

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

TOPLINE TAKEAWAY

- *Bombing a school bus: The latest Saudi-UAE horror in Yemen encapsulates the bankruptcy of the Washington foreign policy establishment.*

RECENT ATROCITIES IN YEMEN HIGHLIGHT WHAT'S WRONG WITH U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

Last week's Debrief [focused](#) on how a few recent stories that emerged from the war(s) in Yemen highlight the fact that the U.S. relationship with so-called Gulf "allies" like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates run counter to our values and national security interests (writing for *The Nation*, Win Without War Policy Director Kate Kizer has more on this [here](#).)

But there's more that our unauthorized military involvement in Yemen can tell us about U.S. foreign policy writ large, namely, the bankruptcy of typical bipartisan consensuses in Washington on national security issues – particularly [counterterrorism](#) – DC's obsession with Iran, the military-industrial-congressional complex, and how alleged experts regularly drown out voices of moral clarity.

TRUMP DIDN'T START THE YEMEN PROBLEM

We sometimes forget that everything that's terrible didn't start with Donald Trump and, often, he's just exacerbated problems in our foreign policies left in tact by his predecessors. President Obama was the one who decided to provide U.S. military assistance to the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen, in part, to [mollify the Saudis](#) into acquiescing to the Iran nuclear deal (which obviously didn't work). Even then, [experts were calling him out](#) for it.

But even as it has become more clear -- even amongst some Republicans -- that in Yemen the United States is enabling potential war crimes, fueling the killing of civilians, and exacerbating the world's largest humanitarian catastrophe, bipartisan support for our role continues.

In March, ten Senate Democrats [joined](#) 45 Republicans to [defeat a measure](#) led by Sens. Bernie Sanders, Mike Lee, and Chris Murphy to cut off U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. Earlier, when Reps. Ro Khanna and Tom Massie, attempted to hold a similar vote in the House, they were forced to settle for a [non-binding measure](#) after [reportedly](#) running into the buzzsaw of leadership on both sides of the aisle. While there has been some [recent](#), much [welcome movement](#) from Democratic leaders, the fact remains that the House of

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Representatives has failed for years to do even the most basic level of oversight over America's endless wars.

IRAN! IRAN! IRAN!

The Trump administration ([with help from its allies in Washington](#)) has [repeatedly made the case](#) that one of its main goals in assisting the Saudi/UAE led war in Yemen is to confront Iran, who they claim is fighting a proxy battle there via the Houthi rebels.

Indeed, recall U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley's public relations stunt last year meant to bolster this case, charging, with [little evidence](#), that Iran was supplying the Houthis with missiles that were fired at Riyadh.

Besides the fact that the Houthis actually [are not a Hezbollah-like proxy](#) for Iran in Yemen (a fact that completely undermines this entire narrative and provides yet another data point to question our military involvement in Yemen), Gulf-funded think tanks and Gulf-hired K Street lobbyists have [successfully flamed](#) Iran-phobia in Washington to justify America's counterproductive misadventures in Yemen.

Rather than acknowledging the reality that Yemen is a low-cost, high reward engagement for Iran, which has successfully achieved its goal to overextend Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the U.S. in a civil war with no military solution, Washington appears willing to take the bait indefinitely.

EISENHOWER'S GHOST

We're all familiar with the military-industrial complex President Eisenhower famously laid out in the waning days of his presidency. And our war in Yemen is no exception. The defense industry is making [billions selling arms](#) to Saudi Arabia and the UAE [for their fight in Yemen](#), and their [lobbying](#) efforts help buy support for continuing America's role in it.

Indeed, it is the expansive presence of defense contractors across the country that has fed an overarching fear amongst members of Congress that we couldn't possibly stop selling these weapons because these sales are the best way to create jobs ([false](#)), the Saudis and UAE will start buying from Russia and China (perhaps we should let those countries be responsible for war crimes that [currently create severe anti-American sentiment in Yemen](#)), and voters don't care ([they do](#)).

COMMON SENSE DROWNED OUT

Hawks in Washington -- who are too often described as "experts" on foreign policy simply because they support any and all U.S. military adventures (*cough* [Lindsey Graham](#) *cough*) --

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routinely paint diplomacy advocates and opponents of illogical wars as naive. Hawks charge that war opponents are not sufficiently supporting our “allies,” or just don’t have all the right information to understand that war is the best course. Win Without War’s Policy Director laid this out in her [piece](#) in *The Nation*:

Proponents of maintaining an unquestioning alliance with the Gulf will say the United States **needs to look the other way because these states help the country fight terrorism**. But using countries like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates as the first line of defense against this nation’s perceived threats runs counter to US national-security interests, and worse, contrary to American values.

Indeed, so many Washington pundits and establishment politicians on both sides of the aisle are so fearful of losing these “friends” in the fight against terrorism that they willfully ignore [blatant evidence](#) that these countries’ [policies](#) actively undermine their own stated security interests and subvert the rationale for why America supposedly needs these countries as partners in the first place.

Graham himself personified this dynamic last year when he criticized Senators who wanted to block arms sales to Saudi Arabia because of the destruction those arms are causing in Yemen, claiming that Saudi is an ally and we need to support them.

“What Iran is trying to do is destabilize the Mid-East in unprecedented fashion, and our Arab allies are tired of it,” he [claimed](#). “And now’s the time to stand with them, with their imperfections, against Iran with their hostility.”

Missing from Graham’s criticism? The people of Yemen and the destruction our assistance is enabling that itself helps fuel the growth of groups like Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen.

- For a detailed breakdown of recent events in Yemen and congressional responses, click [here](#).

BURIED LEDES

Poor Donald Trump [says](#) he’ll have to go to Paris to watch the big machines make big noise. Indeed, [\\$92 million](#) did **seem like a lot to spend on blowing up Trump’s already over-inflated ego**.

The Trump administration is [setting up](#) an “Iran Action Group” (read: Iran War Group) at the State Department seemingly to make sure everyone knows it means business when it says Iran is bad. [Meanwhile](#), **the strategic malfeasance of Trump violating the Iran nuclear deal continues to multiply**.

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Top Trump aide Stephen Miller is [working quietly behind the scenes](#) to **eliminate the U.S. refugee program**.

As part of his push for peace on the Korean Peninsula, South Korean President Moon Jae-in [issued a bold proposal](#) for **broader economic cooperation with North Korea**. (Perhaps we wouldn't be in this mess if we had just [let them take care of this a long time ago](#).)

Meanwhile, **the U.S. and South Korea would be wise to incorporate civil society** during the negotiations with North Korea, our very talented intern Sarah Chin [explains](#).

The White House not only wants to wipe out the refugee status for millions of Palestinians, but it [also is now](#) **seeking to withhold \$200 million in humanitarian aid to the West Bank and Gaza**.

MUST (LONG) READ: "[BDS](#): how a controversial non-violent movement has **transformed the Israeli-Palestinian debate**."

The [Trump administration is](#) **turning U.S. diplomats into agents of America's largest gun manufacturers**.

While the Pentagon [continues](#) to deny the U.S. role in the bombing of a school bus last week, a U.S. official [wondered](#) **why people even care the U.S. is apparently aiding and abetting war crimes**.

Nearly 1,400 employees at Google [signed a letter](#) **protesting the company's decision to build a censored version of its search engine in China**.

The goofballs at *Fox & Friends* [accidentally stumbled upon](#) the reality that **the U.S. has firmly embraced the idea of Endless War**.

Treasury finally sanctioned some Burmese military brass for atrocities against the Rohingya, [but more must be done](#) to hold the highest levels of the chain of command accountable.

[Attacks on the press](#) **aren't just coming from the White House**.

And finally, once again, the Onion [nails it](#): "Trump Slammed For Signing John McCain Defense Bill **Without Praising How Many People It Will Kill**." (More on that absurdity [here](#).)