

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

TOPLINE TAKEAWAY

- *The world showed us this week just how isolated the U.S. is on Iran.*

TRUMP AT THE UN: MAKING REGIME CHANGE GREAT AGAIN

As Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh's sexual assault hearing mired Washington, DC in domestic controversy this week, international affairs took center stage in New York City when world leaders gathered for the annual United Nations General Assembly. While [literally laughable](#) at times, Trump's performance at the UN this week was also dangerous, as his administration's inflammatory rhetoric put us further along the path to war with Iran.

While the U.S. withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal earlier this year, the deal has persisted with European, Chinese, and Russian support and continued Iranian compliance. So during the week, Trump escalated his efforts to finally dismantle the deal. In his [speech](#) to the General Assembly, Trump lambasted the deal as a "windfall" for Iran and asked all countries to isolate the regime. While chairing a UN Security Council meeting, Trump reiterated U.S. commitment to re-imposing nuclear-related sanctions in full force, in addition to pursuing more sanctions, "tougher than ever before." He declared that any countries refusing to comply with U.S. sanctions would "[face severe consequences](#)."

Trump also made his administration's policy of regime change particularly transparent this week. At the General Assembly, Trump asked nations "to support Iran's people as they struggle to reclaim their religious and righteous destiny" – ignoring the fact that his policies do the opposite. Iran's president Hassan Rouhani recognized this and responded, [remarking](#) that "it is ironic that the U.S. government does not even conceal its plan for overthrowing the same government it invites to talk."

Trump's efforts to isolate and provoke Iran was part of an administration-wide effort. True to form, Trump's National Security Advisor John Bolton [threatened](#) Iran with "hell to pay." And the State Department ran a Hollywood-esque and cringeworthy campaign depicting Iran as an "[Outlaw Regime](#)." Senior Policy Advisor to the Secretary of State and Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook [shared](#) a 48-page report of the same name detailing the Iranian regime's "destructive activities" at a hearing on Tuesday. And Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declared, "The Iranian regime's track record over the past 40 years has revealed it as among the worst violators of the UN Charter and UN Security Council Resolutions. It is truly an outlaw regime."

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Of course, Trump's war cabinet's desire to escalate tensions and move us closer to a war with Iran is nothing new. After all, John Bolton advocated bombing Iran for years, including in a [2015 New York Times op-ed](#). However, the particularly concerted efforts to antagonize Iran at the UN this week escalate an already troubling situation, one made particularly stark when Pompeo and Bolton continued their inflammatory campaign a few blocks from the UN at the private United Against Nuclear Iran (UANI) conference, which probably could have just been named [the U.S.-Gulf Forum for Regime Change in Iran](#).

WHAT IS UANI AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Since its inception in 2008, United Against a Nuclear Iran has [generally allied itself](#) with neoconservatives and right-wing pro-Israel groups in their anti-Iran activities. The group [campaigned](#) vigorously against the Iran nuclear deal and, since Trump's violation of the agreement, is [now trying to pressure companies](#) against doing business in Iran.

UANI's [leadership and advisory board](#) is a who's who of Iran hawks. These former diplomats and intelligence operatives (foreign and domestic) and others have [called for war with Iran](#), promoted [regime change](#), [backed](#) the cultish ex-terrorist Iranian opposition group, Mujahedin e-Khalq (MEK), and have even said things like diplomacy with Iran is "[appeasement](#)" or called for [starving](#) ordinary Iranians. On that last point, UANI itself has [pressured](#) pharmaceutical companies to cease sales of medicine to Iran.

UANI has received considerable funding from donors like Sheldon Adelson, who famously said we should set off a nuclear weapon in Iran. Meanwhile, some of UANI's murkier funding streams call into question [whether and how much](#) Gulf countries like the UAE pushing for confrontation against Iran are funding UANI and thus influencing Trump and U.S. foreign policy. Other sources of UANI's income have [raised questions](#) about whether the group is trying to foment strife in Iran and the wider Middle East for corporate profit. And what's perhaps even more bizarre is that a high-dollar UANI funder has been [linked](#) to a \$4.5 billion corruption scandal in Malaysia, one in which even a top Trump fundraiser has been entangled.

For more on UANI and its relationship to the Trump administration, see our media memo [here](#).

WHAT TRUMP'S IRAN POLICY MEANS FOR THE REGION

Needless to say, a war with Iran would be devastating for the people of the United States, Iran, and the entire region. Trump's decision to demonize Iran also has considerable implications for other regional conflicts across the Middle East:

- In Syria, Bolton [announced](#) U.S. forces would not leave "as long as Iranian troops are outside Iranian borders." As a reminder, **operations targeting Iran in Syria are illegal and unconstitutional**. Moreover, prolonged U.S. military presence in Syria risks direct

WIN WITHOUT WAR



military confrontation with Russia, Iran, and the Assad regime as the government re-consolidates control over the country.

- In Yemen, claims of Iranian interference in support of the Houthis **are used to justify continued U.S. participation in one of the world's largest humanitarian crisis**, in which Saudi Arabia and the UAE are using starvation as a weapon of war and indiscriminately bombing civilians. Thankfully, [momentum is building](#) to end U.S. participation in Yemen's war: This week, Rep. Ro Khanna, along with more than 20 bipartisan co-sponsors including Democratic party leadership, [introduced](#) a war powers resolution to end all military support to the coalition in Yemen.
- Across the Gulf, Trump's efforts to contain Iran mean propping up Gulf States with money and weapons, **strengthening autocratic regimes and turning a blind eye to their continuous and blatant abuses of human rights**. It's also meant giving Saudi Arabia and the UAE a blank check to destabilize the region, whether in their disingenuous spat with Qatar or by holding the Lebanese premier hostage in Riyadh.

By rebuffing diplomacy and positioning the Iranian regime as the source of all instability in the Middle East, the Trump administration can argue that prolonged U.S. military presence across the region is legitimate – with or without Congress' authorization. But we don't buy it. And neither does the rest of the world.

THE WORLD REBUFFS TRUMP

Trump's efforts to isolate Iran [backfired](#). In all his bluster and condemnation, Trump stood alone. Nearly all countries at the UN Security Council expressed their support for the JCPOA, including other signatories Britain, France, Russia, China, and Germany. French President Emmanuel Macron [criticized](#) Trump's strategy towards Iran, arguing that "sanctions and containment" alone were inadequate and that a longer term strategy was needed. Other countries joined the chorus of objections, with Sweden's foreign minister [arguing](#), "We have tried sanctions over the years, over decades. We tried sanctions. We tried isolation, and **it only gave the most conservative forces in Iran more power.**"

In an effort to preserve the deal, Russia, China, Germany, Britain, and France even [signed an agreement](#) to create a special payment system for Iran to bypass U.S. sanctions, rebuking U.S. policy and further widening the growing gulf between the U.S. and its closest allies. When asked whether Iran felt isolated, Rouhani summarized the week's outcome: "We're not isolated," he said. "America is isolated."

BIG PUSH BACK AT HOME

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Top foreign policy experts at home also opposed Trump's strategy towards Iran. The National Coalition to Prevent an Iranian Nuclear Weapon, comprised of more than fifty prominent U.S. national security, intelligence, and foreign policy figures, released a [statement](#) arguing that Trump's refusal to engage in meaningful diplomacy could "**lead to a more dangerous, destructive, and enduring regional conflict with Iran.**"

Congress is also taking action. On Wednesday, Senator Tom Udall, along with a number of his colleagues, introduced legislation that would prevent a war with Iran without Congressional authorization. In a [statement](#), Senator Udall accused Trump and his "saber-rattling foreign policy advisors like John Bolton" of pushing us closer to direct conflict with Iran and argued that "the administration's approach to Iran is **ripped straight out of the same playbook that launched us in to the failed invasion of Iraq**, and Congress needs to assert its constitutional authority and halt the march to war."

Senator Udall's bill creates a significant roadblock to the administration's unilateral path to war with Iran. You can join Win Without War in demanding that the Senate pass this vital legislation by [signing our petition](#).

BURIED LEDES

South Korean President Moon Jae-in [reiterated his position](#) this week that **denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is linked to a declaration of peace**. We couldn't [agree](#) more.

Bolivian president **Evo Morales gave Trump the what-for to his face this week during the UN Security Council meeting**, criticizing him for undermining human rights and withdrawing from the Iran deal. Trump's response? "[Thank you, Mr. President.](#)"

This week, a bipartisan majority in Congress gave the Pentagon a truly ridiculous amount of money (as they do every year). [Here's a sample](#) of **how we could better spend that money**.

There is [massive momentum](#) for progressives to **take the mantle as leaders of a reasonable and responsible U.S. foreign policy**. They should take it (and the answer is [not to try to out-hawk Trump](#)).

Palestinians and Israeli Arabs have called for a general strike on October 1 to [protest](#) the recently passed so-called "Nation-state law" which [codifies discrimination by downgrading the rights of non-Jews in Israel](#).

Trump administration officials are [claiming](#) that space-based missile defense can be done on the cheap. **Nope.**

And finally, it's been a [tough week](#). **We believe survivors.**