

America against Iran: How Capitalism Stops at Nothing

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Abstract

Tension between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran has existed for decades, with the possibility of escalation being particularly strong since the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. During Donald Trump's presidency, the issue of whether Iran poses a threat to American national security has figured prominently and remains hotly-debated, especially given the recent U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. The purpose of this research paper is to determine the likelihood of war breaking out between the U.S. and Iran in the near future and the potential causes of such a war. In order to analyze these complex topics, theories on international relations must be applied to the data, which come from various books and internet articles. The conclusion that class system theory best explains the inevitability of an American-instigated war with Iran is based on a thorough examination of the given evidence. Although war would be devastating for the American and Iranian people, it would be entirely in line with U.S. foreign policy, which has served to enhance the wealth and power of the ruling capitalist class at the expense of ordinary people around the world.

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*Come you masters of war
You that build all the guns
You that build the death planes
You that build the big bombs
You that hide behind walls
You that hide behind desks
I just want you to know
I can see through your masks*

*You that never done nothin'
But build to destroy
You play with my world
Like it's your little toy
You put a gun in my hand
And you hide from my eyes
And you turn and run farther
When the fast bullets fly*

*Like Judas of old
You lie and deceive
A world war can be won
You want me to believe
But I see through your eyes
And I see through your brain
Like I see through the water
That runs down my drain*

*You fasten the triggers
For the others to fire
Then you set back and watch
When the death count gets higher
You hide in your mansion
As young people's blood
Flows out of their bodies
And is buried in the mud*

*You've thrown the worst fear
That can ever be hurled
Fear to bring children
Into the world
For threatening my baby
Unborn and unnamed
You ain't worth the blood
That runs in your veins*

*How much do I know
To talk out of turn
You might say that I'm young
You might say I'm unlearned
But there's one thing I know
Though I'm younger than you
Even Jesus would never
Forgive what you do*

*Let me ask you one question
Is your money that good
Will it buy you forgiveness
Do you think that it could
I think you will find
When your death takes its toll
All the money you made
Will never buy back your soul*

*And I hope that you die
And your death'll come soon
I will follow your casket
In the pale afternoon
And I'll watch while you're lowered
Down to your deathbed
And I'll stand o'er your grave
'Til I'm sure that you're dead*

*Bob Dylan
"Masters of War"
1963*

Music played a significant role in the mass protests of the Civil Rights and Vietnam War era and in the overarching counterculture movement of the 1960's and early 1970's. A leading musical voice of dissent during this time was Bob Dylan, whose "finger pointin' songs" helped bring people together in the struggle for peace, justice, and racial equality. "Masters of War," released soon before the rapid escalation of American involvement in Vietnam, is perhaps "the strongest indictment of war in popular music" (Zinn & Arnove, 2009). Using especially blunt and vehement language, Bob Dylan decries those in power who start wars and profit through the making and selling of vast quantities of weapons. These "masters of war" send their countries'

young people off to do the actual fighting, unknowing and uncaring of the true horrors and suffering that war will inflict upon their soldiers.

Given the large amount of warmongering in the U.S. in regards to Iran during the last two decades, it is imperative that one has a complete, uncensored knowledge of previous American wars. The Vietnam War is a defining example of disastrous U.S. foreign policy and bears many troubling parallels to America's actions in the Middle East. After more than eight years of fighting, the U.S. failed to defeat North Vietnam and the Viet Cong, lost over 50,000 soldiers, and was responsible for hundreds of thousands (if not millions) of civilian casualties in Southeast Asia. Many of these civilian casualties were the result of U.S. war crimes, such as the use of chemical weapons (e.g. napalm and Agent Orange), secret bombings, "free fire zones," massacres (e.g. the My Lai Massacre), and illegal executions (e.g. Operation Phoenix). It is important to note that the U.S. government's primary justification for the escalation to full-scale war in 1964 was the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, which was entirely fabricated by the Johnson administration in order to secure Congressional military funding and to bypass the Constitutional requirement of a declaration of war (Zinn, 2003).

Manufacturing a pretext for war is a dangerous precedent that has nonetheless been a component of recent U.S. foreign policy, notably the 2003 invasion of Iraq. As discussed later in this research paper, the U.S. government's claim that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) was false and helped cause a war that, like Vietnam, has resulted in war crimes and the devastation of an entire country (Kovalik, 2018). In January 2008, an incident occurred that resembled the events in the Gulf of Tonkin: "Iranian speed boats had allegedly swarmed between three large US warships heading into the Persian Gulf, broadcasting threatening messages that the US ships were about to explode and dropping small box-like

objects into the seas.” Despite serious uncertainties about what had actually happened, the Bush administration and the mass media were quick to sensationalize the incident as another example of the dire Iranian threat (Bennis, 2009). A key element of this alleged threat has been that, like Iraq under Saddam Hussein, Iran desires nuclear weapons, which this paper will show to be also false. Although the 2008 incident did not lead to war, it is entirely possible that something similar (some distorted Iranian provocation) will be the powder keg that touches off a war.

As the long history of American military intervention shows, the U.S. government often pursues courses of action abroad that run counter to the democratic ideals that America is supposedly founded upon and so cherishes. It is therefore necessary to use the various theories on international relations in order to address this disconnect and determine what drives U.S. policy, especially in relation to war. Class system theory makes a very convincing central argument that the socioeconomic system of capitalism is the main source of conflict around the world as it “both creates and perpetuates uneven development between advanced capitalist states and poor, less developed states.” Using their great political, economic, and military power, these advanced industrial states (ruled by an elite capitalist class) wage war in order to “increase their wealth and power through imperialist foreign policies” that “dominate and exploit poorer states.” According to class system theory, the primary function of Western governments has been to enrich capitalist elites and multinational corporations, which are key instruments of modern neo-imperialism (Genest, 2004). Despite propagandist ideas like American exceptionalism, the U.S. became the world’s #1 superpower through imperialist domination, with the Middle East being a frequent target and victim. War with Iran seems highly likely given that U.S. foreign policy is centered on preserving U.S. global hegemony and the vitality of the military-industrial complex. Iran, in spite of its peace efforts and compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal, will suffer dearly.

America's involvement in the Middle East is a complicated history that nevertheless offers great insight into how U.S. foreign policy works. As war with Iran looms, it is crucial to have a thorough understanding of America's relationship with Iran, a relationship whose true nature has been distorted by the U.S. government and mainstream media with the purpose of vilifying Iran. On the contrary, the U.S. has been the threat to Iranian national security, not the other way around. This threat began in 1953 with the overthrow of democratically-elected Prime Minister Mossadegh via a CIA-led coup codenamed "Operation Ajax." This coup, backed by the U.S. and UK governments, was carried out in retaliation for Mossadegh nationalizing Iran's oil industry, which had been under the control of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. Mossadegh's actions were influenced by a nationalist desire to end Western control of Iran's natural resources and use oil profits to help improve the lives of the Iranian people. According to the U.S., the coup was justified on the grounds that, with Mossadegh in power, Iran could become a communist state, whether through Iran's Tudeh communist party seizing control or USSR expansion. However, the U.S. government had concluded (privately) that that possibility was highly unlikely and instead removed Mossadegh with the purpose of acquiring Iranian oil and setting up a pro-Western government. This new government was headed by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran, who effectively was a Western puppet (Kovalik, 2018).

The Shah's autocratic regime was marked by economic hardship and widespread, brutal repression. Iran's oil industry returned to Western (primarily British and American) control, part of a larger effort to divert Iran's wealth from the people to Western and Iranian elites. The Shah's "White Revolution," launched in 1963, was a series of economic reforms centered on the policies of Western privatization and modernization. These reforms were disastrous for the Iranian people (Ahmed, 2003). The Shah, with strong backing from the West, maintained an iron

grip on Iran via the SAVAK, a secret police force created by the CIA and Mossad, Israel's national intelligence agency. The SAVAK terrorized the Iranian population through an extensive system of surveillance, censorship, and torture. Human rights abuses were committed on a large scale as the SAVAK imprisoned thousands and cracked down on students, communists, Muslim dissidents, and other supposed political radicals (Kovalik, 2018).

The inevitable consequence of the Shah's reign of terror was the 1979 Iranian revolution, which led to the creation of the theocratic Islamic Republic of Iran. As Kovalik (2018) argues, "it was the United States' own policies that made a revolution, and specifically an Islamic revolution, both possible and probable." Under the Shah, leftists and intellectuals were severely repressed, resulting in the people turning to Iran's Islamic clerics for leadership instead of secular political groups. One such cleric, Ruhollah Khomeini, had a longstanding history of popular support during the Shah regime and became the leader of the revolution and eventual Supreme Leader of Iran. Kovalik (2018) succinctly describes the 1979 revolution as a "consequence of the US coup against Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953, its subsequent support of the Shah and the dreaded SAVAK security forces ... and the United States' direct support of the Islamists in Iran over the secular left." The U.S. viewed the revolution as having "the potential to severely damage US hegemony in the Middle East." In other words, the Iranian revolution threatened Western economic interests and, as the U.S. feared, could inspire other Muslim countries to overthrow Western-backed dictatorships (Ahmed, 2003).

Soon after the Islamic Revolution, Iran became embroiled in an eight-year war with Iraq, which was led by the dictator Saddam Hussein. With Iran no longer being "an island of stability" (as described by President Jimmy Carter in 1978) or a "guardian of the Gulf," the U.S.

decided to mainly back the weaker Iraq during the war with the purpose of “keeping the fighting going for as long as possible and maintaining US power in the region.” On that basis, the U.S. provided significant support to Iraq in the form of weapons, training, funding, and military intelligence (Bennis, 2009). However, as Kovalik (2018) describes, the U.S. also sold weapons to Iran directly (the Iran-Contra affair), and “Israel sold Iran hundreds of millions of dollars of US-manufactured weapons during the Iran-Iraq war — Israel claims with full US consent and approval.” If conventional modern warfare was not horrific enough, the Iran-Iraq War featured the use of chemical weapons, with Iraq killing several thousand Iraqi Kurds and (by Iran’s account) 60,000 Iranians. The U.S. had supplied Saddam Hussein with these chemical agents, along with biological agents, and the technology needed to weaponize them. Iran “never retaliated against Iraq in kind for its chemical weapons attacks even though international law, and specifically the reservations to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, would have allowed for such retaliation.” According to Ayatollah Khomeini, the development and use of chemical weapons was forbidden under Islamic law (Kovalik, 2018).

The Iran-Iraq War ended in a stalemate that left both countries in ruin, yet they were still considered threats to U.S. interests in the Middle East. Specifically, the U.S. desired a permanent military presence in the Persian Gulf in order to expand its regional hegemony and economic interests, namely weapons and oil. Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990 (an invasion provoked by Kuwait at America’s behest) provided the perfect opportunity for the U.S. to achieve these goals via destroying Iraq and stationing troops in Saudi Arabia. After mercilessly bombing the entire country, the U.S. urged the Iraqi people to revolt against Saddam Hussein. However, in accordance with its core foreign policy objectives, the U.S. ultimately decided to not support this uprising, fearing that “an indigenous rebellion would replace Saddam only with another

nationalist leadership likely to be opposed to US/Western domination of the Persian Gulf.” With Saddam (who proceeded to brutally put down the revolt) still in power, the stage was set for the 2003 invasion of Iraq (Ahmed, 2003).

The 9/11 terrorist attacks had enormous impacts on the Middle East and led to the War on Terror and the consequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. On the basis that the Taliban (who ruled Afghanistan) was harboring Osama bin Laden and helping al-Qaeda, the U.S. decided to invade in 2001 and topple the Taliban, who up to that point had in fact been supported by the U.S. It was the U.S. that armed and funded the Mujahideen beginning in 1979, enabling them to take control of Afghanistan from the secular government, fight off the subsequent Soviet invasion, and later form the Taliban government. Often overlooked, Osama bin Laden (who founded al-Qaeda) was a Mujahideen leader. In regards to Iraq, the U.S. invasion in 2003 was launched on the grounds that Saddam Hussein possessed or even intended to possess WMDs, specifically chemical and nuclear weapons. Saddam’s chemical weapons “had been destroyed under UN supervision,” and Iraq was not pursuing a nuclear weapons program. In addition, the U.S. alleged that Iraq was supporting al-Qaeda, which was patently false. Just like the Vietnam War, Congress passed a resolution that allowed President Bush to invade Iraq without an official declaration of war (Kovalik, 2018). It should be noted that Iran (a mortal enemy of the Taliban and al-Qaeda) condemned the 9/11 terrorist attacks and was a major partner in the U.S.-led coalition that occupied Afghanistan and worked to install a new government. However, “the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist government, and the dissolution of the Iraqi army greatly empowered Iran.” The U.S. began to fear that Iraq, predominantly Shi’ite, would fall under the influence of Shi’ite Iran (Bennis, 2009).

The historical background on America’s relationship with Iran reveals that Iranians have

every right to despise the U.S. government and its foreign policy, which has been steering these two countries toward war for a long time. Therefore, it is crucial to understand what the foundation of U.S. foreign policy is. In reference to the George W. Bush administration, Krauthammer (2005) affirms “the spread of freedom to be the central principle of American foreign policy” and that “America is genuinely committed to democracy in and of itself.” Despite government and media rhetoric, U.S. foreign policy is synonymous with hypocrisy, not democracy. During the Cold War, the U.S. viewed the USSR as a global threat to democracy, yet carried out coups and backed right-wing governments and military Juntas in sovereign Latin American countries. Throughout the world, the U.S. has supported regimes known for human rights abuses and/or repression (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Israel) because of their strategic importance, such as having U.S. military bases (Selfa, 2005). It seems that the need to democratize mainly applies to nations that the U.S. views as threats (e.g. Iran) and is used as justification for military intervention, regime change, and economic imperialism. In regards to the Middle East, Hiro writes:

The history of the past six decades shows that whenever there has been conflict between furthering democracy in the region and advancing American national interests, U.S. administrations have invariably opted for the latter course. Furthermore, when free and fair elections in the Middle East have produced results that run contrary to Washington’s strategic interests, it has either ignored them or tried to block the recurrence of such events. (as cited in Selfa, 2005)

As U.S. foreign policy shows, war with Iran will not be waged with the actual purpose of spreading secular democracy, as some would argue. For instance, Krauthammer (2005) states that, “We should, for example, be doing everything in our power, both overtly and covertly, to

encourage a democratic revolution in Iran, a deeply hostile and dangerous state.” It is highly ironic that the U.S. supposedly wants democracy in Iran when it is directly responsible for the rise of Iran’s theocracy as a result of overthrowing Mossadegh and supporting the Shah.

As the #1 superpower since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. is driven to maintain this unipolar status at all costs, often acting unilaterally as “the world’s policeman” in order to secure its interests. However, the U.S. government does not enforce international law, instead it frequently breaks it (such as by committing terrorism) and ignores it if found guilty (e.g. *Nicaragua v. United States*) (Kovalik, 2018). The Middle East is a central part of America’s goal of global hegemony, with the foundation of U.S. foreign policy in the region being the Carter Doctrine. As Bennis (2009) writes:

US policy has consistently claimed the "right" to control strategic resources, especially oil, across the globe. In his January 1980 State of the Union address, President Jimmy Carter made clear that he deemed Persian Gulf—including Iranian—oil part of "the vital interests of the United States of America," and that any attack on that oil "will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."

The Carter Doctrine has shaped the Middle East policy of successive U.S. presidents (e.g. the Bush Doctrine) and provided the basis for the expansion of America’s military presence in the region. In 1991, President George H. W. Bush “announced the construction of a ‘New World Order’ which would be led by the United States” (Kovalik, 2018). In other words, the U.S. would continue its pursuit of using its military and economic power to advance Western interests, namely elite control of vital economic resources. In the Middle East, the U.S. and its allies have worked to keep the region subservient to these elite interests by preventing any threat to the “New World Order,” such as Iran.

Since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Iran has emerged as a potential regional hegemon in the Middle East. Given its large population and geographic size, oil reserves, and water resources, Iran is a serious challenger to U.S. and Israeli domination of the region. As a result, the U.S. has sought to demonize Iran and weaken it, both externally and internally. A strategy of the U.S. has been to use sectarian and cultural divisions within the Middle East in order to prevent the rise of nationalist movements. As the removal of Saddam Hussein and his nationalist Ba'athist government showed, the U.S. will not tolerate states who attempt to reduce Western influence (Ahmed, 2003). Middle Eastern divisions include Shi'ite versus Sunni, Arab versus Persian, and Muslim versus Jewish. During the Iraq War, U.S. government and military officials alleged (with little to no evidence) that Iran was waging a proxy war by arming Shi'ite militia in Iraq and was seeking to create a "Shi'a crescent" in the Middle East (Bennis, 2009). In addition, Iran has been vilified by the U.S. government and the mass media as being bent on destroying Israel. Like the U.S., it is actually Israel (backed by the U.S. and having an unsupervised nuclear arsenal) that has been a main threat to Middle East stability. Iran, with its long history of religious tolerance and acceptance of Jews, does not want to wipe out the Israeli people (Kovalik, 2018).

Another potential justification for war with Iran is that Iran sponsors terrorism, a claim that is highly debatable. Although it could be argued that Iran has supported groups (e.g. Hamas and Hezbollah) that have engaged in alleged terrorist actions, it should be noted that these two groups are "important political parties that have been democratically elected to majority and nearmajority positions in their respective parliaments" (Bennis, 2009). In addition, Iran, despite being labelled a leading state sponsor of terrorism, has been fighting al-Qaeda and ISIS (both of which arose due to U.S. blunders in the Middle East). Although the U.S. is also fighting ISIS, its goal (at the very least during the Obama administration and arguably under Trump) has been to

not completely destroy ISIS, thus weakening Iran through a proxy war in Syria.

What is certainly not debatable is that the U.S. has been supporting terrorists groups against Iran. In particular, the MEK has carried out bombings and other acts of terrorism inside Iran. Terrorism is one part of the U.S. plan of forcing regime change internally. For example, “In 2017, the United States spent over \$1 million in financing anti-government protests in Iran and in trying to convert spontaneous protests into a push for regime change” (Kovalik, 2018). Instead of supporting natural democratic movements in Iran (like the Green Revolution), the U.S. aims to install a regime that is favorable to American geopolitical and corporate interests. U.S. actions in this regard have been detrimental to the Iranian people and have caused more repression from hard-liners in the Iranian government.

Two key aspects of the conflict between the U.S. and Iran have been Iran’s nuclear program and the economic sanctions that have been devastating for the Iranian people. The U.S. government has long used the spectre of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons as a means to create fear in the American public and secure domestic political support for its warmongering policies. In 2002, President Bush declared that Iran, North Korea, and Iraq were members of an “axis of evil.” This comment would come to define the Bush administration’s relationship with Iran and helped lead to the election of hard-liner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as President of Iran in 2005 (Kovalik, 2018). Iran’s nuclear program was a central reason for the antagonism between the U.S. and Iran during this time. In 2007, the National Intelligence Estimate released a report backed up by all U.S. intelligence agencies that “made clear that Iran did not have a nuclear weapon, did not have a program to build a nuclear weapon, and was less determined to develop nuclear weapons than US intelligence agencies had earlier claimed.” Indeed, in 2005, Ayatollah Khamenei had even decreed (via a Fatwa) that the building and use of nuclear weapons went

against Islamic law. However, as a signatory of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Iran has a “legal right to produce and use nuclear power for peaceful purposes, including for energy production.” Despite this, Iran’s nuclear program (which was actually supported by the U.S. in the 1970’s during the Shah’s reign) has been viewed as a huge U.S. national security issue. During the Bush administration, plans were made to launch military strikes and even nuclear weapon strikes against Iran and its nuclear facilities. Israel also threatened to attack Iran. Had the U.S. carried out these “preventive attacks against a non-nuclear weapons state,” it would have been in flagrant violation of the NPT and international law (Bennis, 2009). The U.S. government, however, considers itself above international law.

Sanctions have been an integral part of the U.S. bid to isolate and undermine the Iranian government. According to Chomsky, the goal of these sanctions is “to provoke the Iranian leadership to adopt more repressive policies. Such policies could foment internal disorder, perhaps weakening Iran enough so that the United States might hazard military action” (as cited in Kovalik, 2018). It should be noted that prior to the escalation of sanctions under President Bush, Iran in 2003 made peace overtures to the U.S. in the form of a “Grand Bargain,” which addressed issues like Iran’s nuclear program, sanctions, and U.S. attempts at regime change. The Bush administration ignored this potential peace treaty and continued to increase its belligerent rhetoric. Western-imposed sanctions on Iran essentially amount to economic warfare, costing Iran billions in oil revenues and directly contributing to high unemployment and lowered standard of living for the Iranian people (Kovalik, 2018). Although the U.S. claims to want to help liberate the Iranian people from their oppressive government, its policies are intentionally designed to rip apart the fabric of Iranian society.

Donald Trump’s presidency and the U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal mark a

potentially catastrophic chapter in U.S. and Iranian relations. Iran is increasingly being put into a position where having a nuclear deterrent is the seemingly only option to protect itself against U.S. and Israeli aggression in the Middle East; Iran is practically surrounded by U.S. military bases. Similar to the fraudulent pretexts used for the Iraq War, the Trump administration is “making false claims about Iran’s ballistic missile program and about its role in Yemen” (Kovalik, 2018). In addition, Trump’s cabinet appointments are a major cause for concern. National Security Advisor John Bolton (who blatantly supports the MEK terrorist group) and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo are both war hawks on Iran, with Pompeo describing Iran as “the world’s largest state sponsor of terrorism” and “a thuggish police state and a despotic theocracy.” The perversity of the Trump administration’s policy on Iran is no more apparent than in Pompeo’s first public speech as Secretary of State on May 21, 2018. In his speech, Pompeo lambasted Iran for being the apparent cause of major Middle East problems (such as the wars in Afghanistan and Yemen) and declared that the U.S. must “deter Iranian aggression.” Furthermore, Pompeo justified the U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal on the basis that the deal would not protect Americans from some supposed Iranian threat (Boardman, 2018). Soon after Trump’s unilateral withdrawal from the deal (which Iran had in fact been fully compliant with in order to end crippling sanctions), Pompeo “warned that Iran would be hit with ‘the strongest sanctions in history’ if it did not bow to Washington’s demands.” These sanctions include the U.S. demand that countries completely cut off their imports of Iranian oil by November 2018 (Symonds, 2018).

Having at least half of the world’s proven crude oil reserves, the Middle East is therefore a critically important region. As the world’s preeminent industrialized power, the U.S. has been tightly connected to fossil fuels and bases its foreign policy around the control of these energy

resources. In relation to the Middle East and Iran, Bennis (2009) writes:

For a global power such as the US, the issue is not so much direct access to Iran's oil; the US doesn't need to import that much Iranian or indeed Middle Eastern oil in general for its own use. Far more important is maintaining control of Iran's and other countries' oil supplies: the ability to determine price and the quantity available, and to guarantee access to oil to favored friends and deny it to competitors.

The U.S. thus engages in neo-imperialism, using its vast military and geopolitical influence to enforce its claim of control of Middle East oil. While oil companies profit enormously (gaining substantial political power as a result), the people of the Middle East suffer the “resource curse”: frequent wars, authoritarian regimes, and low standards of living. The U.S., with its long history of interventions (Afghanistan, Iraq, etc.) and sizeable permanent military presence in the Middle East, is a primary source of the region’s problems. Another U.S. military intervention could be on the horizon in light of Trump’s proposed sanctions on Iran. Rainwater (2018) states, “if the U.S. succeeds in effectively shutting down Iran’s oil export industry, Iran may retaliate by shutting down the Strait of Hormuz.” In return, the U.S. might retaliate with military action.

Although Americans and Iranians alike would suffer immensely from a war, the military-industrial-Congressional complex (an iron triangle greased with crude oil) would not. U.S. wars in the Middle East have been immense boons to military contractors and the Pentagon, with the first Persian Gulf War being a prime example. The 1991 war against Iraq, which the U.S. had armed heavily in the 1980’s, was instigated by the U.S. in part to justify continued enormous Pentagon budgets in spite of the very recent collapse of the Soviet Union (America’s main enemy at the time). In addition, the war led to improved ties with many Gulf states, particularly Saudi Arabia. The basis of these improved ties was the military-industrial complex: “in the

ensuing decade the US sold \$43 billion worth of military assistance to Saudi Arabia, and another \$16 billion to Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates” (Ahmed, 2003). As a result of the war, the U.S. was able to increase its military presence in the region, enabling multinational corporations to build new military bases. Military contractors like Halliburton would only continue to become a greater part of U.S. war efforts.

In the 21st century, the U.S. remains the world’s #1 arms dealer and spends more on its military than most nations combined (including its major allies and rivals). Just like the oil industry, the arms industry has penetrated all levels of American government, especially the Pentagon. As Hartung (2016) writes:

In a typical sale, the U.S. government is involved every step of the way. The Pentagon often does assessments of an allied nation’s armed forces in order to tell them what they “need” -- and of course what they always need is billions of dollars in new U.S.-supplied equipment. Then the Pentagon helps negotiate the terms of the deal, notifies Congress of its details, and collects the funds from the foreign buyer, which it then gives to the U.S. supplier in the form of a defense contract.

Furthermore, arms companies employ tens of thousands of American voters working in facilities all across the country, helping to maintain Congressional support of excessive arms sales. The result of the arms industry’s success is that the U.S. is able to support other militaristic states like Israel and Saudi Arabia, which has been using American-made cluster bombs and other advanced weaponry in its horrific war in Yemen. In addition, as is frequently the case in the Middle East, U.S. weapons often end up in the wrong hands and are used against the U.S (e.g. Syria). However, this is all of no concern to the arms industry, which views the highly unstable Middle East as a “growth area” (Hartung, 2016). In other words, an increase in conflict in the

region, such as a U.S. war with Iran, would be good for business, and therefore good for America.

Even after well over a decade of continual U.S. military intervention in the Middle East, the U.S. government seems ready to begin another war, this time with Iran. If the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were not bad enough already, a war with Iran would be even worse. Although the U.S. could readily destroy a significant amount of Iran's military capabilities by an extensive bombing campaign, the war would nowhere near be over. As Farley states, "There is very little reason to suppose that anything other than an Iraq-style war would lead to regime change in Iran" (as cited in Perry, 2018). Despite these potentially dire military consequences, the U.S. seems bent on finding some pretext in order to justify a "pre-emptive war" against an "imminent threat" from Iran. However, all indications point toward such a war being actually "preventive" (like the Iraq War under the Bush Doctrine) and hence illegal by international law (Bennis, 2009). The U.S. accusations that Iran intends to acquire nuclear weapons, sponsors terrorism, is a threat to Israel, and threatens the national security of the U.S. and the stability of the Middle East are all false. In fact, it is the U.S. that is the main barrier to the beginnings of any sort of peace process in the Middle East; its policies have spread terrorism and cost thousands of American lives and countless more among the region's populations.

It is highly likely that war with Iran will come soon, not because the American or Iranian people want it, but because the U.S. government wants it. The American political process has been infected by capitalism and its imperialist extension, resulting in an entrenched government apparatus that represents the interests of an oligarchical ruling class, not the people. The U.S. has a long history of intervening in the poorer, developing areas of the world in order to advance its geopolitical and economic goals. These goals have not been to spread democracy or improve the

livelihood of people, but to enrich corporations and other members of the elite class. This is readily apparent in the case of America's conflict with Iran. The U.S. has consistently ignored the right of the Iranian people to self-determination, instead aiming to bring down the government and replace it with one friendly to America's brand of liberal democracy and America's desire to dominate the Middle East and its oil supply. If a war must be fought to accomplish this, then the U.S. government (much to the joy of the arms industry) seems prepared to do so. In order to prevent such a catastrophic war, Americans and Iranians must find common ground and unite in protest on an unprecedented international scale. Only then can we begin to stop the masters of war.

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