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# Washington's long war in the “Middle East”: It's not the oil, it's the money

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A partially constructed gas refinery at the South Pars gas field in Asalouyeh, Iran, on January 22, 2014.

*“Only Iran-U.S. tensions supporting crude oil prices; outlook bearish” Economic Times, July 23, 2019*

U.S. warships are not prowling the coast of Iran to protect navigation and the free flow of oil. That's a lie. For decades, Washington has used wars and sanctions to stop the flow of any oil or gas not owned by U.S. corporations.

The name of the game is monopoly. It's a global version of what John D. Rockefeller did when he set up the Standard Oil trust — ancestor of ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco — in the 1870s. But much, much bloodier. Rockefeller's goons sometimes torched or dynamited competitors' drilling rigs and refineries. The

Pentagon and its proxies have murdered hundreds of thousands of people in the past 30 years to keep the world's energy revenues flowing to U.S. banks and corporations.

### **The U.S.-Israel-Saudi axis**

Who are those proxies? First and foremost, the racist state of Israel and the brutal House of Saud. Gen. Alexander Haig, Ronald Reagan's secretary of state, called Israel ["the biggest U.S. aircraft carrier in the world and the only one that can't be sunk."](#) The Zionist state has been in a state of war since it was created on the stolen land of Palestine. And every war it has waged has benefited U.S. corporate interests.

Saudi-occupied Arabia is a U.S. tribute state, a cash cow for U.S. banks, and oil and arms companies. So are the other five kingdoms on the Arabian Peninsula: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. For decades their ruling families have put their oil revenues and production policy at the service of Wall Street and Washington.

Saudi ARAMCO, the world's richest oil company, was originally the Arabian-American Oil Company. Now, it is supposedly owned by the Saudi royal family. But its top executives are U.S. and British citizens. Four Western monopolies — ExxonMobil, Chevron, BP and Shell — control and market its output. U.S. bankers invest the kingdom's oil revenues, and U.S. contractors run its military.

The Saudi kingdom is the biggest overseas customer of the U.S. military-industrial complex. For the past four years the kingdom has used its U.S.-made weaponry to murder and starve the people of neighboring Yemen. The United Nations has described the situation in that impoverished land as "the worst humanitarian catastrophe in the world." President Trump has vetoed two congressional resolutions to limit U.S. involvement in the war. The Senate upheld the vetoes.

The United Arab Emirates, also involved in the war in Yemen, is the world's third biggest purchaser of U.S. arms. General Dynamics keeps an F16 production line open to fill a contract from Bahrain. On July 27, Bahrain's ruling Al Khalifa family executed two young pro-democracy activists, Ahmad al Malali, 24, and Hakim Al Arab, also 24, who had been tortured and convicted with 56 others in a mass trial. Bahrain is under Saudi military occupation. It is also home to the U.S. Naval Central Command and the U.S. Fifth Fleet, whose ships are off the coast of Iran.

## **Why they hate Iran**

Before the 1979 Revolution, the Shah of Iran was the U.S. arms industry's biggest overseas paying customer and Chase Manhattan Bank's largest depositor. At Henry Kissinger's request, the shah bailed the U.S. arms industry out of the slump that followed the end of the Vietnam War.

Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi ("King of Kings, Shadow of God, Light of the Aryans") was put on the throne by British troops in 1941. The CIA kept him on it. In 1953, as the monarch hid out in Rome, a CIA-organized coup overthrew Iran's elected prime minister, Mohammed Mossadegh. Mossadegh's government had nationalized Iran's then British-owned oil industry. The grateful shah cut the Gulf Oil Company, now part of Chevron, in on Iran's oil reserves. And Kermit Roosevelt, the CIA agent who ran the coup, became a vice president of Gulf Oil.

The 1979 Revolution, which threw out the shah, ended Iran's subservience to Washington and Wall Street. The country's oil revenues no longer went into U.S. bankers' pockets. The Islamic Republic has been on Washington's enemy list ever since.

There are a lot of differences between Islamic Iran, Bolivarian Venezuela, Baathist Iraq, Jamahiriya Libya and Putin's Russia. But in the eyes of the U.S. ruling class they are all guilty of the same sin: using their oil revenues for their own interests

and not those of Wall Street.

Something more urgent than greed for lost tribute drives the Trump regime's desperation to confront Iran. It's the same thing that drove the U.S. to attack, sanction and invade Iraq, sanction Venezuela and Russia, bomb Libya and launch proxy wars in Syria and Ukraine. It's the desperate struggle of capital against that crisis unique to the capitalist system, what Karl Marx called "an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity—the epidemic of overproduction."

### **The 'end of history' and endless war**

Let's go back 30 years, to the summer of 1989. The so-called Cold War, which was hot and bloody in most of the world, seemed to be ending. The Soviet Union was imploding under the impact of Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika. Politicians promised a "peace dividend" as military budgets would supposedly be slashed. A State Department employee named Francis Fukuyama wrote an essay called "The End of History." Its theme was that 'the triumph of the West,' of capitalism, would usher in an epoch of global stability.

As the corporate media oohed and aahed over Fukuyama's words, a Defense Department employee was engaged in a different task. Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of U.S. Central Command, was drawing up plans to attack Iraq.

The general was carrying on a family tradition. His father, [Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf Sr.](#), first served in Iran in the 1940s. He organized the shah's brutal security forces and helped crush independent republics in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan. During the 1953 coup, he was liaison between the CIA, the shah and Iranian security officials. After the coup, Schwarzkopf Sr. trained the shah's dreaded secret police, later known as SAVAK.

Gen. Schwarzkopf Jr. drew up his war plans more than a year before Iraqi troops

entered Kuwait on Aug. 2, 1990. That Iraqi action was deliberately provoked by Kuwait's British-installed royal family and manipulated by the first Bush regime. (A detailed [description of Washington's maneuvers can be found in the book](#) "The Fire This Time" by former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark.)

On Aug. 6, 1990, the U.S. pushed sanctions against Iraq through the U.N. Security Council. Five million barrels a day disappeared from the world market. The sanctions were followed by a devastating U.S. bombing campaign against the Iraqi people. The U.S. military has been at war in West Asia and North Africa ever since.

### **It's not the oil, it's the money**

In January 1991, as the U.S. war machine began bombing Iraq, hundreds of thousands marched in Washington chanting, "No blood for oil!" It's a catchy slogan but a misleading one.

Iraqi troops withdrew from Kuwait on Feb. 27. U.S. planes napalmed retreating soldiers and civilian refugees on Highway 8, the "highway of death," killing thousands. But the Bush regime did not seize Iraq's oil fields. Nor did it allow Iraq's oil back on the world market. Instead it — and the Democratic and Republican administrations that followed — bombed and sanctioned Iraq for 12 more years.

A December 1995 U.N. report found that sanctions had caused the death of 587,000 Iraqi children. Commenting on the deaths, Bill Clinton's secretary of state, [Madeleine Albright, told CBS 60 Minutes](#), "We think the price is worth it."

The tragedy in Iraq was indeed worth it to the U.S. corporate ruling class, especially those most invested in oil. They had "won" the Cold War. But their "victory" only intensified the crisis of their system.

Big Oil desperately needed respite from the oil glut of the 1980s. That glut, aggravated by Saudi and Kuwaiti overproduction, seriously damaged the Soviet

economy. But it also played havoc with oil profits.

The end of the Soviet bloc's planned economy and state-owned industries drove down the price of labor on a world scale. It opened up new markets for the U.S. dollar and for capitalist investment and exploitation.

It however caused a huge drop in global demand, threatening to drive energy prices lower still. And it left the U.S. military-industrial complex without an enemy to justify bloated budgets and new contracts. The children of Iraq were collateral damage in a desperate attempt by the wealthiest U.S. corporations to salvage their bottom line.

