

Neocons Push Israeli-Saudi Alliance

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Jackson Diehl, deputy editorial page editor of the Washington Post.

Early U.S. presidents warned against the dangers of “entangling alliances,” prescient advice that the neocons want President Obama to ignore amid demands from Israel and Saudi Arabia that America tie itself up in the endless and bloody sectarian conflicts of the Middle East.

American neocons are rallying to the new Israeli-Saudi alliance by demanding that President Barack Obama engage more aggressively against the two countries’ foes in the Middle East, thus “bolstering Israeli and Saudi confidence,” as the Washington Post’s deputy editorial-page editor Jackson Diehl declared.

For years, the Washington Post has served as Official Washington’s neocon flagship, bristling in support of every hawkish demand for U.S. intervention in the Mideast, most notably assembling a flotilla of misguided consensus in support of President George W. Bush’s 2003 invasion of Iraq and then pounding any American skeptics who dared emerge over the horizon.

Diehl’s [column](#) on Monday represented an extension of the neocons’ knee-jerk support of Israeli interests to those of the Saudi monarchy, Israel’s new secret friend. Diehl hoisted the banner of this odd-couple alliance in excoriating President Obama for letting down these two “allies” as they maneuver to crush what’s known as the Shiite crescent extending from Iran through Iraq and Syria to the Hezbollah strongholds in Lebanon.

In sync with the regional interests of Saudi Arabia and Israel, Diehl argued that the United States should toughen up its military posture in the Middle East with the goal of “reshaping conditions on the ground,” specifically going after Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria and damaging the new Iranian government of President Hassan Rouhani, or in Diehl’s words, “weakening Assad [and] degrading Iranian strength.”

Diehl added, “That work could be done without deploying U.S. troops, but it would be hard, expensive and require a lot of presidential attention.” Presumably, Diehl wants the U.S. military to launch those cruise missiles that were poised to “degrade” Assad’s regime in late August, and he hopes the U.S. diplomatic corps will rebuff Iran’s overtures for a diplomatic settlement over its nuclear program.

Like other neocons, Diehl takes Obama to task for giving peace a chance – by accepting Assad’s surrender of Syria’s chemical weapons, by seeking a negotiated settlement to the Syrian civil war (with Assad agreeing to send representatives to Geneva although the fractious Saudi-backed Syrian rebels and their jihadist allies still balk), by working with Iran

on a deal that would swap tighter international controls over Iran's nuclear program for sanctions relief, and by pressing for meaningful talks between Israel and Palestine toward a two-state solution.

Diehl deems this diplomatic offensive a series of "foreign policy fantasies," the title of his Washington Post op-ed. By pushing diplomacy over confrontation, Obama has, in Diehl's view, "driven a wedge between the United States and some of its closest allies [leaving] U.S. allies in the region – Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Turkey – marooned in a scary new world where *their* vital interests are no longer under U.S. protection.

"Israel and Saudi Arabia worry that Obama will strike a deal with Iran that frees it from sanctions without entirely extirpating its capacity to enrich uranium — leaving it with the potential to produce nuclear weapons. But more fundamentally, they and their neighbors are dismayed that the United States appears to have opted out of the regional power struggle between Iran and its proxies and Israel and the Arab states aligned with the United States.

"It is the prospect of waging this regional version of the Cold War without significant U.S. support that has prompted Saudi leaders to hint at a rupture with Washington — and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to talk more publicly than ever about Israel's willingness to act alone."

Fighting for Others

Diehl — like virtually all his compatriots in the mainstream U.S. news media — leaves out the detail that Israeli already possesses one of the most sophisticated though undeclared nuclear arsenals in the world, while U.S. intelligence agencies still conclude that Iran is not working on even a single nuclear bomb.

Diehl also doesn't bother to explain exactly why the American people should continue to expend vast amounts of money, prestige and blood to take sides in these interminable and often incomprehensible conflicts in the Middle East. The neocons simply behave as if every American should understand why a Shiite-dominated regime is so much more objectionable than a Sunni one; why an absolute monarchy like Saudi Arabia is preferable to a limited democracy like Iran; and why Israel has some fundamental right to possess East Jerusalem and other Palestinian lands.

For many Americans, it's perhaps even harder to understand why the likes of Jackson Diehl and his boss, editorial-page editor Fred Hiatt, continue to reign over the Washington Post's editorial section more than a decade after they helped guide the American people into the disastrous war in Iraq.

Not only has there been no accountability for their journalistic errors, including reporting Saddam Hussein's alleged possession of WMDs as "flat fact" when it was no fact at all, but also none for the ugly character assassination against war critics, such as former U.S. Ambassador Joseph Wilson whose wife, CIA officer Valerie Plame, saw her career destroyed when the Bush administration exposed her identity on the Post's op-ed pages and Hiatt then kept up a years-long campaign to destroy Wilson's reputation. [See Consortiumnews.com's ["Why WPost's Hiatt Should Be Fired."](#)]

Beyond no accountability at the Post, there appear to have been no lessons learned. Hiatt,

Diehl and the other neocons simply continue to place the policy desires of Israel, in particular, and now its new buddy, Saudi Arabia, above the foreign policy of the U.S. government and above the interests of the American people.

In the early years of the Republic, Presidents George Washington and John Adams warned against the dangers of “entangling alliances” that could draw the United States into faraway and expensive conflicts that would drain the Treasury and create unnecessary enemies. In his Farewell Address, Washington saw the risk of foreign influence coming not only from adversaries but from allies who would seek to twist American domestic opinion in their favor.

Washington warned: “The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none, or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities.”

Those early warnings seem particularly prescient today regarding the Middle East, given the extensive and expensive efforts by Israel and Saudi Arabia to win favor in Official Washington through lobbying, propaganda and financial favors doled out to many influential Americans.

While Israel’s skills at lobbying and propaganda are renowned, Saudi Arabia also can throw its weight around through its ownership of American debt, its ability to manipulate oil prices and its stakes in major U.S. corporations, including in the powerful Wall Street financial sector.

Now that these two longtime rivals, Israel and Saudi Arabia, have formed a behind-the-scenes alliance – joining together on key regional issues such as countering Iranian influence, subverting the Assad regime in Syria, and backing the military coup in Egypt – the Obama administration finds itself confronting an imposing phalanx of political and economic clout.

The ease with which neocons like Jackson Diehl lift up the banner of this new combination of Israeli-Saudi interests is a telling sign of the two countries’ impressive geopolitical muscle. [For more on this topic, see Consortiumnews.com’s “[Israeli-Saudi Alliance Slips into View](#).”]

*Investigative reporter **Robert Parry** broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his new book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). For a limited time, 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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