on the nuclear issue, though not crazy, was mistaken. Some of the reasons for the miscalculation may have been ones that many others also might have had a hard time anticipating, including Hassan Rouhani's victory in the Iranian presidential election of 2013, the degree of unity among the P5+1 during the negotiations, and the skill and determination with which President Barack Obama and Secretary John Kerry tackled the task of achieving a readily defensible agreement.

Probably also involved, and this was a reason for some of the mistaken analysis elsewhere about insufficient bargaining space, was a misbelief that Iran really is bent on acquiring nuclear weapons and thus never would make the concessions necessary to close off paths to such weapons. Because of the tendency of people to come to believe their own rhetoric when it is repeated enough, this misbelief probably had become entrenched in Israeli government circles.

Whatever the underlying reasons for any miscalculation, Netanyahu and his government now face the reality of a negotiated agreement. An even more

uncomfortable thought for them is that their own endless agitation on the nuclear issue, accompanied by their saber-rattling about what Israel might do militarily against Iran, helped to bring that agreement about.

Possibly the discomfort of having scored an own goal is part of what has brought their opposition to the agreement to such a feverish pitch. They are using the trusty weapon of the lobby to make one last attempt to make an agreement go away, but there already are signs of their thinking moving on to a Plan B of how to subvert the agreement, or at least to keep it from leading to any more extensive dealings with Iran, if the U.S. Congress does not kill it in September.

That gets to what must be an even more discomfiting thought for Netanyahu's government, which is that their politicking and propagandizing around the nuclear issue may be backfiring not just in the sense of a nuclear agreement having been reached but also in the sense of moving regional alignments and especially the role of the United States in directions they don't want. This involves not only partial rehabilitation of Iran as a regional player but also disgust in the United States that raises new questions and doubts among Americans about the extraordinary U.S.-Israeli relationship.

Indeed, this latter concern has been a theme of much criticism of Netanyahu by his Israeli political opponents, who charge him with mishandling relations with the United States. Levy probably is correct, however, that no major change in that relationship is imminent because "the role of money in U.S. politics guarantees against that, and anyway, Obama and the Democrats' commitment to Israel's well-being and security is sincere, Bibi or no Bibi."

But this entire episode may, over the longer term and in combination with other concerns and controversies, at least marginally weaken the edifice that is the unusual U.S.-Israeli relationship. Levy makes the point well:

"A process is in motion, a growing distancing between the Jewish communities of America and Israel, born of tensions between American Jewish liberalism and Israel's denial of basic freedoms for Palestinians and an overall drift toward greater extremism and intolerance. It is a process that has been significantly accelerated by Netanyahu's brash and bullying foray into congressional politics. Netanyahu is unlikely to pay an immediate political price at home, but in the arc of Israel-U.S. relations, it is a moment that will echo long after the details of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action are forgotten."

Those who wish for the United States to be able to pursue its own interests in the Middle East in a more flexible and effective manner than it has been able to hitherto can view such a process as an offsetting advantage of Netanyahu's

bullying.

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## Neocons to Americans: Trust Us Again

**Exclusive:** Marching in lockstep with Israeli hardliners, American neocons are aiming their heavy media artillery at the Iran nuclear deal as a necessary first step toward another “regime change” war in the Mideast and they are furious when anyone mentions the Iraq War disaster and the deceptions that surrounded it, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

America's neocons insist that their only mistake was falling for some false intelligence about Iraq's WMD and that they shouldn't be stripped of their powerful positions of influence for just one little boo-boo. That's the point of view taken by Washington Post editorial page editor Fred Hiatt as he whines about the unfairness of applying “a single-interest litmus test,” i.e., the Iraq War debacle, to judge him and his fellow war boosters.

After noting that many other important people were on the same pro-war bandwagon with him, Hiatt criticizes President Barack Obama for citing the Iraq War as an argument not to listen to many of the same neocons who now are trying to sabotage the Iran nuclear agreement. Hiatt thinks it's the height of unfairness for Obama or anyone else to suggest that people who want to kill the Iran deal – and thus keep alive the option to bomb-bomb-bomb Iran – “are lusting for another war.”

Hiatt also faults Obama for not issuing a serious war threat to Iran, a missing ultimatum that explains why the nuclear agreement falls “so far short.” Hiatt adds: “war is not always avoidable, and the judicious use of force early in a crisis, or even the threat of force, can sometimes forestall worse bloodshed later.”

But it should be noted that the neocons and Hiatt in particular did not simply make one mistake when they joined President George W. Bush's rush to war in 2002-03. They continued with their warmongering in Iraq for years, often bashing

the handful of brave souls in Official Washington who dared challenge the neocons' pro-war enthusiasm. Hiatt and his fellow "opinion leaders" were, in effect, the enforcers of the Iraq War "group think" and they have never sought to make amends for that bullying.

### **The Destruction of Joe Wilson**

Take, for instance, the case of CIA officer Valerie Plame and her husband, former U.S. Ambassador Joseph Wilson. Hiatt's editorial section waged a long vendetta against Wilson for challenging one particularly egregious lie, Bush's nationally televised claim about Iraq seeking "yellowcake" uranium from Niger, a suggestion that Iraq was working on a secret nuclear bomb. The Post's get-Wilson campaign included publishing a column that identified Plame as a CIA officer, thus destroying her undercover career.

At that point, you might have thought that Hiatt would have stepped forward and tried to ameliorate the harm that he and his editorial page had inflicted on this patriotic American family, whose offense was to point out a false claim that Bush had used to sell the Iraq War to the American people. But instead Hiatt simply piled on the abuse, essentially driving Wilson and Plame out of government circles and indeed out of Washington.

In effect, Hiatt applied "a single-issue litmus test" to disqualify the Wilson family from the ranks of those Americans who should be listened to. Joe Wilson had failed the test by being *right* about the Iraq War, so he obviously needed to be drummed out of public life.

The fact that Hiatt remains the Post's editorial-page editor and that Wilson ended up decamping his family to New Mexico speaks volumes about the upside-down world that Official Washington has become. Be conspicuously, obstinately and nastily wrong about possibly the biggest foreign-policy blunder in U.S. history and you should be cut some slack, but dare be right and off with your head.

And the Iraq War wasn't just a minor error. In the dozen years since Bush launched his war of aggression in Iraq, the bloody folly has destabilized the entire Middle East, resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths (including nearly 4,500 U.S. soldiers), wasted well over \$1 trillion, spread the grotesque violence of Sunni terrorism across the region, and sent a flood of refugees into Europe threatening the Continent's unity.

Yet, what is perhaps most remarkable is that almost no one who aided and abetted the catastrophic and illegal decision has been held accountable in any meaningful way. That applies to Bush and his senior advisers who haven't spent a single day inside a jail cell; it applies to Official Washington's well-funded

think tanks where neoconservatives still dominate; and it applies to the national news media where almost no one who disseminated pro-war propaganda was fired (with the possible exception of Judith Miller who was dumped by The New York Times but landed on her feet as a Fox News “on-air personality” and an op-ed contributor to The Wall Street Journal).

### **The Plame-Gate Affair**

While the overall performance of the Post’s editorial page during the Iraq War was one of the most shameful examples of journalistic malfeasance in modern U.S. history, arguably the ugliest part was the Post’s years-long assault on Wilson and Plame. The so-called “Plame-gate Affair” began in early 2002 when the CIA recruited ex-Ambassador Wilson to investigate what turned out to be a forged document indicating a possible Iraqi yellowcake purchase in Niger. The document had aroused Vice President Dick Cheney’s interest.

Having served in Africa, Wilson accepted the CIA’s assignment and returned with a conclusion that Iraq had almost surely not obtained any uranium from Niger, an assessment shared by other U.S. officials who checked out the story. However, the bogus allegation was not so easily quashed.

Wilson was stunned when Bush included the Niger allegations in his State of the Union Address in January 2003. Initially, Wilson began alerting a few journalists about the discredited claim while trying to keep his name out of the newspapers. However, in July 2003 after the U.S. invasion in March 2003 had failed to turn up any WMD stockpiles Wilson penned an op-ed article for The New York Times describing what he didn’t find in Africa and saying the White House had “twisted” pre-war intelligence.

Though Wilson’s article focused on his own investigation, it represented the first time a Washington insider had gone public with evidence regarding the Bush administration’s fraudulent case for war. Thus, Wilson became a major target for retribution from the White House and particularly Cheney’s office.

As part of the campaign to destroy Wilson’s credibility, senior Bush administration officials leaked to journalists that Wilson’s wife worked in the CIA office that had dispatched him to Niger, a suggestion that the trip might have been some kind of junket. When right-wing columnist Robert Novak published Plame’s covert identity in The Washington Post’s op-ed section, Plame’s CIA career was destroyed.

### **Accusations of Lying**

However, instead of showing any remorse for the harm his editorial section had done, Hiatt simply enlisted in the Bush administration’s war against Wilson,

promoting every anti-Wilson talking point that the White House could dream up. The Post's assault on Wilson went on for years.

For instance, in a Sept. 1, 2006, editorial, Hiatt accused Wilson of lying when he had claimed the White House had leaked his wife's name. The context of Hiatt's broadside was the disclosure that Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage was the first administration official to tell Novak that Plame was a CIA officer and had played a small role in Wilson's Niger trip.

Because Armitage was considered a reluctant supporter of the Iraq War, the Post editorial jumped to the conclusion that "it follows that one of the most sensational charges leveled against the Bush White House that it orchestrated the leak of Ms. Plame's identity is untrue."

But Hiatt's logic was faulty for several reasons. First, Armitage may have been cozier with some senior officials in Bush's White House than was generally understood. And, just because Armitage may have been the first to share the classified information with Novak didn't mean that there was no parallel White House operation to peddle Plame's identity to reporters.

In fact, evidence uncovered by special prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald, who examined the Plame leak, supported a conclusion that White House officials, under the direction of Vice President Cheney and including Cheney aide Lewis Libby and Bush political adviser Karl Rove, approached a number of reporters with this information.

Indeed, Rove appears to have confirmed Plame's identity for Novak and also leaked the information to Time magazine's Matthew Cooper. Meanwhile, Libby, who was indicted on perjury and obstruction charges in the case, had pitched the information to The New York Times' Judith Miller. The Post's editorial acknowledged that Libby and other White House officials were not "blameless," since they allegedly released Plame's identity while "trying to discredit Mr. Wilson." But the Post reserved its harshest condemnation for Wilson.

"It now appears that the person most responsible for the end of Ms. Plame's CIA career is Mr. Wilson," the editorial said. "Mr. Wilson chose to go public with an explosive charge, claiming falsely, as it turned out that he had debunked reports of Iraqi uranium-shopping in Niger and that his report had circulated to senior administration officials.

"He ought to have expected that both those officials and journalists such as Mr. Novak would ask why a retired ambassador would have been sent on such a mission and that the answer would point to his wife. He diverted responsibility from himself and his false charges by claiming that President Bush's closest aides

had engaged in an illegal conspiracy. It's unfortunate that so many people took him seriously."

### **A Smear or a Lie**

The Post's editorial, however, was at best an argumentative smear and most likely a willful lie. By then, the evidence was clear that Wilson, along with other government investigators, had debunked the reports of Iraq acquiring yellowcake in Niger and that those findings did circulate to senior levels, explaining why CIA Director George Tenet struck the yellowcake claims from other Bush speeches.

The Post's accusation about Wilson "falsely" claiming to have debunked the yellowcake reports apparently was based on Wilson's inclusion in his report of speculation from one Niger official who suspected that Iraq might have been interested in buying yellowcake, although the Iraqi officials never mentioned yellowcake and made no effort to buy any. This irrelevant point had become a centerpiece of Republican attacks on Wilson and was recycled by the Post.

Plus, contrary to the Post's assertion that Wilson "ought to have expected" that the White House and Novak would zero in on Wilson's wife, a reasonable expectation in a normal world would have been just the opposite. Even amid the ugly partisanship of modern Washington, it was shocking to many longtime observers of government that any administration official or an experienced journalist would disclose the name of a covert CIA officer for such a flimsy reason as trying to discredit her husband.

Hiatt also bought into the Republican argument that Plame really wasn't "covert" at all and thus there was nothing wrong in exposing her counter-proliferation work for the CIA. The Post was among the U.S. media outlets that gave a podium for right-wing lawyer Victoria Toensing to make this bogus argument in defense of Cheney's chief of staff Lewis Libby.

On Feb. 18, 2007, as jurors were about to begin deliberations in Libby's obstruction case, the Post ran a prominent Outlook article by Toensing, who had been buzzing around the TV pundit shows decrying Libby's prosecution. In the Post article, she wrote that "Plame was not covert. She worked at CIA headquarters and had not been stationed abroad within five years of the date of Novak's column."

### **A Tendentious Argument**

Though it might not have been clear to a reader, Toensing was hanging her claim about Plame not being "covert" on a contention that Plame didn't meet the coverage standards of the Intelligence Identities Protection Act. Toensing's



claim was legalistic at best since it obscured the larger point that Plame was working undercover in a classified CIA position and was running agents abroad whose safety would be put at risk by an unauthorized disclosure of Plame's identity.

But Toensing, who promoted herself as an author of the Intelligence Identities Protection Act, wasn't even right about the legal details. The law doesn't require that a CIA officer be "stationed" abroad in the preceding five years; it simply refers to an officer who "has served within the last five years outside the United States."

That would cover someone who while based in the United States went abroad on official CIA business, as Plame testified under oath in a congressional hearing that she had done within the five-year period. Toensing, who appeared as a Republican witness at the same congressional hearing on March 16, 2007, was asked about her bald assertion that "Plame was not covert."

"Not under the law," Toensing responded. "I'm giving you the legal interpretation under the law and I helped draft the law. The person is supposed to reside outside the United States." But that's not what the law says, either. It says "served" abroad, not "reside."

At the hearing, Toensing was reduced to looking like a quibbling kook who missed the forest of damage done to U.S. national security, to Plame and possibly to the lives of foreign agents for the trees of how a definition in a law was phrased, and then getting that wrong, too.

After watching Toensing's bizarre testimony, one had to wonder why the Post would have granted her space on the widely read Outlook section's front page to issue what she called "indictments" of Joe Wilson, U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald and others who had played a role in exposing the White House hand behind the Plame leak.

Despite Toensing's high-profile smear of Wilson and Fitzgerald, Libby still was convicted of four felony counts. In response to the conviction, the Post reacted with another dose of its false history of the Plame case and a final insult directed at Wilson, declaring that he "will be remembered as a blowhard."

With Plame's CIA career destroyed and Wilson's reputation battered by Hiatt and his Post colleagues, the Wilsons moved away from Washington. Their ordeal was later recounted in the 2010 movie, "Fair Game," starring Naomi Watts and Sean Penn. Though Libby was sentenced to 30 months in prison, his sentence was commuted by President Bush to eliminate any jail time.

## **A Pattern of Dishonesty**

While perhaps Hiatt's vendetta against Joe Wilson was the meanest personal attack in the Post's multi-year pro-war advocacy, it was just part of a larger picture of complicity and intimidation. Post readers often learned about voices of dissent only by reading Post columnists denouncing the dissenters, a scene reminiscent of a totalitarian society where dissidents never get space to express their opinions but are still excoriated in the official media.

For instance, on Sept. 23, 2002, when former Vice President Al Gore gave a speech criticizing Bush's "preemptive war" doctrine and Bush's push for the Iraq invasion, Gore's talk got scant media coverage, but still elicited a round of Gore-bashing on the TV talk shows and on the Post's op-ed page.

Post columnist Michael Kelly called Gore's speech "dishonest, cheap, low" before labeling it "wretched. It was vile. It was contemptible." [Washington Post, Sept. 25, 2002] Post columnist Charles Krauthammer added that the speech was "a series of cheap shots strung together without logic or coherence." [Washington Post, Sept. 27, 2002]

While the Post's wrongheadedness on the Iraq War extended into its news pages with the rare skeptical article either buried or spiked Hiatt's editorial section was like a chorus with virtually every columnist singing from the same pro-invasion song book and Hiatt's editorials serving as lead vocalist. A study by Columbia University journalism professor Todd Gitlin noted, "The [Post] editorials during December [2002] and January [2003] numbered nine, and all were hawkish." [American Prospect, April 1, 2003]

The Post's martial harmony reached its crescendo after Secretary of State Colin Powell made his bogus presentation to the United Nations on Feb. 5, 2003, accusing Iraq of hiding vast stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction. The next day, Hiatt's lead editorial hailed Powell's evidence as "irrefutable" and chastised any remaining skeptics.

"It is hard to imagine how anyone could doubt that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction," the editorial said. Hiatt's judgment was echoed across the Post's op-ed page, with Post columnists from Right to Left singing the same note of misguided consensus.

After the U.S. invasion of Iraq on March 19-20, 2003, and months of fruitless searching for the promised WMD caches, Hiatt finally acknowledged that the Post should have been more circumspect in its confident claims about the WMD.

"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," Hiatt said in an interview with the Columbia Journalism Review. "If that's not true, it

would have been better not to say it." [CJR, March/April 2004]

### **Concealing the Truth**

But Hiatt's supposed remorse didn't stop him and the Post editorial page from continuing its single-minded support for the Iraq War. Hiatt was especially hostile when evidence emerged that revealed how thoroughly he and his colleagues had been gulled.

In June 2005, for instance, The Washington Post decided to ignore the leak of the "Downing Street Memo" in the British press. The "memo" actually minutes of a meeting of British Prime Minister Tony Blair and his national security team on July 23, 2002 recounted the words of MI6 chief Richard Dearlove who had just returned from discussions with his intelligence counterparts in Washington.

"Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy," Dearlove said.

Though the Downing Street Memo amounted to a smoking gun regarding how Bush had set his goal first overthrowing Saddam Hussein and then searched for a sellable rationalization, the Post's senior editors deemed the document unworthy to share with their readers.

Only after thousands of Post readers complained did the newspaper deign to give its reasoning. On June 15, 2005, the Post's lead editorial asserted that "the memos add not a single fact to what was previously known about the administration's prewar deliberations. Not only that: They add nothing to what was publicly known in July 2002."

But Hiatt was simply wrong in that assertion. Looking back to 2002 and early 2003, it would be hard to find any commentary in the Post or any other mainstream U.S. news outlet calling Bush's actions fraudulent, which is what the "Downing Street Memo" and other British evidence revealed Bush's actions to be.

The British documents also proved that much of the pre-war debate inside the U.S. and British governments was how best to manipulate public opinion by playing games with the intelligence.

Further, official documents of this nature are almost always regarded as front-page news, even if they confirm long-held suspicions. By Hiatt's and the Post's reasoning, the Pentagon Papers wouldn't have been news since some people had previously alleged that U.S. officials had lied about the Vietnam War.

### **Not a One-Off**

In other words, Hiatt's Iraq War failure wasn't a one-off affair. It was a long-running campaign to keep the truth from the American people and to silence and even destroy critics of the war. The overall impact of this strategy was to ensure that war was the only option.

And, in that sense, Hiatt's history as a neocon war propagandist belies his current defense of fellow neocon pundits who are rallying opposition to the Iran nuclear deal. While Hiatt claims that his colleagues shouldn't be accused of "lusting for another war," that could well be the consequence if their obstructionism succeeds.

It has long been part of the neocon playbook to pretend that, of course, they don't want war but then put the United States on a path that leads inevitably to war. Before the Iraq War, for instance, neocons argued that U.S. troops should be deployed to the region to compel Saddam Hussein to let in United Nations weapons inspectors yet once the soldiers got there and the inspectors inside Iraq were finding no WMD, the neocons argued that the invasion had to proceed because the troops couldn't just sit there indefinitely while the inspectors raced around futilely searching for the WMD.

Similarly, you could expect that if the neocons succeed in torpedoing the Iran deal, the next move would be to demand that the United States deliver an ultimatum to Iran: capitulate or get bombed. Then, if Iran balked at surrender, the neocons would say that war and "regime change" were the only options to maintain American "credibility." The neocons are experts at leading the U.S. media, politicians and public by the nose to precisely the war outcome that the neocons wanted from the beginning. Hiatt is doing his part.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). You also can order Robert Parry's trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America's Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).**

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## Neocons Falsify Iraq War 'Lessons'

Having escaped accountability for the Iraq War disaster, U.S. neocons are urging the use of more military force in the Mideast, in line with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's demand to block the Iran nuclear deal. From their important

perches of power, these war hawks also twist the history of their catastrophic misjudgments, writes ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

It really rankles some people that Barack Obama was correct from the outset, before any unfolding of the history confirming he was right, that the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was a huge mistake. And one can understand how to some ears Mr. Obama's subsequent references to the Iraq War may have a grating "I told you so" quality.

Those most likely to be annoyed are the President's most fervent political opponents, who include most of those who were the most fervent promoters of the Iraq War. Possibly there also is some unspoken annoyance among those who fit into neither of these categories but who allowed themselves to be swept up in the pre-war militancy that the war promoters skillfully exploited.

These latter people include, as *Washington Post* editorial page chief Fred Hiatt reminds us, President Obama's Vice President and both of his secretaries of state, all of whom were among the majority of Democratic senators who voted, along with nearly unanimous Republican ranks, for the war resolution in 2002. Hiatt makes this observation in the course of acknowledging his own support for the war at that time and suggesting that the Iraq War ought not to be a "single-issue litmus test."

Hiatt is right that no one issue should be such a test, but meaningful distinctions can and should be made between those who actively promoted the invasion and those whose offense consisted instead of insufficient attention to the consequences of what the promoters were promoting or insufficient political courage to try to stop the train that was hurtling down the tracks toward war.

Moreover, correctness or incorrectness about the war today is not, as the headline of Hiatt's piece on the *Post's* op-ed page suggests, merely a matter of hindsight. Careful attention to the realities of Iraqi political culture and political demography provided ample basis for anticipating before the invasion the sorts of difficulties that would come after it, and multiple sources of expertise did anticipate those difficulties, but the war promoters ignored them.

Belief that the invasion was a good idea (and not just going along with it for the political ride) was rooted in destructive patterns of thought that Mr. Obama referred to the other day as a "mindset" that is also destructive when applied to other issues. Even if a past position on a single issue does not disqualify one as a source of policy advice, repeatedly exhibiting such patterns of thought ought to be a disqualifier.

Hiatt, giving himself a pass for his own support for the Iraq War, offers us a couple of “lessons” from the war that he says should be applied to the issue of the nuclear agreement with Iran. The most obvious lesson, he asserts, “is that intelligence on nuclear capabilities is notoriously unreliable.” Maybe many people see that as the most obvious lesson, but it is certainly not the most important one, given that , as I have discussed at length elsewhere , intelligence on Iraqi nuclear capabilities did not drive the decision to go to war at all.

I won’t repeat all the evidence that it did not, but suffice it to note that in the intelligence community’s comprehensive, annual unclassified statement of worldwide threats, and specifically the statement in 2001, the latest one before the war-selling campaign began, the possibility of an Iraqi nuclear weapon did not appear at all. It didn’t even make the cut of what the intelligence community considered to be worth mentioning in the statement.

Hiatt accuses President Obama of not taking Hiatt’s “lesson” to heart when the President expresses confidence that any Iranian cheating under the nuclear agreement will be caught. But regardless of whether one regards U.S. intelligence on such subjects as reliable or unreliable, any problem or challenge in following Iranian nuclear developments certainly would be no worse with the agreement than without it.

In fact, the ability to follow those developments will be substantially greater with the agreement. That gets to what is actually the most important lesson from the Iraq War about understanding a foreign state’s nuclear capabilities: that there is no substitute for on-site monitoring and inspection.

International inspectors were doing their job in Iraq in the weeks prior to the war. Their leaders expressed well-founded confidence that if they were permitted to keep doing their job they could reach accurate conclusions about what Iraq was or was not doing in the way of nuclear and other unconventional weapons. But they were not permitted to keep doing their job.

The Bush administration kicked them out of Iraq to make way for the invasion. The war-makers had already decided what they wanted to do and were not interested in hearing any findings from international inspectors.

The Iran agreement of today reflects a taking of the relevant lesson very much to heart by establishing the most comprehensive and intrusive international monitoring regimen ever applied to any nation’s nuclear program.

The rest of Hiatt’s piece seems to be saying that the usefulness of military force hasn’t been given a fair shake and that you never know when you might need

more of it. He argues that President Obama has not used it, or persisted in using it, enough. He gives Mr. Obama a well-deserved slap for the way Libya has turned out, but then contends that the problem there was in not committing enough "U.S. resources for postwar stabilization."

Apart from the fact that the Libya situation has never gotten to a *postwar* stage, this seems to assume that nation-building in a badly divided and violent society would somehow go more smoothly in Libya than it has in Afghanistan or Iraq. It likely would have gone even worse, even with more application of U.S. military force, given the vacuum left with the removal of Gaddafi's personalized rule.

The problem was not in any follow-up but rather in the initial decision to join in a military effort to topple the dictator, which, by the way, sent a very unhelpful signal to the Iranians and others, given that Gaddafi had reached an agreement with the United States and Britain to completely give up his unconventional weapons programs peacefully and to forswear international terrorism.

The notion of insufficient military follow-up leads Hiatt to recite one of the most persistent myths about the Iraq War: that the war was won at the time that George W. Bush left office and that Barack Obama snatched defeat from the jaws of victory by withdrawing U.S. troops too soon.

It is not surprising that this myth has been relied on as heavily as it has. For the fervent crowd that was pro-Iraq War and is now anti-Obama, the myth is a twofer: a way to attack Obama as well as a way to relieve the mountain of cognitive dissonance that comes from having thought the invasion of Iraq was a swell idea but then seeing the violent mess that resulted from the invasion.

It is remarkable how much purveyors of the myth express it in terms that are so patently divorced from reality. In a public debate in which I participated last year, the neocon pundit Bret Stephens stated that Iraq was "at peace" as of 2009. Hiatt's formulation is that at the time President Obama was withdrawing troops from Iraq, the country had achieved "unity and relative stability."

To speak of Iraqi unity at this time is a joke; the country was at least as fractured along ethnic and sectarian lines as it has ever been. And as for being at peace, the number of Iraqis killed in the continuing civil war in the year 2009 was around 5,000, which by way of comparison is more than the total number of U.S. troops killed there in eight and a half years of war.

Iraq's troubles are a direct consequence of the U.S. invasion. Toppling Saddam Hussein unleashed the civil war. The supposed alliance between Saddam and Al-

Qa'ida that was one of the war-selling themes was another myth, but once the United States invaded, Al-Qaeda in Iraq became a reality and evolved into what we know today as Islamic State or ISIS.

The "surge" of U.S. troops during the latter part of the Bush administration gets described by the myth-purveyors as a success, but as Peter Beinart aptly reviews that piece of history, it was not. It was a blatant failure regarding the objective of leading to political reconciliation among the contending Iraqi factions. It was a stopgap step, fortuitously coinciding with some other developments that reduced the intensity of the civil war, that enabled the war-makers in the Bush administration to slam shut the door on the mess they had created and to get out of town before it would be said that the war had been lost on their watch.

No one perpetuating these myths explains why there should be any reason to expect that keeping 10,000 or 15,000 or some such number of U.S. troops in Iraq for however long they would be there could have accomplished what 160,000 troops and more than eight years of war did not.

Nor is it explained how any of this constitutes a criticism of the Obama administration when it was implementing a troop withdrawal schedule that had been negotiated by its predecessor.

Now the Republican presidential candidate who is the front-runner for the nomination among those whose name is not Trump has joined in the promoting of the Iraq War myth. The twofer becomes a threefer, with the added motivation being that it is a way of attacking the front-runner for the other party's nomination, the idea being that she somehow should have done more to fix Iraq while she was secretary of state.

Or maybe it is a fourfer, given that it is a way of dealing with the political liability that association with his brother's war is for Jeb Bush. So expect to hear more of this in the coming months of campaigning.

Hiatt's concluding application of his "lesson" about military force to the Iran agreement is that insufficient brandishing by Obama of the threat of military attack means Iran has not made as many concessions at the negotiating table as it otherwise would have. The Iranians, upon hearing this sort of contention, probably wonder whether, as far as lessons from the Iraq War are concerned, most Americans think the way Hiatt is thinking and whether disinclination to start another Middle East war is just a matter of wimpiness on the part of Barack Obama.

Whether the Iranians wonder that or not, we should wonder why anyone should



expect that a threat of armed attack would make the Iranians any more inclined to accede to U.S. demands on points on which the Iranians have shown firmness for reasons of pride, sovereignty, credibility and internal politics. We should especially wonder that about a nation that endured what the Iranians endured with stoicism and determination for eight years the last time someone else attacked them.

Hiatt also needs to explain how threats of military attack are supposed to reduce, rather than increase, any remaining Iranian interest in developing a nuclear deterrent, the very purpose of which would be to ward off such attacks.

Yes, let us not establish one-issue litmus tests. But let's use the evidence from recent experience to identify where sound judgment has existed and where it has not. And as we draw lessons let's make sure they are the right ones.

**Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency's top analysts. He is now a visiting professor at Georgetown University for security studies. (This article first appeared as a [blog post at The National Interest's Web site](#). Reprinted with author's permission.)**

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## Escalating the Anti-Iran Propaganda

**Exclusive:** The Israel Lobby canceled summer vacations for its operatives in a desperate bid to stop the Iran nuclear deal, and U.S. neoconservatives are committing all their "experts" to the fight to keep alive their hopes for war with Iran, such as alleged weapons specialist David Albright, as Jonathan Marshall explains.

By Jonathan Marshall

The United States and five other powers that negotiated the nuclear deal with Iran based it on verification, not on trust. The media need to start applying to the same standard rather than trusting the often questionable claims of their favorite expert on nuclear proliferation, David Albright.

Albright, who is president of the Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security, has long been a loud and oft-quoted critic of Iran's nuclear intentions. His latest salvo was his widely reported [claim](#) that Iran is engaging in suspicious activity at Parchin, a military [facility](#) in northern Iran, that "could be related" to "sanitization efforts" to defeat verification efforts by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Albright's suspicions were buttressed by two anti-Iran-deal columnists who reported that the "U.S. intelligence community" was also studying recent photos of the site for possible evidence of clean-up work ahead of planned inspections. His claims were touted by the Washington Post's right-wing blogger Jennifer Rubin as one more reason to reject the Iran nuclear deal. The Post's neoconservative-leaning opinion page also gave Albright a column to repeat his assertions, and to ridicule as "mirthful" Iran's denials.

But credible experts with much more serious credentials than Albright have undercut his latest report along with many of his earlier warnings about Iran's nuclear plans. Needless to say, they have received much less media attention.

Albright's Aug. 5 report, a mere one page of text along with three photos, began by describing Parchin as a facility "that is linked to past high explosive work on nuclear weapons." That unqualified phrase should have concerned reporters right from the start.

Yes, there have been unproven claims that Iran tested *non-nuclear* high-explosive devices at Parchin, but they have been debunked by no less an authority than Robert Kelley, former director of the Department of Energy's Remote Sensing Laboratory and former director of the IAEA's nuclear inspections in Iraq. Moreover, IAEA found nothing amiss during two unrestricted visits to Parchin in 2005, though Iran has rebuffed its requests for return visits.

Albright's report then analyzed several recent satellite photos, which show something happening on the roofs of two buildings, several "possible oil spills," and a couple of vehicles, possibly including a bulldozer. In contrast, a photo taken before the signing of the agreement showed "little activity" and no vehicles. In addition, two new structures "of unknown purpose" had been erected since May. All of this pointed, in Albright's fevered imagination, to a "last ditch effort to try to ensure that no incriminating evidence will be found."

He offered not a shred of evidence to link the mundane visual clues to his dramatic conclusion. One wonders if any reporters actually looked at his photo evidence critically.

Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, stated in response that the activities at Parchin were related to road construction. Opponents of the deal "have spread these lies before," he added. "Their goal is to damage the agreement."

In his Washington Post column, Albright twisted Zarif's words to claim that he "chose to deny the visible evidence in commercial satellite imagery. Iran's

comments would be mirthful if the topic were not so serious." Of course, Zarif was disputing not the *imagery* but the tendentious *conclusions* that Albright drew from it.

Albright's conclusions were also disputed by Kelley, the American nuclear weapons scientist and inspector, who studied a much larger sample of satellite photos over the past five years and found no evidence of any unexplained activity. He also took issue with a subsequent Albright "imagery brief" calling suspicious attention to more than 20 cars parked between Parchin and a nearby dam.

"The 'parking lot of death' has been imaged dozens of times and there are clear patterns of passenger cars parked there," Kelley told Bloomberg News. "There have been no indicators of a change in Iranian activities of any significance – no earth moving or sanitization whatsoever."

Other experts also derided Albright's overheated conclusions. "Parchin is an active site and movement is inevitable," said Paul Ingram, executive director of the British American Security Information Council. "Attempting an impossible cleanup in full view of satellites and just before Congressional votes would be stretching conspiracy theories beyond breaking point."

Who should one believe? Expert nuclear inspectors like Kelley, or Albright, who apparently has no advanced training as a nuclear engineer or photographic interpreter?

Scott Ritter, the former chief United Nations weapons inspector and IAEA consultant, unloaded on Albright several years ago, saying he has "a track record of making half-baked analyses derived from questionable sources seem mainstream. He breathes false legitimacy into these factually challenged stories by cloaking himself in a rÃ©sumÃ© which is disingenuous in the extreme. Eventually, one must begin to question the motives of Albright and ISIS" (the unfortunate acronym of Albright's organization).

Ritter cited example after example of Albright peddling misinformation: "On each occasion, Albright is fed sensitive information from a third party, and then packages it in a manner that is consumable by the media. The media, engrossed with Albright's misleading rÃ©sumÃ© ("former U.N. weapons inspector," "Doctor," "physicist" and "nuclear expert"), give Albright a full hearing, during which time the particulars the third-party source wanted made public are broadcast or printed for all the world to see. More often than not, it turns out that the core of the story pushed by Albright is, in fact, wrong."

Ritter concluded his blast, "It is high time the mainstream media began dealing

with David Albright for what he is (a third-rate reporter and analyst), and what he isn't (a former U.N. weapons inspector, doctor, nuclear physicist or nuclear expert). It is time for David Albright, the accidental inspector, to exit stage right. Issues pertaining to nuclear weapons and their potential proliferation are simply too serious to be handled by amateurs and dilettantes."

Judging by the latest dust-up, Albright remains a media darling, able to garner headlines whenever he lobs new charges into the political battlefield. The issues at stake in the Iran nuclear deal, to echo Ritter, are simply too serious to be muddied by such irresponsible speculation. It's high time the media began subjecting Albright, and all quoted experts, to more careful verification of their credentials and claims.

[For more on Albright and other fake experts on Iran's nuclear program, see Consortiumnews.com's "[Israel Clears the Bench in Iran Fight.](#)"]

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## Congress' Test of Allegiance: US or Israel?

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has instructed the U.S. Congress to reject an international agreement constraining Iran's nuclear program and to humiliate the sitting U.S. president, thus testing where the primary allegiance of most members of Congress lies, with the U.S. or Israel, writes John V. Whitbeck.

By John V. Whitbeck

The choice facing members of the U.S. Congress in September's "disapproval" votes could scarcely be clearer and has little to do with the merits of the international agreement reached on July 14 with respect to Iran's nuclear program.

Whether one believes that there was a genuine risk of Iran attacking Israel with a nuclear weapon or, more sensibly, that there was a genuine risk of Israel attacking Iran with conventional or nuclear weapons (the real and only rational

reason for the mobilization of the European Union, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany on this issue), the "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action" reached in Vienna should vastly reduce the risk of a catastrophic war involving Iran and Israel.

Since this diplomatic agreement is obviously good news for the world, the UN Security Council has unanimously approved it and only one of the UN's 193 member states, Israel, is currently opposed to it.

The choice before members of Congress is thus a clear and simple one: Do they owe their primary allegiance and loyalty to the United States of America or to Israel?

The great majority of members of Congress have traditionally seen less personal career risk in favoring Israeli desires over American interests than in favoring American interests over Israeli desires. There has been good empirical evidence to support this self-serving calculation. Several prominent and patriotic American politicians have lost their reelection bids as a result of the perception that they put American interests ahead of Israeli desires, and it has become a truism in American politics that "no one has ever lost an election for being too pro-Israel."

However, the choice facing members of Congress has never been so clear-cut and consequential as in the imminent "disapproval" votes on the Iran nuclear agreement.

At first glance, it appeared that President Obama had outsmarted the Republican Congressional leadership by getting them to agree that approval of American participation in any Iran nuclear agreement would not require an inconceivable two-thirds majority of the Senate but, rather, only a post-veto one-third minority approval in one of the two houses of Congress.

However, particularly since the influential Democratic Senator from New York Chuck Schumer, poised to become the next Democratic leader in the Senate, has confirmed his personal allegiance to Israel and consequent intention to vote for "disapproval," it is by no means certain that even one third of one house of Congress will choose the United States over Israel.

What if Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu does defeat President Barack Obama in the American Congress? How might Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry react to a defeat more crushing and humiliating than any defeat ever suffered by any American president and secretary of state?

In Obama's case, one can envision three alternatives, one cowardly and two courageous:

1. He could accept his and his country's humiliation and retreat into irrelevance for the remaining 16 months of his term in office; or
2. He could go before the American people, announce that he has no desire to continue to represent a country in which more than two-thirds of the members of the legislative branch owe their allegiance to a foreign country and resign as president; or
3. He could seek patriotically to restore the independence and dignity of his country (or simply to take personal revenge against Netanyahu) by supporting or not vetoing a new application by the State of Palestine for full member state status at the United Nations and by supporting or not vetoing a UN Security Council resolution imposing meaningful sanctions on Israel until it withdraws fully from the occupied State of Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

In Kerry's case, one may hope that he would resign as secretary of state and run again for the Democratic nomination for president, this time with an America-First focus on restoring the independence and dignity of the United States.

Palestinians and those who seek some measure of justice for Palestine and the Palestinian people must view this remarkable spectacle with mixed emotions.

All the signs suggest that, if Obama "wins," even by a hair's breadth, he will immediately seek to "compensate" Israel for his unprecedented act of disobedience through a significant increase in the amount of America's annual tribute payment to Israel, through even deeper military largesse and cooperation and through continuing American diplomatic and political support at the United Nations and elsewhere.

However, if Netanyahu "wins," Obama just might finally do the right and decent thing for Palestine, the Palestinian people and the United States. To cite the ancient Chinese curse, we are living in interesting times.

**John V. Whitbeck is an international lawyer who has advised the Palestinian negotiating team in negotiations with Israel.**

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## Christianity and the Nagasaki Crime

Two of warfare's great crimes were inflicted when the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing hundreds of thousands of civilians and in the bitterest of ironies wiping out Nagasaki's Christian

community which had survived long-term Japanese persecution, writes Gary G. Kohls.

By Gary G. Kohls

Seventy years ago, an all-Christian bomber crew dropped a plutonium bomb over Nagasaki City, Japan, instantly vaporizing, incinerating or otherwise annihilating tens of thousands of innocent civilians, including a disproportionately large number of Japanese Christians. The explosion mortally wounded uncountable thousands of other victims who succumbed to the blast, the intense heat and/or the radiation.

At the time of the Nagasaki bombing following the first use of a nuclear bomb on Hiroshima just three days earlier the United States was regarded as the most Christian nation in the world. But it was a form of Christianity in which most churches were proponents of eye-for-an-eye retaliation, supported America's military and economic exploitation of other nations, or otherwise failed to sincerely teach or adhere to the ethics of Jesus as taught in the Sermon on the Mount.

In a cruel irony, prior to the bomb exploding nearly directly over the Urakami Cathedral at 11:02 a.m., Nagasaki was the most Christian city in Japan. The massive cathedral was the largest Christian church in the Orient.

The Christian U.S. airmen, following their wartime orders to the letter, did their job efficiently. They accomplished the mission with military pride, albeit with an astonishing number of near-fatal glitches along the way.

Probably most Americans would have done what the crew did if we had been in the shoes of the Bock's Car crew and if we had never seen, heard or smelled the suffering humanity that the bomb caused on the ground. After being treated as heroes in the aftermath, most of us like the crew would have experienced little or no remorse, though the action was retrospectively, almost universally regarded as a war crime.

Of course, the crew members knew few details about the top-secret bomb that they dropped. Some of the crew did admit that they had some doubts about what they had participated in after the bomb actually detonated. But none of them actually witnessed the horrific suffering of the victims up close and personal. "Orders are orders" and disobedience in wartime is severely punishable, even by summary execution, so the crew obeyed the orders.

### **Hard for Japan to Surrender**

It had been only three days since Aug. 6, 1945, when another U.S. bomber crew

had dropped another atomic bomb incinerating Hiroshima and leaving Japanese leaders uncertain precisely what had happened. When the Nagasaki bomb was dropped on Aug. 9, there was massive chaos and confusion in Tokyo, where the fascist military command was just beginning a meeting with the Emperor to discuss how to surrender with honor. The military and civilian leadership of both nations had known for months that Japan had lost the war.

The only obstacle to ending the war had been the Allied Powers insistence on unconditional surrender, which meant that the Emperor Hirohito would have been removed from his figurehead position in Japan and perhaps even subjected to war crime trials. That demand was intolerable for the Japanese, who regarded the Emperor as a deity.

The Soviet Union had declared war against Japan the day before (on Aug. 8), hoping to regain territories lost to Japan in the humiliating (for Russia) Russo-Japanese War 40 years earlier, and Stalin's army was advancing across Manchuria. Russia's entry into the war had been encouraged by President Harry Truman before he knew of the success of the atom bomb test in New Mexico on July 16.

But afterwards, Truman and his strategists knew that the Bomb could elicit Japan's surrender without Stalin's help. So, not wanting to divide any of the spoils of war with the Soviet Union and because the U.S. wanted to send an early Cold War message to Moscow that the U.S. was the new planetary superpower, Truman ordered the bomber command to proceed with using the atomic bombs as weather permitted and as they became available (although no more fissionable material was actually available to make a fourth bomb).

Aug. 1 was the earliest deployment date for the Japanese bombing missions, and the Target Committee in Washington, D.C., had already developed a list of relatively undamaged Japanese cities that were to be excluded from the conventional US Army Air Force fire-bombing campaigns (that, during the first half of 1945, had used napalm to burn to the ground over 60 essentially defenseless Japanese cities).

The list of protected cities included Hiroshima, Niigata, Kokura, Kyoto and Nagasaki. Those five cities were to be off-limits to the terror bombings that the other cities were being subjected to. They were to be preserved as potential targets for the new "gimmick" weapon that had been researched and developed in labs and manufacturing plants all across America over the several years since the Manhattan Project had begun.

Ironically, prior to Aug. 6 and 9, the residents of those five cities considered themselves lucky for not having been bombed as had the other large cities.



Little did the residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki know that they were only being temporarily spared from an even worse carnage in an experiment with a new weapon that could cause the mass destruction of entire cities that were populated with hundreds of thousands of live human guinea pigs.

### **The Trinity Test**

The first and only field test of an atomic bomb had been blasphemously code-named "Trinity" (a distinctly Christian term). That experiment had occurred in secrecy three weeks earlier at Alamogordo, New Mexico, on July 16, 1945. The results were impressively destructive, but the blast had just killed a few hapless coyotes, rabbits, snakes and some other desert varmints. That plutonium bomb at Alamogordo had been identical to the Nagasaki bomb.

Trinity also produced huge amounts of an entirely new type of rock that was later called "Trinitite," a radioactive molten lava rock that had been created from an intense heat that was twice the temperature of the sun.

On Aug. 6, a uranium bomb, nicknamed "Little Boy" (although first called "Thin Man" after President Franklin Roosevelt) was dropped on Hiroshima. Three days later, a B-29 Superfortress bomber (that had been "christened" Bock's Car) was loaded with a plutonium bomb code-named "Fat Man," partly because of its shape and partly to honor the rotund British Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

At 3 a.m. on Aug. 9, Bock's Car took off from Tinian Island in the South Pacific, with the prayers and blessings of the crew's Lutheran and Catholic chaplains. Barely making it off the runway before the heavily loaded plane went out over the ocean (the bomb weighed 10,000 pounds), Bock's Car headed north for Kokura, the primary target.

Japan's Supreme War Council in Tokyo still had no comprehension of what had happened at Hiroshima, so the members were not inclined to heighten their sense of urgency concerning the issue of surrendering. As they scheduled a meeting at 11 a.m. on Aug. 9, the council members were mostly concerned about Russia's declaration of war.

But it was already too late, because by the time the War Council members were arising and heading to the meeting with the Emperor, there was no chance to alter the course of history. Bock's Car flying under radio silence was already approaching the southern islands of Japan, heading for Kokura. The crew was hoping to beat an anticipated typhoon and the clouds that would have caused the mission to be delayed.

The Bock's Car crew had instructions to drop the bomb only on visual sighting. But Kokura was clouded over. So after making three failed bomb runs over the

clouded-over city and experiencing engine trouble on one of the four engines – using up valuable fuel all the while – the plane headed for its secondary target, Nagasaki.

### **The History of Nagasaki Christianity**

Nagasaki is famous in the history of Japanese Christianity. The city had the largest concentration of Christians in all of Japan. St. Mary's Cathedral was the mega-church of its time, with 12,000 baptized members.

Nagasaki was the community where the legendary Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier planted a mission church in 1549. The Catholic community at Nagasaki grew and eventually prospered over the next several generations. However it eventually became clear to the Japanese that the Catholic Portuguese and Spanish commercial interests were exploiting Japan. It only took a couple of generations before all Europeans and their foreign religion – were expelled from the country.

From 1600 until 1850, being a Christian in Japan was a capital crime. In the early 1600s, Japanese Christians who refused to recant their faith were subject to unspeakable tortures – including crucifixion. But after a mass crucifixion occurred, the reign of terror expired, and it appeared to all observers that Japanese Christianity was extinct.

However, 250 years later, after the gunboat diplomacy of U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry forced open an offshore island for American trade purposes, it was discovered that there were thousands of baptized Christians in Nagasaki, living their faith in secret in a catacomb-like existence, completely unknown to the government.

With this revelation, the Japanese government started another purge; but because of international pressure, the persecutions were stopped and Nagasaki Christianity came up from the underground. By 1917, with no financial help from the government, the revitalized Christian community had built the massive St. Mary's Cathedral in the Urakami River district of Nagasaki.

So it was the height of irony that the massive Cathedral – one of only two Nagasaki landmarks that could be positively identified from 31,000 feet up (the other one was the Mitsubishi armaments factory complex, which had run out of raw materials because of the Allied naval blockade) became Ground Zero for Fat Man.

At 11:02 am, during Thursday morning mass, hundreds of Nagasaki Christians were boiled, evaporated, carbonized or otherwise disappeared in a scorching, radioactive fireball that exploded 500 meters above the cathedral. The black rain that soon came down from the mushroom cloud contained the mingled cellular remains of many Nagasaki Shintoists, Buddhists and Christians. The theological

implications of Nagasaki's Black Rain surely should boggle the minds of theologians of all denominations.

Most Nagasaki Christians did not survive the blast. 6,000 of them died instantly, including all who were at confession that morning. Of the 12,000 church members, 8,500 of them eventually died as a result of the bomb. Many of the others were seriously sickened with a highly lethal entirely new disease: radiation sickness.

Three orders of nuns and a Christian girl's school nearby disappeared into black smoke or became chunks of charcoal. Tens of thousands of other innocent, non-Christian non-combatants also died instantly, and many more were mortally or incurably wounded. Some of the victim's progeny are still suffering from the trans-generational malignancies and immune deficiencies caused by the deadly plutonium and other radioactive isotopes produced by the bomb.

And here is one of the most cruelly ironic points: **What the Japanese Imperial government could not do in 250 years of persecution (i.e., to destroy Japanese Christianity) American Christians did in mere seconds.**

Even after a slow revival of Christianity since World War II, membership in Japanese churches still represents a small fraction of 1 percent of the general population, and the average attendance at Christian worship services across the nation is reported to be only 30 per Sunday. Surely the decimation of Nagasaki at the end of the war crippled what at one time was a vibrant church.

### **The Catholic Chaplain**

Father George Zabelka was the Catholic chaplain for the 509<sup>th</sup> Composite Group (the 1,500-man United States Army Air Force group whose only mission was to successfully deliver atomic bombs to their Japanese targets). Zabelka was one of the few Christian leaders who eventually came to recognize the serious contradictions between what his modern church had taught him and what the early pacifist church believed concerning homicidal violence.

Several decades after Zabelka was discharged from the military chaplaincy, he finally concluded that both he and his church had made serious ethical and theological errors in religiously legitimating the organized mass slaughter that is modern war. He eventually came to understand that (as he articulated it) "the enemy of me and the enemy of my nation is not an enemy of God. Rather my enemy and my nation's enemy is a child of God who is loved by God and who therefore is to be loved (and not to be killed) by me as a follower of a loving God."

Father Zabelka's sudden conversion away from the standardized violence-tolerant Christianity changed his Detroit, Michigan ministry around 180 degrees. His

absolute commitment to the truth of gospel nonviolence just like the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. inspired him to devote the remaining decades of his life to speaking out against violence in all its forms, including the violence of militarism, racism and economic exploitation.

Zabelka travelled to Nagasaki on the fiftieth anniversary of the bombing, tearfully repenting and asking for forgiveness for the part he had played in the crime.

Likewise, the Lutheran chaplain for the 509th, Pastor William Downey (formerly of Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota), in his counseling of soldiers who had become troubled by their participation in making murder for the state, later denounced all killing, whether by a single bullet or by weapons of mass destruction.

In Daniel Hallock's important book, *Hell, Healing and Resistance*, the author described a 1997 Buddhist retreat that was led by the Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh. The retreat involved a number of combat-traumatized Vietnam War veterans who had left the Christianity of their birth. The veterans had responded positively to Nhat Hanh's ministrations.

Hallock wrote, "Clearly, Buddhism offers something that cannot be found in institutional Christianity. But then why should veterans embrace a religion that has blessed the wars that ruined their souls? It is no wonder that they turn to a gentle Buddhist monk to hear what are, in large part, the truths of Christ."

Hallock's comment should be a sobering wake-up call to Christian leaders who seem to regard as important both the recruitment of new members and the retention of old ones. The fact that the U.S. is a highly militarized nation makes the truths of gospel nonviolence difficult to teach and preach, especially to military veterans (particularly the homeless ones) who may have lost their faith because of spiritually-traumatic horrors experienced on the battlefield.

### **Prevention, the Only Cure**

I am a retired physician who has dealt with hundreds of psychologically traumatized patients (including combat-traumatized war veterans), and I know that violence, in all its forms, can irretrievably damage the mind, body, brain and spirit. But the fact that the combat-traumatized type is totally preventable and oftentimes virtually impossible to fully cure – makes prevention really important.

The old saying that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure is especially true when it comes to combat-induced PTSD. And where Christian churches should and could be instrumental in the prevention of homicidal

violence (and the soul-destroying combat PTSD) is by counseling their members to not participate in it, as the ethics of the nonviolent Jesus surely guided the pacifist church in the first three centuries of its existence.

Experiencing violence can be deadly and sometimes it is even contagious. I have seen violence, neglect, abuse and the resultant traumatic illnesses spread through both military and non-military families – even involving the third and fourth generations after the initial victimizations.

That has been the experience of the hibakusha (the long-suffering atomic bomb survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) and their progeny and it has been the experience of the warrior-perpetrators (and their victims) who experienced the acts of killing in any war, not just WWII.

Years ago I saw an unpublished Veteran's Administration study that showed that, whereas most Vietnam War-era soldiers were active members of Christian churches before they went off to war, if they came home with PTSD, the percentage returning to their faith community approached zero. Daniel Hallock's sobering message above helps explain why that is so.

Therefore the church – at least by its silence on the issue of war – seems to be promoting homicidal violence, contrary to the ethical teachings of Jesus, by failing to teach what the primitive church understood was one of the core teachings of Jesus, who said, in effect, that "violence is forbidden for those who wish to follow me."

Therefore, by refraining from warning their adolescent members about the faith- and soul-destroying realities of war, the church is directly undermining the "retention" strategies in which all churches engage. The hidden history of Nagasaki has valuable lessons for American Christianity.

The Bock's Car bomber crew, like conscripted or enlisted men in any war, was at the bottom of a long, complex and very anonymous chain of command whose superiors demanded unconditional obedience from those below them in the chain. The Bock's Car crew had been ordered to "pull the trigger" of the lethal weapon that had been conceptualized, designed, funded, manufactured and armed by other entities, none of whom would feel morally responsible for doing the dirty deed.

As is true in all wars, the soldier trigger-pullers are usually the ones blamed for the killing and therefore they often feel the post-war guilt that is a large part of combat-induced PTSD. However, their religious chaplains, who are responsible for the morals of their soldiers, may share their guilt feelings. Both groups are down at the bottom of the chain of command, but neither group knows exactly who they are trying to kill or why.

The early church leaders, who knew the teachings and actions of Jesus best, rejected nationalist, racist and militarist agendas that are now the foundation of the modern national security agencies, the military-industrial complex and the war-profiteering corporations. As Christianity adapted to the needs of powerful leaders and empires, the teachings of Jesus were deformed into eye-for-an-eye retaliatory doctrines that have, over the past 1,700 years, enabled baptized Christians to willingly kill both Christians and non-Christians in the name of Christ.

**Gary G. Kohls is a retired physician who practiced holistic mental health care for the last decade of his career. In his practice he often dealt with the horrific psychological consequences of veterans (and civilians) who had suffered psychological, neurological and/or spiritual trauma during incidents of violence (including basic training and combat).**

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## The Disastrous Neocon Mindset

The neocon mindset, which envisions U.S. military force remaking the Mideast at the point of a gun or the warhead of a drone, has confronted a string of disasters and faces a new challenge from President Obama's successful diplomacy with Iran, but the mindset will likely survive, says ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

President Barack Obama's speech at American University was a thorough enough review of the issues that have come to surround the agreement to restrict Iran's nuclear program that any fair-minded listener who focuses on merits rather than politics would reach the conclusion, as Mr. Obama has, that completion of this agreement as being in U.S. interests was not a difficult decision or even close to being one.

But although the President's main purpose in the speech was to review the reasons this is the case and to beat back ill-guided attempts to destroy the agreement in the U.S. Congress, he made some more general points about the attitudes and beliefs that underlie those attempts and also underlay the launching of a disastrous war in Iraq 12 years ago. Here is how the President put it:

"When I ran for President eight years ago as a candidate who had opposed the decision to go to war in Iraq, I said that America didn't just have to end that

war – we had to end the mindset that got us there in the first place. It was a mindset characterized by a preference for military action over diplomacy; a mindset that put a premium on unilateral U.S. action over the painstaking work of building international consensus; a mindset that exaggerated threats beyond what the intelligence supported.

“Leaders did not level with the American people about the costs of war, insisting that we could easily impose our will on a part of the world with a profoundly different culture and history. And, of course, those calling for war labeled themselves strong and decisive, while dismissing those who disagreed as weak – even appeasers of a malevolent adversary.”

The comparison with the Iraq War is apt, and not only because some of the most enthusiastic promoters of that ill-fated expedition are today among the most vocal opponents of the Iran agreement. The same sort of thinking has led to each of those mistaken positions, and the President identified some of the elements of that thinking.

The preference for military action over diplomacy is indeed one of those elements, although the observation can be broadened a bit beyond a simple preference for one tool of statecraft over another. The attitude involves a preference for destroying things without thinking much about why people built whatever is being destroyed, or how people will react to the destruction. It involves a narrow focus on capabilities, and military force unquestionably is the instrument best able to destroy capabilities, and insufficient attention to intentions and motivations.

The preference for unilateral U.S. action and disdain for the judgments of most of the rest of the world is another of those elements, with the parallels extending even to some of the same major U.S. allies being the object of disdain. It was “old Europe” that became an object of contempt at the time of the Iraq War, a time when French fries became freedom fries.

Today the same old Europeans of France and Germany are being ignored by opponents of the Iran agreement even though they are among the parties who helped to negotiate the agreement. And the same is true of that very close U.S. ally, the United Kingdom; David Cameron is not John Boehner’s poodle (or Barack Obama’s), even if Tony Blair was George W. Bush’s.

What the President identified as the exaggeration of threats beyond what intelligence supports is another common element. The makers of the Iraq War launched their project despite judgments by the U.S. intelligence community that contradicted the war-makers’ mythical “alliance” between the Iraqi regime and al-Qa’ida, not to mention the community’s judgments about the mess likely to

ensue in Iraq after Saddam was overthrown.

Today, opponents of the agreement speak endlessly about what an Iran that supposedly is salivating over the prospect of getting a nuclear weapon could do to cheat, despite the intelligence community's repeatedly expressed public judgment that Iran has not decided to build a nuclear weapon and gave up whatever work it may have done on a weapon more than a decade ago.

This opposition attitude is remarkably similar to how the promoters of the Iraq War went on endlessly about what Saddam Hussein "could" do with unconventional weapons he was presumed to have, despite the intelligence community's public judgment that he was unlikely to use such weapons against U.S. interests or to give them to terrorists unless we invaded his country and started to overthrow his regime.

The belief in the ability of the United States to impose its will in the Middle East is certainly another common thread in the thinking involved, and it is not only a matter of faith in the efficacy of military force. The belief that a liberal democracy would easily fall into place in Iraq once Saddam was gone and if the United States so willed is of a piece with the belief that a "better deal" could be obtained once the current nuclear agreement is destroyed and if the United States so wills.

In each case there is obtuseness about how real human beings react to real events, whether it is reaction to the "birth pangs of democracy" in Iraq or to attempts to coerce a proud Iran.

Another element of this thinking that could be mentioned, but that President Obama did not explicitly do so, is a black-and-white perspective that tends to see the Middle East as starkly divided between good-guy allies and bad-guy adversaries, with Iran currently occupying the most prominent place in the latter camp.

Although the President did speak of the wisdom of making deals with one's adversaries, he did not fundamentally challenge this perspective, despite its incongruence with reality. That is probably understandable and forgivable, given the need for him to maintain enough political correctness about Iran (and about Israel) to get the nuclear agreement through the Congressional gauntlet and across the finish line.

"Mindset" is an appropriate term for the President to have used. That term implies persistence and difficulty in dispelling the thought patterns involved. If the nuclear agreement survives it will be a major blow against the kind of insalubrious thinking that the mindset represents. But the mindset itself will



survive.

It is rooted primarily in certain parts of the politically active American elite, especially the part that usually carries the label neoconservatism. And those parts exploit some similar strains of thinking that are spread more widely in the American public. That exploitation helps the mindset to survive, despite even a disastrous collision with reality such as the Iraq War.

**Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency's top analysts. He is now a visiting professor at Georgetown University for security studies. (This article first appeared as [a blog post](#) at The National Interest's Web site. Reprinted with author's permission.)**

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## Obama's Pragmatic Appeal for Iran Peace

**Exclusive:** President Obama defended the Iran nuclear deal and urged Americans to support this initiative for peace, but his choice of American University for the speech invited comparisons with JFK's famous words that "we all inhabit this small planet" and Obama fell far short of that standard, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Trying to rally public support for a diplomatic agreement to constrain Iran's nuclear program, President Barack Obama went to American University in Washington D.C., where in 1963 President John F. Kennedy gave perhaps his greatest speech arguing against the easy talk of war in favor of the difficult work for peace.

Obama's speech lacked the universal appeal and eloquent nobility of Kennedy's oration, but represented in a programmatic way what Kennedy also noted, that the details and deal-making of diplomacy are often less dramatic than the clenching of fists and the pounding of chests that rally a nation to war. Obama went through the pluses of what he felt the Iran deal would achieve and the minuses of what its rejection would cause.

Obama said congressional approval of the agreement would gain the narrow but important goal of ensuring that Iran won't get a nuclear weapon while congressional rejection would lead toward another war in the Middle East, thus adding to the chaos started by President George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq in 2003.

"Congressional rejection of this deal leaves any U.S. administration that is

absolutely committed to preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon with one option, another war in the Middle East. I say this not to be provocative, I am stating a fact," Obama said.

"So let's not mince words. The choice we face is ultimately between diplomacy or some form of war. Maybe not tomorrow, maybe not three months from now, but soon."

Obama also called out many of the deal's opponents, noting that many were vocal advocates for invading Iraq and that some are now openly acknowledging their preference for another war against Iran.

Obama said, "They're opponents of this deal who accept the choice of war. In fact, they argue that surgical strikes against Iran's facilities will be quick and painless. But if we've learned anything from the last decade, it's that wars in general and wars in the Middle East in particular are anything but simple.

"The only certainty in war is human suffering, uncertain costs, unintended consequences. We can also be sure that the Americans who bear the heaviest burden are the less-than-1 percent of us, the outstanding men and women who serve in uniform, and not those of us who send them to war."

### **Still a 'War President'**

Apparently seeking to establish his own credibility as a "war president," Obama also took note of how many countries he has launched military attacks in and against during his presidency:

"I've ordered military action in seven countries. There are times when force is necessary, and if Iran does not abide by this deal, it's possible that we don't have an alternative. But how can we, in good conscience, justify war before we've tested a diplomatic agreement that achieves our objectives, that has been agreed to by Iran, that is supported by the rest of the world and that preserves our option if the deal falls short?

"How could we justify that to our troops? How could we justify that to the world or to future generations? In the end, that should be a lesson that we've learned from over a decade of war. On the front end, ask tough questions, subject our own assumptions to evidence and analysis, resist the conventional wisdom and the drumbeat of war, worry less about being labeled weak, worry more about getting it right."

One might note that as worthy as those guidelines are, they have often been violated by the Obama administration, such as its dubious allegations against the Syrian government regarding the infamous sarin gas attack on Aug. 21, 2013,

and against Russia over the shoot-down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 in eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014. In both cases, Obama and his administration have kept from public view evidence that they claim to possess while decrying skeptics who have questioned the conventional wisdom.

But Obama did take to task the neoconservatives and other warmongers who have followed a pattern of exaggerating dangers to frighten the American people into support for more warfare:

“I know it’s easy to play in people’s fears, to magnify threats, to compare any attempt at diplomacy to Munich, but none of these arguments hold up. They didn’t back in 2002, in 2003, they shouldn’t now. That same mind-set in many cases offered by the same people, who seem to have no compunction with being repeatedly wrong.”

In conclusion, Obama added, “John F. Kennedy cautioned here more than 50 years ago at this university that the pursuit of peace is not as dramatic as the pursuit of war. But it’s so very important. It is surely the pursuit of peace that is most needed in this world so full of strife.”

### **Usual Iran Bashing**

Yet, while Obama made an impassioned case for a diplomatic solution to the Iran-nuclear dispute and defended the details of the agreement he also drifted back into the typical propagandistic Iran bashing that has become *de rigueur* in Official Washington.

Obama salted his praise for diplomacy with the typical insults toward Iran, portraying it as some particularly aggressive force for evil in the Middle East, juxtaposed against the forces for good, such as Saudi Arabia, the Gulf sheikdoms and Israel all of which have spread more violence and chaos in the Middle East than Iran.

In that sense, Obama’s speech fell far short of the statement of universal principles on behalf of humanity that was the hallmark of Kennedy’s speech on June 10, 1963, a declaration that was remarkable coming at a peak of the Cold War and almost unthinkable today amid the petty partisan rhetoric of American politicians. In contrast to Obama’s cheap shots at Iran, Kennedy refrained from gratuitous Moscow bashing.

Instead, Kennedy outlined the need to collaborate with Soviet leaders to avert dangerous confrontations, like the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Kennedy also declared that it was wrong for America to seek world domination, and he asserted that U.S. foreign policy must be guided by a respect for the understandable interests of adversaries as well as allies. Kennedy said:

“What kind of peace do I mean and what kind of a peace do we seek? Not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war. Not the peace of the grave or the security of the slave. I am talking about genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living, and the kind that enables men and nations to grow, and to hope, and build a better life for their children, not merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women, not merely peace in our time but peace in all time.”

### **Standing Up to Cynics**

Kennedy recognized that his appeal for this serious pursuit of peace would be dismissed by the cynics and the warmongers as unrealistic and even dangerous. But he was determined to change the frame of the foreign policy debate, away from the endless bravado of militarism:

“I speak of peace, therefore, as the necessary, rational end of rational men. I realize the pursuit of peace is not as dramatic as the pursuit of war, and frequently the words of the pursuers fall on deaf ears. But we have no more urgent task.

“Too many of us think it is impossible. Too many think it is unreal. But that is a dangerous, defeatist belief. It leads to the conclusion that war is inevitable, that mankind is doomed, that we are gripped by forces we cannot control. We need not accept that view. Our problems are manmade; therefore, they can be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings.”

And then, in arguably the most important words that he ever spoke, Kennedy said, “For in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children’s futures. And we are all mortal.”

Kennedy followed up his AU speech with practical efforts to work with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev to rein in dangers from nuclear weapons and to discuss other ways of reducing international tensions, initiatives that Khrushchev welcomed although many of the hopeful prospects were cut short by Kennedy’s assassination on Nov. 22, 1963.

Kennedy’s AU oration was, in many ways, a follow-up to what turned out to be President Dwight Eisenhower’s most famous speech, his farewell address of Jan. 17, 1961. That’s when Eisenhower ominously warned that “In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes.”

Arguably no modern speeches by American presidents were as important as those two. Without the phony trumpets that often herald what are supposed to be “important” presidential addresses, Eisenhower’s stark warning and Kennedy’s humanistic appeal defined the challenges that Americans have faced in the more than half century since then.

Those two speeches, especially Eisenhower’s phrase “military-industrial complex” and Kennedy’s “we all inhabit this small planet,” resonate to the present because they were rare moments when presidents spoke truthfully to the American people.

Nearly all later “famous” remarks by presidents were either phony self-aggrandizement (Ronald Reagan’s “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down that wall” when the wall wasn’t torn down until George H.W. Bush was president and wasn’t torn down by Mikhail Gorbachev anyway but by the German people). Or they are unintentionally self-revealing (Richard Nixon’s “I am not a crook” or Bill Clinton’s “I did not have sexual relations with that woman.”)

Obama has yet to leave behind any memorable quote, despite his undeniable eloquence. There are his slogans, like “hope and change” and some thoughtful speeches about race and income inequality, but nothing of the substance and the magnitude of Eisenhower’s “military-industrial complex” and Kennedy’s “we all inhabit this small planet.”

Despite the practical value of Obama’s spirited defense of the Iran nuclear deal, nothing in his AU speech on Wednesday deserved the immortality of the truth-telling by those two predecessors.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). You also can order Robert Parry’s trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America’s Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).**

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## Bolton’s Creative Attack on Iran-Nuke Deal

The neocon foes of the Iranian nuclear accord are reaching for any argument imaginable but few have been as creative as John Bolton, a longtime enemy of the

UN who fears the Iran deal might somehow erode the principle of Security Council vetoes, notes ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

As implacable opponents of the nuclear agreement with Iran continue to scramble for any argument that has a chance of helping to shoot the deal down, a prize for originality ought to go to John Bolton for a new idea he tries out on us in a New York Times op-ed.

The idea involves sanctions, and it involves the United Nations. Bolton got a recess appointment in the George W. Bush administration as ambassador to the United Nations for a little more than a year, although it would be more accurate to describe his role then as ambassador *against* the United Nations. One of Bolton's more notable comments about the global organization was that if ten stories were removed from the 38-story U.N. Secretariat building, "it wouldn't make a bit of difference."

It should not be surprising that the posture of Bolton, hard-core neocon that he is, regarding sanctions against Iran is that the more of them there are, and the longer they can be kept imposed on Iran, the better. And part of his opinion piece is about the possibility, as he sees it, that any lifted or suspended international sanctions would not be reimposed with sufficient certainty and swiftness in the event of any Iranian violation of the agreement.

One could reasonably think that one aspect of the agreement about which Bolton would *not* be complaining is the procedure for dispute resolution whereby if any party to the agreement believes a violation has occurred and the matter has not been resolved at other levels, it would take a positive vote of the U.N. Security Council for any further lifting of sanctions.

In other words, the bias is in favor of *not* lifting sanctions, and sanctions against Iran would stay in place as long as anyone who has the power to stop Council action wants them to stay in place. The subtext for the writing of this provision is that if the United States believes that Iranian behavior warrants a halt to sanctions relief, it will get its way even if Russia or China (or Europeans hungry for economic deals with Iran) want sanctions relief to continue.

But, says Bolton, and here is his original notion, there is a "hidden danger" in this for America. "By concocting a procedure that elides the Russian or Chinese vetoes," Bolton writes, "Mr. Obama has surreptitiously accomplished a prized objective of the international left, which always disapproved on principle of the veto power.

“Through 70 years of United Nations history, one lodestar emerges clearly: Washington’s only immutable protection has been its Security Council veto. Mr. Obama’s end-run around the veto poses long-term risks that far outweigh whatever short-term gain is to be had from boxing in Russia and China now.”

Set aside any search for the “international left” that supposedly has been waging a 70-year campaign against Article 27 of the U.N. Charter and reflect on a couple of other things. One is that far from representing any weakening of “Washington’s only immutable protection,” the provision Bolton is criticizing is a recognition of, and bowing to, U.S. veto power.

Even if the United States were to stand entirely alone in its interpretation of an alleged Iranian violation and everyone else on the Council wanted sanctions relief to continue, the United States could use its veto and sanctions would stay in place. If Bolton were to have his former job back, one could picture him, mustache twitching, in the Council chamber, casting his lonely “no” vote to stop giving any further sanctions relief to the perfidious Iranians.

In his op-ed Bolton is being more solicitous of Russian and Chinese veto power than U.S. veto power. It is odd for an American, and a neocon at that, to frame things that way. But we needn’t feel sorry for the Russians and Chinese; they were parties to the negotiation that produced the agreement with Iran. Far from being end-runned by President Obama, Russia and China participated in writing the very provision that Bolton is knocking.

Bolton then tries to make a comparison with the “Uniting for Peace” procedure during the Korean War, in which recourse was made to the General Assembly to get around a Soviet veto of any action on the subject by the Security Council. But the comparison isn’t valid at all. No one is talking about taking any compliance issues on the Iran agreement to the General Assembly. And what happened during the Korean War was, quite unlike the Iran agreement, very much an end run around the Soviets, who strenuously opposed both the procedure and any U.N. involvement in the war.

Perhaps there are three takeaways from this strange offering from Bolton. One is the comic relief we can get from such a bizarre argument.

A second is validation of the wisdom of those in the U.S. Congress who opposed the confirmation of someone who doesn’t know, or doesn’t care, about such distinctions as the one between positive and negative action by the Security Council, and who demonstrably was unfit to represent the United States before the preeminent global organization.

The third is the conclusion that resort to sophistry such as this demonstrates

that the die-hard opponents of the Iran agreement really are short on valid arguments.

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## Confronting a Very Dark Chapter

This week marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a very dark chapter of human history, the U.S. incineration of tens of thousands of Japanese civilians by dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a war crime that has been rationalized in popular U.S. history, writes Gary G. Kohls.

By Gary G. Kohls

August 6, 2015, is the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima, a civilian city that had minimal military value despite the claims of President Harry Truman when he announced the event to the American people.

An estimated 80,000 innocent civilians plus 20,000 weaponless young Japanese conscripts died instantly in the Hiroshima bombing raid. Hundreds of thousands more suffered slow deaths and disabilities from agonizing burns, radiation sickness, leukemia, anemia, thrombocytopenia and untreatable infections. Another shameful reality was the fact that 12 American Navy pilot POWs, their existence well known to the U.S. command prior to the bombing, were instantly incinerated in the Hiroshima jail on that fateful day.

The Japanese survivors and their progeny suffered a fate similar to the survivors and progeny of America's "Atomic Soldiers," who were exposed in the line of duty to the hundreds of nuclear tests in the 1950s and 1960s or to the depleted uranium that the U.S. military has used in the two Gulf Wars. These groups were afflicted with horrible radiation-induced illnesses, congenital anomalies, genetic mutations, immune deficiencies, cancers and premature deaths.

The whole truth about the Hiroshima slaughter the first of only two cases of nuclear bombs being dropped in wartime, with the second coming only three days later at Nagasaki has been heavily censored and mythologized ever since. In 1945, war-weary Americans accepted the propaganda that the bombings were necessary to shorten the war and prevent what U.S. officials claimed could be the loss of a million U.S. soldiers during a November 1945 invasion of Japan.



On Aug. 9, 1945, the U.S. military dropped the second atomic bomb on the equally defenseless city of Nagasaki, which no longer had any military value to Japan. "Fat Man," the plutonium bomb named after British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, was detonated before the Japanese leadership fully understood what had happened at Hiroshima.

The premeditated killing of so many civilians would be defined by the Nuremberg tribunal in the context of Germany's actions as an international war crime and a crime against humanity. Of course, the reason that the United States wasn't sanctioned for Hiroshima and Nagasaki as Germany was for the Jewish Holocaust and other atrocities was that America was the victor and the occupier and thus was in charge of making and enforcing the rules in the post-World War II international order.

So, the official War Department-approved, highly censored version of the end of the war in the Pacific was added to an ever-lengthening list of myths that we Americans have been continuously fed by our corporate-controlled military, political and media opinion leaders. In the process, the gruesomeness and cruelty of war has been cunningly propagandized so that we consumers of information see only the glorification of American militarism.

My high school history teachers all seemed to be ex-jocks who weren't athletically talented enough to make it into the professional ranks. The main chance for them to play games for pay was to join the teaching profession and thus be available to coach high school athletics. American history was of secondary importance in many small town high schools. Thus, my classmates and I "learned" our lessons from some very uninspired, very bored and/or very uninformed teachers who would rather have been on the playing field.

In my coach's defense, the history books that they had to teach from had been highly censored in order to promote patriotism; and so we "learned" that most everything that the "noble" British colonizers and "honorable" U.S. empire-builders ever did in the history of warfare was self-sacrificing, democracy-promoting and Christianizing – and that everything their revolutionary colonial victims did was barbaric, atheistic and evil. Anybody who resisted colonial oppressors was treated as a terrorist.

It was from these history books that we learned about the "glorious" end of the war against Japan via nuclear incineration. Probably everybody in my high school, including myself, swallowed the post-war propaganda hook, line and sinker.

Of course, I now realize that my classmates and I, just like most other Americans (including the volunteer or conscripted members of the military), have

been naive victims of “lies our history teachers taught us.” In their defense, those teachers had been misled in their own schooling by equally mis-informed teachers who got their information from a variety of dis-informers who wrote the books: and those authors were the war- and empire-justifying militarists and assorted uber-patriotic pseudo-historians who had been duped into believing the myth of American exceptionalism.

Not included in that group of true believers were the 50,000 WWII American soldiers, members of the “Greatest Generation,” who in many cases logically and understandably deserted or went AWOL during their war service, a reality that also has been conveniently censored out of our consciousness.

### **Post-War Japan**

One of General Douglas MacArthur’s first acts after taking over as Viceroy of Japan was to confiscate or otherwise destroy all the photographic evidence documenting the horrors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He imposed total censorship over journalists who wanted to report to the world about what had really happened at Ground Zero, again proving the old adage that “the first casualty of war is truth.”

Embedding journalists in the U.S. military so that only America-friendly reportage happened wasn’t the original idea of General Stormin’ Norman Schwarzkopf in Gulf War I.

In 1995, the Smithsonian Institution was preparing to correct some of the 50-year-old pseudo-patriotic myths about the Pacific War by staging an honest, historically-accurate display dealing with the atomic bombings from the Japanese civilian perspective.

Swift, vehement and well-orchestrated condemnations directed at the Smithsonian historians’ plans to tell unwelcome truths about war came from right-wing pro-war veterans organizations, the GOP-dominated Congress at the time, and other militarist groups (such as House Speaker Newt Gingrich’s paymaster Lockheed Martin, one of many war-profiteering merchants-of-death multinationals whose profits and products depend on Congressional and Pentagon largesse).

Gingrich threatened to stop federal funding of the Smithsonian, thus forcing it to censor-out all of the contextually important parts of the real story. And so the pseudo-patriotic myths about Hiroshima and Nagasaki continue to be preserved to this very day.

So, we historically illiterate Americans are blocked, again and again, from learning historical truths about the American Empire – and the control that the military and multinational corporations have over it. Anything that might shake

voter confidence in or incite grassroots revolution against – the unelected ruling elites, the Pentagon or the conscienceless transnational corporations (that control our two major party politicians, the mainstream media and the “invisible hand of the market”) is verboten.

The Smithsonian historians did have a gun to their heads, but in the melee, we voters failed to learn an important historical point, and that is this: the war in the Pacific could have ended in spring 1945 without the need for the August atomic bombings, and therefore there might have been no Okinawa bloodbath that senselessly doomed thousands of American Marines and Japanese soldiers.

And there would have been no need for an American land invasion of Japan in November. Indeed, in the 1980s, top secret records were revealed that the contingency plans for a large-scale U.S. invasion (planned for no sooner than Nov. 1, 1945) would have been unnecessary. However, to the victors go the spoils, and the American victors were the ones running the war crimes tribunals and determining the content of my history text books.

### **Japan Seeking Surrender**

American intelligence agencies, with the full knowledge of President Franklin Roosevelt’s and President Harry Truman’s administrations, were fully aware of Japan’s search for ways to honorably surrender months before Truman gave the fateful order to incinerate Hiroshima.

Japan was working on peace negotiations through its ambassador in Moscow as early as April of 1945, with surrender feelers from Japan occurring as far back as 1944. Truman knew of these developments because the U.S. had broken the Japanese code even before Pearl Harbor, and all of Japan’s military and diplomatic messages were being intercepted. On July 13, 1945, Foreign Minister Togo wrote: “Unconditional surrender (giving up all sovereignty, including the deposing of Emperor Hirohito) is the only obstacle to peace.”

Truman’s advisers knew about these efforts and that the war could have ended through diplomacy by simply conceding a post-war figurehead position for the emperor (who was regarded as a deity in Japan). That reasonable concession was refused by the U.S. in its demand for unconditional surrender, which announced at the 1943 Casablanca Conference between Roosevelt and Churchill and then reiterated at the Potsdam Conference by Truman, Churchill and Soviet leader Josef Stalin. Still, the Japanese continued searching for an honorable peace through negotiations.

Even Secretary of War Henry Stimson said: “the true question was not whether surrender could have been achieved without the use of the bomb but whether a

different diplomatic and military course would have led to an earlier surrender. A large segment of the Japanese cabinet was ready in the spring of 1945 to accept substantially the same terms as those finally agreed on." In other words, Stimson knew that the U.S. could have ended the war before Hiroshima.

After Japan officially surrendered on Aug. 15, 1945 six days after the Nagasaki bomb General MacArthur allowed the emperor to remain in place as spiritual head of Japan, the very condition that forced the Japanese leadership to refuse to accept the earlier, humiliating, "unconditional surrender" terms.

So the two essential questions that need answering in order to comprehend what was going on behind the scenes are these: 1) Why did the U.S. refuse to accept Japan's only demand concerning its surrender (the retention of the emperor) and 2) why were the atomic bombs used when victory in the Pacific was assured?

There are a number of factors that contributed to the Truman administration's fateful decision to use the atomic bombs, including:

- 1) **Investment.** The U.S. had made a huge investment in time, mind and money (a massive \$2 billion in 1940 dollars) to produce three bombs, and there was no inclination – and no guts – to stop the momentum.
- 2) **Revenge.** Like many Americans, the U.S. military and political leadership had a tremendous appetite for revenge because of the Pearl Harbor "surprise" attack. Mercy wasn't in the mindset of the U.S. military or the average American Christians and their churches. The missions against Hiroshima and Nagasaki were accepted as necessary, with no questions asked, by most of those folks who only knew the sanitized, national security state version of events. Most Americans wanted to believe the cunningly-orchestrated propaganda.
- 3) **A "use it or lose it" mentality and scientific curiosity.** The fissionable material in Hiroshima's bomb was uranium. The Trinity test bomb (exploded on July 16, 1945) and the Nagasaki bomb were plutonium bombs. Scientific curiosity was a significant factor that pushed the project to its deadly completion. The Manhattan Project leaders were curious. "What would happen if a city was leveled by a single uranium bomb?" "What would happen if plutonium was used?" With the war against Nazi Germany (the original intended target) over, the most conscientious scientists felt that the bombs should not be used against civilian targets but they lost out in the internal debate.
- 4) **"Orders are orders."** Actually, the military decision to drop both bombs had been made well in advance of August 1945. Accepting the surrender of Japan prior to their use was not an option if the experiment was to go ahead. It should be obvious to anybody that the three-day interval between the two bombs was

unconscionably short if the purpose of the first bomb was to force immediate surrender. Japan's communications and transportation capabilities were in shambles, and no one, not the Japanese high command, not even the U.S. military, fully understood what had happened at Hiroshima. (It is a fascinating fact that the Manhattan Project had been so top secret that even MacArthur, commanding general of the entire Pacific theatre, was kept out of the loop – until July 1.)

**5) The Russians.** Stalin had proclaimed his intent to enter the war with Japan 90 days after V-E Day (Victory in Europe Day, May 8, 1945), which would have been two days after Hiroshima was bombed. Indeed, Russia did declare war on Japan on Aug. 8 and was advancing eastward across Manchuria when Nagasaki, ironically the center of Japanese Christianity, was incinerated.

Certainly Russia still felt the sting of the humiliating defeat and the loss of territory from the disastrous Russo-Japanese War of 1905 when the Russians were beaten by upstart Japan. Ego-bloated nation-states have long memories, especially when they lose an argument, lose a fight or are embarrassed in public. Witness the 150-year-old enduring devotion of white segregationists to the Confederate flag or consider the rabid right-wing, sociopathic neo-Nazis all around the world in their devotion to Adolf Hitler and the symbol of fascism, the Swastika.

### **Spoils of War**

The U.S. didn't want Japan surrendering to the Soviet Union with the Soviets getting a share of the spoils of war. The Soviet Union was soon to be one of only two world superpowers – and therefore a future enemy of the United States. So the first "messages" of the Cold War were sent by the U.S. to the USSR on Aug. 6 and 9, 1945.

The Soviets didn't receive the spoils of the Pacific War that they had anticipated, and the two superpowers were instantly mired in the multi-trillion-dollar stalemated nuclear arms race and the multitude of proxy wars that regularly risked the total extinction of humanity.

But somehow most of us still hang on to our shaky "my country right or wrong" patriotism, desperately wanting to believe the myths that say that the war-profiteering corporate elite (and the politicians, military leaders and media talking-heads who are in their employ) only work for peace, justice, equality and liberty, supposedly "making the world safe for democracy," but really for predatory capitalism.

Our understanding of Aug. 6 and 9, 1945, is just another example of the brain-washing that goes on in all "total war" political agendas, which are accompanied

by the inevitable human death and destruction that is euphemistically labeled “splendid slaughter,” “collateral damage” or “friendly fire.”

Among the other censored out realities of American wars include what really happened in the U.S. military’s participation in the destabilize-and-conquer campaigns and coups d’etat in Ukraine, Honduras, Venezuela, Libya, and bloody invasions and/or occupations of Korea, Iran, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Lebanon, Granada, Panama, the Philippines, Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Haiti, Colombia, Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc, etc.

This list doesn’t necessarily cover the uncountable secret Pentagon/CIA covert operations and assassination plots in the rest of the world, where scores of “sovereign” nations have been coerced into allowing the building of American military bases (permission lavishly paid for by bribes or threats of economic or military sanctions).

It might already be too late to effectively confront the corporate hijacking of liberal democracy in America. It might be too late to successfully bring down the arrogant and greedy ruling elites who are selfishly dragging our planet down the road to destruction. The rolling coups d’etat orchestrated by the profiteers of what I call Friendly American Fascism may have already accomplished their goals.

But I suppose there is always hope. Rather than being silent about the destabilizing conflicts that the warmongers are provoking all over the planet (with the very willing assistance of Wall Street, the Pentagon, the weapons industries and their lapdogs in Congress), people of conscience need to start learning the whole truth of history, despite the psychological discomfort that they may feel (cognitive dissonance) when the lies that they had been led to believe can’t be believed any more. We need to start owning up to America’s uncountable war crimes that have been orchestrated in our names.

And so the whistle-blowers among us need to rise up in dissent, go to the streets in protest and courageously refuse to cooperate with those sociopathic personalities that have gradually transformed America into a criminal rogue state.

Like Nazi Germany or Fascist Japan, rogue nations throughout history have been eventually targeted for downfall by the billions of angry, fed-up, suffering victims who live both inside and outside its borders. That fate awaits America unless its leaders confess their sins and promise to join the peace-loving human race.

Doing what is right for the whole of humanity for a change, rather than just

doing what is profitable or advantageous for our over-privileged, over-consumptive, toxic and unsustainable American way of life, would be real honor, real patriotism and an essential start toward real peace.

**Dr. Kohls writes a weekly column for the Reader Weekly, an alternative newsweekly magazine that is published in Duluth, Minnesota. Many of his columns are archived at [http://duluthreader.com/articles/categories/200\\_Duty\\_to\\_Warn](http://duluthreader.com/articles/categories/200_Duty_to_Warn).**

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