

Lots of Shouting, Tiny Stick: Iran is “Not Behaving... They are the No 1 Terrorist State” according to Trump

By [Pepe Escobar](#)

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Here we go again. General “Mad Dog” Mattis, the US Secretary of Defense, declares Iran “is the single biggest state sponsor of terrorism in the world.” National Security Advisor General Michael Flynn puts Iran “on notice.”

President Trump says “they are not behaving,” and, on his Superbowl interview, doubles down: “They are the No 1 terrorist state. They’re sending money all over the place – and weapons. And... [they] can’t do that.” Iran is slapped with new sanctions. It’s as if Dick “Dark Side” Cheney and Donald “known unknowns” Rumsfeld never left.

Never allow facts to get in the way of a bombastic quote. “State sponsor of terrorism” is a neocon meme for any nation/political system that resists US Exceptionalism. The industrial-military-intelligence-security complex feeds on massive budgets to engage these manufactured “threats” while real, on the ground terrorism – yielding from the Salafi-jihadi matrix – has absolutely nothing to do with Iran.

The birth of al-Qaeda was inbuilt in the official Dr Zbig “Grand Chessboard” Brzezinski doctrine of fighting the former USSR in Afghanistan in the 1980s via a Wahhabi-controlled Jihad Inc. Nothing to do with Iran. Even Trump’s own national security advisor admitted on the record [there was a “willful decision”](#) by the Obama administration to let ISIS/ISIL/Daesh fester. Nothing to do with Iran.

As for the Iranian missile test, the UN resolution concerning the nuclear deal “called upon” Iran not to test nuclear-capable missiles. [This was a conventional missile test](#), as even the White House admitted.

So what is it all about? We must once again resort to the [shadowplay/wayang](#) of a Henry Kissinger-devised new balance-of-power US foreign policy bent on preventing Eurasian integration by prying away Russia from China while antagonizing Iran.

Putting the New Silk Roads “on notice”

Beijing was not amused by the new “unilateral” (Foreign Ministry description) anti-Iran sanctions barring access to the US financial system or dealings with US companies. After all, the sanctions include two Chinese companies and two Chinese nationals. Xinhua worries that overall this may become “a ticking time bomb for peace and stability in the Middle East.”

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov for his part stressed that Russia and Iran “cooperate on a wide range of issues, [we] value our trade ties, and hope to develop them further.”

Whatever the administration, and whoever the privileged dalang advisor in the shade, the US strategic imperative in Eurasia always remains the same – to prevent the ascent of a peer competitor, or worse, an alliance, as in the case of a Sino-Russian strategic partnership.

For China, Iran is an absolutely critical node of the New Silk Roads, or One Belt, One Road (OBOR). Along with Russia, it is a key player in the International North-South Transportation Corridor (INSTC), is set to increase its cooperation with the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), and will become a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). All this spells out Eurasian integration. By 2030 Eurasia may exceed the US and Europe in global GDP terms. Eurasia, not the Atlantic alliance, is the future.

Most of the geostrategic game ahead hinges on whether there can be a “win-win” grand bargain between the Trump administration and the Kremlin. Assuming Washington would back off in eastern Ukraine and accept Russia’s legitimate sphere of influence in Eurasia – hardly a given – the price to pay for Moscow would be to let go of its very close partnership with Tehran. Kissinger should know better; this is not going to happen.

In between, there are pressing facts on the ground. The avowed, much ballyhooed Trump smashing of ISIS/ISIL/Daesh across “Syraq” simply cannot happen without Tehran-supported Shi’ite militias/boots on the ground, the Quds force led by Gen. Soleimani, as well as Hezbollah fighters in Syria. Trump is waiting for his ordered 30-day Pentagon plan of “victory” against the jihadis. Bets can be made that the Pentagon won’t integrate both Iran and Russia – both doctrinally regarded as “threats”.

In a nutshell; Trump cannot win his war against Islamist terror if he fully subscribes to the neocon wet dream of crippling the Russia-China-Iran alliance.

It also wouldn’t require a PhD thesis for Trump to understand that Iranophobia is bad for business. Iran is a tremendous developing market ripe for investment, as attested by European, Russian, Chinese and South Korean interest.

Assuming Trump’s campaign promise of no more regime change adventures holds, the new US strategic mission across Southwest Asia would be to essentially guarantee that global supply chain sea lanes remain open and secure – to the benefit of booming business across the Rimland. Russia and China could not agree more.

Everyone who’s been to Iran – neocons haven’t – knows Tehran won’t be subdued with angry threats. Iran has been under US sanctions for no fewer than 38 years. Absolutely nothing across Southwest Asia can be accomplished, geopolitically, without Iranian participation.

Nobody – except the usual suspects – wants confrontation. The Joint Chiefs had already informed then President Obama that Washington cannot go to war again until at least 2022; part of Trump’s platform is exactly to facilitate the means to recruit, retrain and re-tool a new US military.

And even in the (terrifying) event that the Pentagon hits Iran, it would take just a few Iranian ballistic missiles strategically deployed against oil fields and oil refineries around the Persian

Gulf to spell out the end of the petrodollar.

Tehran is betting on – and wants to profit from – a new multipolar world order. Beijing knows there is no New Silk Road if Iran is constrained. Iran's arc of development is inevitable – and European, Russian and Chinese investors know it. An American geography professor who conducted a project on the US presidential race told me that among pro-Hillary, anti-Hillary, pro-Trump and anti-Trump factions, "in no case did any of the four sides mention the New Silk Roads, or OBOR." Trump's cabinet – with the possible exception of Secretary of State "T.Rex" Tillerson – may also fit this mould.

To speak loudly and carry a tiny stick could not be more counter-productive. It might be a stretch to expect Trump to actually read his foreign policy *dalang*, but if he went through Kissinger's World Order he would learn that "the United States and the Western democracies should be open to fostering cooperative relations with Iran. What they must not do is base such a policy on projecting their own domestic experience as inevitably or automatically relevant to other societies,' especially Iran's."

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Articles by: [Pepe Escobar](#)

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