

Provocations in the Gulf of Oman: Will John Bolton Get His War on Iran?

By [Michael Welch](#), [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#), [Pepe Escobar](#), and [Yves Engler](#)

Global Research, June 16, 2019

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)
Theme: [GLOBAL RESEARCH NEWS HOUR](#),
[Media Disinformation](#), [Militarization and WMD](#), [Oil and Energy](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)
In-depth Report: [IRAN: THE NEXT WAR?](#)

"America's declared policy should be ending Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution before its 40th anniversary...Recognizing a new Iranian regime in 2019 would reverse the shame of once seeing our diplomats held hostage for 444 days." – John Bolton (January 15, 2018) [1]

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Coincidentally or not, America's 'maximum pressure' campaign against Iran began within a month of **John Bolton's** installment as National Security Advisor. On May 8th of 2018, **President Donald Trump** announced the U.S. was backing out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), otherwise known as the Iran nuclear deal negotiated by the U.S. under **President Barrack Obama** along with the other permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, Germany and the EU in July of 2015. Consequently, the sanctions imposed on Iran previous to the JCPOA were reinstated, and additional sanctions imposed by the end of the year.

In April of this year, the Trump Administration took the unprecedented step of declaring the Middle East country's military, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to be a terrorist organization.

Two weeks later, the Trump Administration ended the waivers it had extended to other countries which had to that point allowed them to escape sanctions for purchasing Iranian oil. The aim of this manoeuvre being to strangle the Iranian economy by preventing its ability to profit from the sale of its main source of revenue.

Two weeks after that, Bolton announced the deployment of an aircraft carrier strike group and Air Force Bombers to the Middle East as part of an effort to "send a clear and unmistakable message to the Iranian regime that any attack on United States interests or on those of our allies will be met with unrelenting force."

The following week, four tankers were attacked in the Persian Gulf. **Bolton** and **Secretary of State Pompeo** blamed Iran for the attacks.

America's choke-hold on Iran's economy continued to tighten with further sanctions on May

8th of this year, the anniversary of Trump's JCPOA pull-out.

Two weeks after that, **President Trump** ordered 1,500 additional troops to the Middle East, and was able to declare an emergency over Iran, allowing the White House to circumvent Congress, and move ahead with arms sales to allies Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates.

By early June, the administration started sending out conciliatory signals. The President indicated he, unlike his National Security Advisor, was not seeking regime change in Iran, and shortly afterwards, Secretary of State Pompeo said the U.S. was prepared to engage the Iranians "without preconditions."

Then, on Thursday June 13, two ships in the Gulf of Oman were fired upon. U.S. officials including Trump are pointing to Iran as the guilty party, although Iranian officials categorically deny the accusation.

Is the world now on a trajectory toward war? Perhaps even a world war? This daunting possibility is at the heart of this week's Global Research News Hour radio program.

First up, we hear from prominent Canadian intellectual **Michel Chossudovsky**. **Professor Chossudovsky**, while not completely ruling out the possibility of a "bloody nose" operation or other forms of economic warfare, argues that the U.S. cannot expect to fight and win a conventional Iraq style conflict in light of developments in strategic regional alliances over the last decade. **Chossudovsky** explains his reasoning in the first half hour.

Our second guest, **Yves Engler**, brings a Canadian angle to the conversation by outlining the enmity America's northern neighbour has expressed toward the Islamic Republic and that has not changed substantially since the more 'progressive' Trudeau Liberals took power in 2015. **Engler** details the factors influencing Canadian policy and how Canadians can hope to redirect relations in a more positive and peaceful direction.

Finally, the noted journalist and geopolitical analyst **Pepe Escobar** shares his insights into America's shifting attitudes toward the Iranian government, the recent attacks on ships in the Gulf of Oman, and what these developments say about divisions within the Trump Administration, and the prospect of a bloody war and economic depression rivalling anything the world has seen in the 21st century. (See transcript below.)

Professor Michel Chossudovsky is professor emeritus of economics at the University of Ottawa and the award-winning author of 11 books including his most recent *America's Long War Against Humanity*. He is also the founder and director of the Centre for Research on Globalization and editor of *Global Research*.

Yves Engler is one of Canada's foremost Canadian foreign policy critics and dissidents. He is the author of nine books on Canadian foreign policy including [The Black Book of Canadian Foreign Policy \(2009\)](#), and his most recent, [Left, Right: Marching to the Beat of Imperial Canada](#). His articles have appeared at [rabble.ca](#), [canadiandimension.com](#), and on his own site [yvesengler.com](#).

Pepe Escobar is a veteran Brazilian Journalist, geopolitical analyst and Correspondent at large for *Asia Times* based out of Hong Kong. He has written for *Tom Dispatch*, *Sputnik News*, and *Press TV*, and *RT*. His articles appear in a number of websites including *Global Research*, and is a frequent commentator on radio and tv.

(Global Research News Hour Episode 264)

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Transcript - Interview with Pepe Escobar, June 14, 2019.

Global Research: I want to refer to a recent article you mentioned about a devastating hammer that Iran can use against the United States in the event of an overt attack. And the US knows it. What have your sources disclosed about the Strait of Hormuz and Iran's capacity to fight back against an attack?

Pepe Escobar: Exactly. Look, I think the last article I published about it was after the Bilderberg meetings in fact. Because I was asked to investigate about at least some of the stuff they were discussing inside Bilderberg. I had a good banking source in fact. They did not disclose much. You know very well at Global Research how Bilderberg works-

GR: Chatham House Rules

PE: Exactly - you betcha. But I got some interesting information about how they were seeing the results of the European parliamentary elections as a sort of victory because now everyone in Europe is more or less the center-left and the center-right and the Greens are more or less on the same page, but from the point of view of Bilderbergers, there was a victory.

But then, I was asking, look I'm sure they discuss about China and Iran and all that, and my source was saying look, I cannot talk about this for obvious reasons. But then I got information from someone who's above Bilderberg, if you can put it this way. This is one of my best sources for years, in fact. American, the only thing I can say is American. It's not European, it's not Asian.

And he told me look, I know what they discussed about Iran because the key information is actually on Trump's desk. We all know that Trump doesn't read anything, but this information came supported by Wall Street guys. And I'm talking about the big guys. Blackstone, Sumner Redstone, Jamie Dimon from JP Morgan, Goldman Sachs people including Goldman Sachs projections, you name it. So, Trump must have seen it at least, or at least somebody must have read it to him in two or three minutes.

And I had written about this before. Now more...the studies are more detailed. It's about if, essentially, if the Strait of Hormuz is shut down, whatever the reason, it could be a false flag, like most probably what happened yesterday with the two tankers, the Norwegian tanker and the Japanese tanker transporting petrochemical products back to Asia, was not in the Strait of Hormuz, it was more on the open sea and the Gulf of Oman. If it was in the Strait of Hormuz, it would be much, much worse than what happened yesterday.

So the projections, including Goldman Sachs projections, if this happens and the Strait is closed, whatever the reason, because mostly insurers would not risk ensuring any vessel leaving the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz, and then further afield, the price of the barrel of oil in less than 24 hours would be over 100, after one day or two, 200, after a

week, 500, and there is some projections that after a while we would even reach 1000. And more than that, the implosion of Casino Capitalism as we know it, especially because of the...

And then we have different numbers. The derivatives, especially oil derivatives and other derivatives as well. There are all sorts of numbers concerning how many derivatives are out there, from 500 billion dollars, which is the official Bank of International Settlements figure to 2.5 quadrillion dollars, in fact. So, it gets very complicated. I had to fight with the... with Asia Times to say, look, you should publish all the figures, and they prefer to go for the lowest estimate. And one of my sources told me no, this is the... Swiss bankers know this figure, implying more or less his source was from the Bank of International Settlements, and he's adamant that it's 2.5 quadrillion dollars. So this means that the whole western economy would collapse in a matter of literally nanoseconds.

So, this was in my story for Asia Times. I also wrote about this for Consortium News and more, and for the past month or so, I discussed this with Iranians but not directly with the Revolutionary Guards. People who have access to IRGC information.

And always the IRGC are very secretive. They know, and they do have the necessary means to shut down the Strait, whichever way they want. And that's why I got from my Iranian sources this time, they are so sure that the Americans won't try anything stupid, because the Pentagon knows what Iran is capable of militarily. They know about all those missiles lining up the northern shore of the Persian Gulf on the Iranian side pointed at everything that moves in the Strait of Hormuz and also in the Gulf of Oman.

And that was the main reason that Trump wants to talk. And this was discussed at Bilderberg, every single thing that I'm telling you. Why? Because Mike Pompeo, at the last minute, scheduled that stop in Switzerland, especially in Bern, to talk to the president of Switzerland, but he also talked to the people at Bilderberg afterwards. Because Bilderberg was in Montreux, not very far. He went to Montreux as well. And they talk, and I'm sure they talk obviously no leaks whatsoever about it, but obviously Pompeo had to talk especially with Europeans who are terrified about this, and some Europeans knew about this information, because this information was circulated by bankers to European bankers as well. Bilderberg, everything connected. So this was the reason why Pompeo actually went to Switzerland at that time. This was an unscheduled stop; we have to remember this all the time.

So... but still we have the major problem on the table, which resurfaced yesterday. Are the neocons around Trump playing their last card to force him to do anything on a military side against Iran? Because if it's...I would say we still don't have a mega smoking gun, but it's more or less sure that what happened yesterday was a false flag. We still don't know exactly how it worked. But if that's the case, and Trump saying today, no if they close the Strait of Hormuz it's not going to be for long, which is a diversionist tactic, he knows, he should know by now what that would mean in terms of a disaster for the global economy.

So now we are way beyond this already, we are in a horrible stage where the United States has painted itself into a corner, saying, Pompeo saying, on the record, that to Iran they're responsible without examining any evidence at all. Today, very, very important, earlier today, since yesterday and earlier today, in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, guess who was in the same room? Putin, Modi, Xi, Imran Khan, and as an observer, Rouhani, President of Iran.

And obviously, they were discussing Iran. It was not on the final statement because Iran was an observer to the SCO. But they discussed, as far as, from my sources told me, it hasn't leaked a lot so far, but they did discuss Iran, and Rouhani made a solemn promise, which was brilliant in geo-economic terms, to all SCO member nations: You're going to have the... your companies, from any one of you, India, Pakistan, Russia, China, all the central Asians, all of your companies that invest the Iranian market, you're going to have the best possible conditions anywhere. So, there's going to be a lot of foreign investment from the SCO, companies from SCO member nations in the Iranian economy.

So, Iran, on the diplomatic side, they are doing very well. On the military side, as far as I know from my Iranian sources who know more or less in detail what the IRGC is doing, they tell me, look, they don't care anymore, whatever the Americans say. And this comes straight from the top. from Ayatollah Khamenei when he says that it's absolutely pointless to talk with the Americans. And Zarif is saying in a more diplomatic way to Ministers of Foreign Relations everywhere and leaders everywhere, including of course Putin and Xi. "We are ready for anything that happens, we want diplomacy of course, but if they ratchet up the pressure, we will ratchet up pressure from our side." It's getting to a very, very dangerous stalemate now, Michael.

GR: Yeah, I was wondering if you could address a point related... I guess you could call it palace intrigue in Washington. Because it's been suggested by fellow Consortium News contributor of yours, John Kiriakou, that John Bolton's days as national security advisor are numbered, given all the unwelcome provocations he's directing at Iran. At the same time, the United States, Trump, presumably doesn't want to have an unwinnable war on the eve of a major US presidential election campaign, nor does he want to bring down the global capitalist deck of cards. So, how... What options does he have? How can Trump avoid escalation with Iran without losing face at this point?

PE: Exactly, that's a very good question. John's information is very, very good. Because it ties with the information that I have from people in New York who do business with Trump. They told me the same thing. He's absolutely furious, in fact, with the way he was painted into a corner by Bolton especially. Pompeo not so much. Pompeo is expected to go around blasting Iran. But Bolton is actually trying to implement something practical or false flag style on the ground. And now, Trump himself is painting himself into a corner. He is already accusing Iran of what happened in the Gulf of Oman on the record. How is he going to backtrack from that? Of course, now he cannot backtrack without just saying oh, look I was wrong, okay, here's another tweet, I changed my mind!

So, it's...what we know for sure is that he doesn't want any kind of military scenario because he seems to know what that would imply. Considering the IRGC, their force, what they have, the missiles, and of course the financial angle, which is the derivatives crisis. At the same time, they keep ratcheting up the pressure under the so-called self-described maximum pressure campaign. And there's no possibility of dialogue because this, what happened yesterday, was... when Prime Minister Shinzō Abe was talking to Khomeini in Khomeini's office in Tehran, trying to defuse the whole situation, Japan as the intermediary, the messenger between Washington and Tehran, and this thing happens, this is completely crazy and anyone with an IQ higher than 12 can figure out that this doesn't make any sense at all. Why would Iran attack a Japanese-owned tanker... the minute their prime minister is talking to the leader of the... This is completely absurd.

GR: And talking to the prime minister on behalf of Trump.

PE: On behalf of Trump – exactly, exactly! He had a letter. He had a letter which probably was sent by team Trump to Ayatollah Khomeini. Khomeini, from the beginning, he said look there's nothing to talk about. In fact it's fantastic. Somebody came up with two different pictures. Abe had the letter with him, he put it on the table when they were talking, and after a while he removed the letter from the table. A graphic sign that Khomeini was not ready to read anything written by team Trump.

GR: Well, Pepe, I wish we had more time to discuss this, but, I know we've both got to go, but I want to thank you for lending your very knowledgeable voice to this critical discussion on breaking events.

PE: I hope this is helpful for everybody.

GR: We've been speaking with geopolitical analyst Pepe Escobar. He joined us from Paris.

-end of interview -

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Notes:

1. John Bolton (January 15, 2018), 'Beyond the Iran Nuclear Deal: U.S. Policy should be to end the Islamic Republic before its 40th anniversary', Wall Street Journal; <https://www.wsj.com/articles/beyond-the-iran-nuclear-deal-1516044178>

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