

Iraq Redux in the Making? US Rhetoric on Iran Brings Back Memories of 2003

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Sometimes you wake up in the morning and it's 2003 all over again. That was the year when the United States embarked on its catastrophic course of intervention in Asia. It was at least somewhat justified in invading Afghanistan to eliminate al-Qaeda but then made the mistake of sticking around to fix the country, a repair job that has lasted sixteen years and counting with no end in sight. And it was also the time when the neoconservatives who were then controlling the Pentagon and White House decided that it was necessary to go after Iraq.

As Baghdad in no way threatened the United States, and everyone who had examined the actual evidence knew that to be the case, a false narrative about Saddam Hussein had to be contrived. The White House claimed that Iraq was supporting al-Qaeda, that it was seeking uranium to construct a nuclear weapon and that it was building gliders that could cross the Atlantic Ocean with cargoes of chemical and biological weapons.

None of that turned out to be true, but the piece de resistance of the go-to-war crowd was the presentation made by Secretary of State Colin Powell before the United Nations on February 5, 2003. With Central Intelligence Director George Tenet sitting behind him presumably to establish bona fides for the information that was about to be revealed, Powell detailed how Iraq was preparing and concealing from inspectors weapons of mass destruction, was avoiding disarming and was colluding with al-Qaeda. It was all a lie, intended only to make a minimal case to the U.N. that increasing the military pressure on Iraq was a supportable, indeed a necessary, policy. One month later **President George W. Bush** called on **President Saddam Hussein** to resign based on his failure to comply with U.N. demands and, when he did not do so, launched an invasion of Iraq.

America's current United Nations Ambassador **Nikki Haley** is no **Colin Powell** either in terms of intellect or credibility, but she did try to act like him [when she spoke](#) on December 14th in front of a sparsely attended press conference that was focused on a much larger US television audience. Haley displayed parts of what she claimed to be fragments from an Iranian-sourced missile that was allegedly used in an attack initiated by Houthi "rebels" and directed against the Saudi capital Riyadh. Haley denounced what she described as Tehran's "increasing military role" all around the Middle East. She claimed hyperbolically

"It's hard to find a conflict or terrorist group in the Middle East that doesn't have Iran's fingerprints all over it,"

and warned that Washington will “build a coalition to really push back against Iran and what they’re doing.” To give weight to her message, she pointed at the fragments and said

“They are allowing missiles like this to be fired over to innocent civilians.”

Haley’s blinkers, or ignorance, enable her to avoid any consideration of the US-supported war being waged by the Saudis against Yemen which has directly claimed upwards of 5,000 civilian lives while also introducing both famine and cholera to the Yemeni people. A major part of the Yemeni suffering has been inflicted by US manufactured munitions being dropped or fired by the Saudis during hundreds of sorties, many of which are directed against civilian targets. Direct involvement by Washington has also included supplying Riyadh with intelligence and aviation fuel.

Unfortunately, Haley is not alone. The United States is maintaining a military presence in Syria, even though ISIS has been defeated, to be able to threaten any developing Iranian permanent presence in the country. It is doing so even though it is in Syria illegally. Israel has also said it will take military action, presumably supported by Washington, if Iran establishes any military bases. The *Wall Street Journal* [reports that](#) the administration will not allow “Iran and its proxies to be able to establish a presence in Syria.” **Donald Trump**, during his successful electoral campaign, repeatedly denounced Iran, and his foreign policy team, including Generals **James Mattis** and **H.R. McMaster**, as well as CIA **Director Mike Pompeo**, are all unrelentingly hostile to Tehran, as are the pathologically pro-Israel Congress and mainstream media. Are we about to see Iran on center stage in a performance of *Iraq Redux*? Quite likely.

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