

# Trump has Placed the United States on a Collision Course with Iran

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***Donald Trump** has placed the United States on a collision course with Iran. Why? To begin with, Trump it seems, has a personal animus toward Iran similar to the one that Bush Jr. had against Saddam Hussein and Iraq. Bush Jr. it may be recalled, accused Saddam of having attempted to assassinate his father in Kuwait after the first Gulf War. There was of course, no evidence for this claim. That did not deter Bush from eventually prosecuting the 2003 war in Iraq with an eye toward vengeance.*

Trump's hostility toward Iran predated the presidential election of 2016 when he openly criticized Barak Obama for reaching the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or P5 + 1 agreement involving the United States, Britain, France, China, Russia plus Germany. Trump falsely claimed that the agreement would not prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon despite the rigorous inspection protocols that the agreement put in place to prevent such an occurrence. Trump also made the unfounded claim that the United States was paying Iran to make the agreement. In reality, the United States unfroze approximately \$120 Billion of Iranian assets world-wide, \$1.9 Billion of which were held in the United States.

Candidate Trump promised to withdraw from the agreement if elected president and once elected, made good on the promise in May of 2018 thereupon re-imposing stringent sanctions on Iran.

Since becoming president, Trump has taken other actions designed to antagonize Iran. His first visit to a foreign country as president was to Saudi Arabia in May of 2017 where he concluded a [\\$350 Billion arms](#) deal with the Saudi monarchy. Trump justified the deal as needed to counter the nefarious influence of Iran in the region. In July 2019, Trump upped the ante by announcing an additional [\\$8.1 arms deal](#) with the desert Kingdom to support its war in Yemen against a Shia Houthi insurgency that the United States accuses Iran of financing and arming without evidence.

The next hostile act occurred in April 2018 when Trump and his neoconservative Secretary of State Pompeo designated Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organization. It should be clearly understood that when the United States accuses Iran of supporting terrorism it means that Iran is supporting resistance to U.S. and Israeli domination in the region, a resistance the Americans and Israelis seek to criminalize.

Then in May 2019, Iran was accused of conducting [sabotage operations](#) on four commercial ships off the coast of the United Arab Emirates. In early May, the [U.S. announced deployment](#) of aircraft carriers, bombers and patriot missiles to the Middle East to 'deter

credible threats from Iran'. A month later, in June of 2019, Iran was accused of [attacking two oil tankers](#), one Norwegian and one Japanese, in the Gulf of Oman thereby significantly escalating tensions with the Islamic republic. The timing of the attack came as the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe was visiting Tehran in an attempt to diffuse tensions with the United States. Attacks on the oil tankers all give the appearance of false flag operations intended to provoke war with Iran as no credible evidence linking Iran to the strikes was ever presented.

Most perilously, the United States came extremely close to starting such a war when on June 20, 2019 Iran's Revolutionary Guard shot down a [U.S. Global Hawk spy drone](#) over the Strait of Hormuz precipitating a retaliatory bombing attack that Trump reportedly called off at the last minute. Trump drew back because he appeared hesitant to start yet another major conflict in the Middle East thereby jeopardizing his chances at re-election having promised as a candidate to end unnecessary and costly wars in that region.

With the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani, a genuinely heroic and beloved personage in the Islamic Republic and commander of the Quds (Jerusalem) forces in Syria and Iraq, Trump crossed the Rubicon. He did not draw back from the possibility of starting a war but instead breached a very dangerous red line that placed one million mourners in the streets of Tehran on January 5, 2020 and thousands of protesters on city streets around the world, including in the United States. Once again, why?

Diversion from impeachment is the easy answer. Historically, Trump has gained his most lavish support from the Washington establishment and the corporate media when ordering [military strikes](#) as he did on April 14, 2018 in Syria, falsely blaming President Assad of directing a chemical attack near Damascus. Striking Iran will not stop the pending impeachment trial in the Senate that Trump is expected to win, but it will remove the issue from the front pages of the media and allow Trump to present the trial as a distraction from the serious business of defending America.

More powerful forces are at work in the unfolding Iranian drama. Firstly, there are the neoconservatives who dominate the foreign policy establishment in the United States. The most visible representative of this group in the Trump administration is the aforementioned Mike Pompeo. The neoconservatives, it may be recalled, were the chief architects of the Iraq war in 2003, but more profoundly, articulated the vision of a 'New American Century' of domination after the fall of the Soviet Union. It was Paul Wolfowitz, at the behest of then Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney who wrote a document titled '[Defense Planning Guidance](#)' in 1992 that became known as the Wolfowitz Doctrine. This document would subsequently serve as the template for the [Bush Doctrine](#) of pre-emptive and unilateral war after 911.

Neoconservative doctrine now permeates planning throughout the entire foreign policy establishment, especially in the foundations, think tanks, and policy discussion groups that constitute its core institutions. For example, an influential study published by the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institute in 2016 contains a [detailed analysis](#) of strategies meant to subjugate Iran by providing an extensive evaluation of the various policy options available to the United States.

Secondly, there is Israel. The embattled Prime Minister of the apartheid state, [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), has been tirelessly maneuvering throughout his tenure to get America into a war with Iran. Representatives of the nuclear armed Israel fear that a nuclear enrichment

program in Iran can lead to the development of weapons that will shatter its nuclear monopoly in the Middle East thereby creating a deterrent to its relentlessly aggressive and expansionist behavior.

Additionally, for Israel, Iran represents the core of an 'arc of resistance' that stretches from Tehran, to Damascus, to Beirut, to Gaza. Iran, Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip are united in their opposition to Israeli domination of the Middle East and most passionately, the occupation of Palestine. Iran supports armed resistance struggles in Lebanon and Palestine that Israel seeks to destroy by using U.S. power, lives, and treasure. Israel has a formidable [lobby](#) that functions as an extensive network of individuals and organizations within the United States to advance this agenda unremittingly.

Thirdly, there is Saudi Arabia. The Saudi monarchy sees Iran, Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon as a 'Shia arc' to be defeated in the interests of Sunni domination of the region. As a consequence, the reactionary monarchy has provided a significant portion of [material support](#) for Daesh (ISIS) along with promoting its barbaric ideology of Wahhabism. Israel, Qatar and Turkey are also involved in arming Daesh.

Fourthly, there is a militarized national security state at the core of the American power structure that operates to protect an American global corporate empire. The U. S. military is extensively deployed throughout the Middle East and has at its disposal a terribly lethal arsenal ready for use. There is tremendous frustration within the corridors of power because of the failure of a [proxy war](#) launched by Barak Obama in 2012 to topple the Assad government in Syria, thereby isolating Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas. That war was engineered by deploying the Islamic foot soldiers of Daesh. Daesh was defeated in Syria at the hands of the Syrian Army, the Iranian Quds force, Hezbollah fighters and Russian air power.

Consequently, there is a profound desire to reverse the loss in Syria. The failure of proxy war makes conventional war more likely. The assassination of General Suleimani is particularly relevant in this context because he was the Iranian general who was instrumental in bringing about the defeat of the Daesh terror group in Syria and Iraq. As Iran has vowed revenge for the assassination, Trump tweeted what amounts to a terrorist threat of retaliation indicating the United States would hit 52 sites in Iran if its forces struck back at the United States, a number corresponding to the 52 American hostages seized during the 1979 Islamic revolution. Imperialism never forgets and it never forgives.

Congressional democrats, for their part, are angry at Trump for not consulting with them prior to ordering the attack on Suleimani. There is some merit in this position in that only Congress has the constitutional authority to declare war and under the War Powers Act of 1973 needs to be consulted within 48 hours of the use of military force and must grant approval within 60 days for its continuation. However, the democrats share Trump's hostility to Iran and will present no serious obstacle to war aside from procedural and rhetorical objections.

That obstacle must come from a re-energized international anti-war movement that has been dormant for far too long and must quickly awaken to stay the hand of an American terror state bent on destroying its adversaries.

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**Michel Chossudovsky**

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