

War on Iran Is Now US Policy, According to Secretary of State Pompeo

Former CIA head offers policy of prevarication and tortured truth

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On May 21, in his first formal public address, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (sworn in May 2) effectively declared war on the sovereign nation of Iran. Pompeo has no constitutional authority to declare war on anyone, as he well knows, so his declaration of war is just short of overt, though it included a not-so-veiled threat of a nuclear attack on Iran. Pompeo's declaration of war is a reactionary move that revitalizes the malignant Iranaphobia of the Bush presidency, when predictions were rife that Iran would have nuclear weapons by next year, next month, next week, predictions that never came true over twenty years of fearmongering. In effect (as we'll see), Pompeo wants us to believe that everything bad that happened in the Middle East after Saudi terrorists attacked us on 9/11 in 2001 has been Iran's fault, starting with Afghanistan. Almost everything Pompeo had to say to the Heritage Foundation on May 21 was a lie or, more typically, an argument built on lies.

Heritage Foundation host Kay Coles James called [Pompeo's 3,700-word speech](#) "Bold, concise, unambiguous" and "a bold vision – clear, concise, unambiguous." It was none of those, except perhaps bold in its willingness to go to war with an imaginary monster. Even without open warfare, warmongering has its uses both for intimidating other states and creating turmoil among the populace at home. Buckle your seat belts.

The 2012 Iran nuclear deal (officially the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA) was, by all reliable accounts, working effectively in its own terms up until May 8: inspectors confirmed that Iran had eliminated the nuclear programs it had promised to eliminate, that its uranium enrichment program for nuclear power plants was nowhere close to making weapons grade material, and so on. Whatever perceived flaws the deal may have had, and whatever other problems it didn't cover, the deal was working to the satisfaction of all its other signatories: Iran, France, Great Britain, Germany, Russia, and China. As a measure of international cooperation, the deal not only worked, it was an available precedent for further negotiations among equal parties acting in good faith. The US was not such a party. On May 8, the US President, unilaterally and over the clear objections of all the other parties to the agreement, pulled the US out of the deal for no more clearly articulated reason than that he didn't like it. Or as Pompeo tried to re-frame it in his May 21 declaration of war:

President Trump withdrew from the [Iran nuclear] deal for a simple reason: it failed to guarantee the safety of the American people from the risk created by the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This is a Big Lie worthy of Nazi Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels. What “risk created by the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran” is there? Iran poses NO imminent threat to the US, and wouldn’t even if it had nuclear weapons (as North Korea and eight other countries have). Iran has no overseas bases, the US has [more than 600](#), including a couple of dozen [that surround Iran](#). A classified number of US bases and aircraft carriers around Iran are armed with nuclear weapons. Iran lives every day at risk from the US military while posing almost no counter-risk (and none that wouldn’t be suicidal). There is no credible threat to the American people other than fevered speculation about what might happen in a world that does not exist.



Mike Pompeo with Saudi King Salman (Source: Gulf News)

To clarify Pompeo’s lie, the President withdrew from the deal for a simple reason: to protect the American people from a non-existent threat. In reality, peremptorily dumping the deal without any effort to improve it first may well have made Americans less safe in the long term. There’s no way to know. And given the current US ability to manage complicated, multifaceted problems, there’s little reason for hope. Since no one else seems as reckless as the US, we may muddle through despite massive inept stupidity and deceit.

The frame for Pompeo’s deceitful arguments is the familiar one of American goodness, American exceptionalism, American purity of motive. He deploys it with the apparent self-assurance that enough of the American people still fall for it (or profit from it) that it gives the government near carte blanche to make the rest of the world suffer our willfulness. Pompeo complains about “wealth creation for Iranian kleptocrats,” without a word about American kleptocrats, of whom his president is one and he is too presumably. And then there’s the unmentioned collusion with Russian kleptocrats. Better to divert attention and inflate the imaginary threat:

The deal did nothing to address Iran’s continuing development of ballistic and cruise missiles, which could deliver nuclear warheads.

Missiles were not part of the nuclear agreement, so, of course, it didn’t address missiles. And even if Iran, which has a space program, develops missiles under the agreement, it still wouldn’t have nuclear warheads to deliver. There is no threat, but the US could move the *projected* threat closer by scrapping the agreement rather than seeking to negotiate it into other areas. That move both inflames the fear and conceals the lie. In effect, Pompeo argues metaphorically that we had to cut down the cherry orchard because it failed to produce beef.

Pompeo goes on at length arguing that all the problems in the Middle East are Iran’s fault. He never mentions the US invasions of Afghanistan or Iraq, or US intervention in other countries creating fertile ground for ISIS in Libya and genocide in Yemen. Pompeo falsely claims that

“Iran perpetuates a conflict” in Syria that has made “that country 71,000 square miles of kill zone.”

Pompeo falsely claims that Iran alone jeopardizes Iraq's sovereignty. Pompeo falsely blames Iran for the terror and starvation in Yemen caused by US-supported Saudi terror bombing. Pompeo falsely blames Iran for US failure in Afghanistan. Pompeo uses these and other lies to support the long-standing Big Lie that

"Iran continues to be... the world's largest sponsor of terror."

This is another Bush administration lie that lived on under Obama and now gets fresh life from Pompeo, but without evidence or analysis. US sponsorship of Saudi bombing of defenseless civilians in Yemen probably accounts for more terrorist acts than Iran accomplishes worldwide. Israeli murder of unarmed protestors in Gaza has killed more people than Iran's supposed terror. The demonization of Iran persists because of the perverse US public psychology that has neither gotten over the 1979 hostage-taking nor accepted any responsibility for destroying Iranian democracy and subjecting Iran to a brutal US-puppet police state for a quarter-century. The Big Lie about Iran is so ingrained in American self-delusion, Pompeo may not be fully aware of the extent to which he is lying to his core (he surely knows the particulars of specific smaller lies).

Only someone who is delusional or dishonest, or both, could claim with apparent sincerity that one goal of the US is "to deter Iranian aggression." Pompeo offers no particulars of this Iranian "aggression." So far as one can tell, in the real world, Iran has not invaded any other country in the region, or elsewhere. The US has invaded several countries, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, and by proxy Yemen. American aggression has been real and deadly and constant for decades, but because the US is the one keeping score, the US doesn't award itself the prize it so richly deserves year after year as the world's number one state sponsor of terror. This is how it's been since long before 1967 when Martin Luther King tried speaking "clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today — my own government." That's the way it was, that's the way it still is, that's the future Pompeo points us toward with a not so veiled threat of nuclear war:

And I'd remind the leadership in Iran what President Trump said: If they restart their nuclear program, it will mean bigger problems - bigger problems than they'd ever had before.

And then Pompeo launched on a lengthy description of Iran as he sees it, a self-serving interpretation of Iranian events that may or may not mean what Pompeo says they mean. What is most remarkable about the passage is that it could as well apply to the US today. Just change the Iran references to American references, as I have done in the text below, leaving everything else Pompeo said intact, and the likely unintentional effect is eerily like looking in a black mirror reality:

Look, these problems are compounded by enormous corruption inside of [the US], and the [American] people can smell it. The protests last winter showed that many are angry at the regime that keeps for itself what the regime steals from its people.

And [Americans] too are angry at a regime elite that commits hundreds of millions of dollars to military operations and terrorist groups abroad while the Iranian people cry out for a simple life with jobs and opportunity and with liberty.

The [American] regime's response to the protests has only exposed the country's leadership is running scared. Thousands have been jailed arbitrarily, and at least dozens have been killed.

As seen from the [#MeToo] protests, the brutal men of the regime seem to be particularly terrified by [American] women who are demanding their rights. As human beings with inherent dignity and inalienable rights, the women of [America] deserve the same freedoms that the men of [America] possess.

But this is all on top of a well-documented terror and torture that the regime has inflicted for decades on those who dissent from the regime's ideology.

The [American] regime is going to ultimately have to look itself in the mirror. The [American] people, especially its youth, are increasingly eager for economic, political, and social change.

As an analysis of the US by a US official, that might suggest we were headed toward enlightened and progressive policy changes. Even for what it is, Pompeo's self-deceiving pitch to "the Iranian people," it could have led in a positive direction. It didn't. Pompeo followed this assessment with a dishonest offer for new talks. It was dishonest because it came with non-negotiable US preconditions, "only if Iran is willing to make major changes." Then came a full page of preconditions, "what it is that *we demand from Iran*," as Pompeo put it [emphasis added]. Meeting those US demands would be tantamount to a surrender of national sovereignty in exchange for nothing. Pompeo surely understood that he was making an offer Iran couldn't do anything but refuse.

The Secretary of State's bullying chest puffery continued for another two pages of falsehoods and repetitions. He called for a global alliance of democracies and dictatorships "to join this effort against the Islamic Republic of Iran." Linking Egypt and Australia, Saudi Arabia and South Korea, Pompeo spun into a fully delusional statement about nations with little in common:

They understand the challenge the same way that America does. Indeed, we welcome any nation which is sick and tired of the nuclear threats, the terrorism, the missile proliferation, and the brutality of a regime which is at odds with world peace, a country that continues to inflict chaos on innocent people.

Wait a minute! Nuclear threats! Missile proliferation! Brutality at odds with world peace! A country that continues to inflict chaos on innocent people! That's us! That's the US since 1945. And that's absolutely not what Pompeo meant, insofar as anyone can be absolutely sure of anything. He made that clear with yet another lie: "we're not asking anything other than that Iranian behavior be consistent with global norms."

Pompeo came to the predictable conclusion familiar to other countries: Iran will "prosper and flourish... as never before," if they just do what we tell them to do. And to illustrate US *bona fides* and good faith in all its dealings, Pompeo showed himself, however unintentionally, capable of true high hilarity:

If anyone, especially the leaders of Iran, doubts the President's sincerity or his vision, let them look at our diplomacy with North Korea.

THAT is funny. It's just not a joke.

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Michel Chossudovsky

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