

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

DATE: 5/3/19

SL: A chaos first foreign policy

[TRUMP'S FOREIGN POLICY: TURN CHALLENGES INTO CRISES](#)

Amidst all the breaking news alerts, the deception of Attorney General Barr, and the ongoing human suffering being imposed by the Trump administration on our southern border, you may not have noticed international news this week. If you did, the news stories may have seemed at first like far away problems that may require a U.S. response, but for now, seem disconnected. But the truth is, far from being random international events, Donald Trump and his war cabinet are at every turn actively engaged in turning foreign policy challenges into massive crises.

Earlier this week, Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó launched his latest attempt to wrestle power from Nicolás Maduro. While Guaidó's self-described uprising faltered, the destructive nature of the Trump administration's policy toward the embattled South American nation -- and indeed, its foreign policy writ large -- also came into sharper focus.

Guaidó's thus-far failed effort highlighted the fact that the Trump administration's response to the challenges in Venezuela has become "[haphazard and chaotic as the crisis has dragged on.](#)" More broadly, the response has been indicative of Trump's penchant to unilaterally pour gasoline on fires around the world instead of working with allies and partners to put them out.

Just as Guaidó was launching his plan to oust Maduro from power on Tuesday -- which he dubbed "Operation Freedom" and purportedly included political and military defectors from the Maduro regime -- Trump himself tweeted his support. But the operation went belly up hours after it began, which left Bolton and Pompeo scrambling to explain why, and in turn, [exposing](#) the Trump administration's efforts to organize the plan behind the scenes.

Trump, Pompeo, and Bolton rushed to blame Cuba and Russia for intervening on Maduro's behalf, even though with at least respect to Cuba, the *New York Times* [reported](#) that "the C.I.A. has concluded that Cuba is far less involved and its support has been far less important than senior officials in the administration believe."

Bolton even went so far as to identify the three high-level Maduro allies who were supposed to switch sides but never did, "[potentially](#) [revealing] sensitive information [and] burning those channels."

WIN WITHOUT WAR



BUMBLING TOWARD WAR

What's perhaps even more worrisome and dangerous is that with Guaidó's failure this week, **the Trump administration is now more publicly floating a military option for Venezuela**, which Trump has [reportedly](#) been supportive of since the early days of his administration. "Military action is possible. If that's what's required, that's what the United States will do," Pompeo said this week. Bolton [is in favor as well](#), particularly, he said, if that means [protecting Venezuela's oil reserves](#) from other foreign governments. His top-aides have even clashed with senior U.S. military officials who are [urging restraint](#).

Indeed, senior U.S. military officials are reportedly pushing for a diplomatic track and have urged caution against turning to the military, worrying that a unilateral U.S. military intervention would upend international unity and quite possibly ["spiral out of control,"](#) not to mention the fact that Venezuelans themselves oppose it.

There is no military solution to this crisis and military action in Venezuela currently has no congressional authorization. Win Without War [has highlighted alternative policies that would actually improve the situation](#), which includes focusing on humanitarian aid, offering more support for refugees and asylum seekers, and building a multilateral effort toward a negotiated political transition that ensures Venezuelans themselves determine their leaders via democratic elections.

CHALLENGE TO CRISIS: LIBYA EDITION

Weeks before Guaidó's attempted overthrow of Maduro, Trump surprised the world (and his own State Department) by publicly backing a Libyan warlord's efforts to take control of the country's capital, Tripoli, despite the fact that Foggy Bottom had previously issued a statement condemning the offensive and urging "the immediate halt to these military operations."

According to [The Guardian](#), "The state department went from encouraging a UN security council resolution calling for a ceasefire and an end to an offensive on the capital by the eastern Libyan warlord, Khalifa Haftar, to threatening to veto the same resolution a few days later."

Experts called the move ["nuts,"](#) saying it would embolden Haftar (who also just happens to be a U.S. citizen), undermine UN efforts towards a brokered peace, and divert attention from the fight against the self-described "Islamic State" (IS) in Libya.

And of course, Trump's about-face wasn't the result of any strategic or tactical analysis, but instead ["followed"](#) a Trump meeting with Egyptian leader Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, and a phone

WIN WITHOUT WAR



conversation with the Abu Dhabi crown prince, Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan,” who both pressured Trump to issue a public statement supporting Hafter.

“The state department had no advance knowledge of the conversation, and there was no policy discussion,” a former official said, according to *The Guardian*. “The US now has no coherent policy on Libya because there has just been no policy review, **just transactional behaviour by Trump’s family.**”

“The risk here is that Libya winds up looking more like Syria with a broadening civil conflict, a large number of people fleeing, a humanitarian crisis and resurgent terrorism,” said Jonathan Winer, a former US special envoy for Libya. “We need a political solution, not a military one.”

Even Sen. Lindsey Graham, one of the most hawkish members of the U.S. Senate, [agrees with that](#).

THE PATTERN OF HAVOC

Venezuela and Libya are just the latest examples of how Trump’s foreign policy largely boils down to turning challenges into crises. Since Trump became president, Iran is closer to building a nuclear weapon, the potential for greater climate catastrophe has increased, the humanitarian crisis in Yemen has worsened, and the situation with North Korea is back to where it was only after Trump took the world to the brink of nuclear war. And Trump just keeps adding fuel to the flames.

BURIED LEDES

Forty-six Republican Senators now share ownership of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen with Donald Trump as they [declined to override Trump’s veto](#) of a resolution that would have required the U.S. military to end participation in the Saudi-Emirati coalition’s intervention in the war-torn country.

Just days before the vote to override Trump’s veto, the UN [warned](#) in a report that **the death toll from the war in Yemen could reach as high as 250,000 people**.

Win Without War Policy Director Kate Kizer [laid out next steps in the push to end the war against Houthis in Yemen](#).

The nations of world spent \$1.8 trillion dollars on their militaries last year, a 2.6 percent [increase from last year](#). “The USA remained by far the largest spender in the world, and spent almost as much on its military in 2018 as the next eight largest-spending countries combined.”

WIN WITHOUT WAR



It seems logical then that **the gargantuan amount of money Congress throws at the Pentagon** [should probably](#) be a topic of discussion during the 2020 presidential campaign ([or foreign policy in general](#)).

Governors in California, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, and New Mexico [are defying Trump's military trans ban](#). We're [urging](#) New York and Pennsylvania to follow suit.

Win Without War's Program Manager, Mariam Iskajyan, wrote about the [painful costs of denying the Armenian genocide](#) and the need to learn from history.

US News and World Report [published an investigation](#) finding that “the number of security contractors the military employs in Afghanistan **is higher now than at any time since** President Barack Obama declared an end to combat operations in the country in 2014.”

Maybe we should [try calling it](#) a “**climate crisis**.”

And finally, war and misery profiteer Erik Prince had his goons [train right-wing firebrand James O'Keefe](#) and his crew at Project Veritas on “intelligence and elicitation techniques.” But **Prince's staff quit because O'Keefe's team was too stupid to learn them**.