

Escalated Trump Regime Economic Terrorism on Iran

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by Stephen Lendman (stephenlendman.org – [Home – Stephen Lendman](#))

US war on Iran by other means is all about its refusal to subordinate its sovereignty to US interests, opposition to its imperial agenda, support for Palestinian rights, and Washington's aim to control its vast hydrocarbon resources.

America's 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) lets presidents claim unusual and/or extraordinary foreign threats (invented or real), declare a national emergency, and regulate commerce accordingly.

Presidents have taken full advantage deceptively, unjustifiably, and illegally.

Straightaway after its 1979 revolution, the US seized billions of dollars of Iranian bank deposits, gold, and other properties, including amounts held in overseas branches of US banks.

A full trade embargo followed. For decades, Washington ruthlessly targeted Iran and its people, things greatly escalated by Trump regime economic terrorism.

The General Assembly's 1974 Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States says no nation may use or encourage use of economic, political or other measures to coerce another country to subordinate its sovereign rights in any way.

UN General Assembly Resolution 44/215 (1989) prohibits political and economic coercion against developing countries.

It specifically covers trade and financial restrictions, blockades, embargoes, and other economic sanctions.

It calls them incompatible with UN Charter provisions. They adversely affect the ability of nations to function politically, economically and socially. They harm civilians most.

Security Council members alone may legally impose sanctions on nations, entities or individuals – not individual countries on others.

Article 41 of the UN Charter states that the Security Council is empowered to decide what actions may be used to enforce international law – including “complete or partial interruption of economic relations and...severance of diplomatic relations,” other than use of military force.

When unilaterally imposed by one nation on others, sanctions have no legal validity. Countries complying with them are complicit in wrongdoing.

The US weaponizes sanctions to wage war by other means on nations unwilling to bend to its will. Virtually always they're unjustifiably justified by Big Lies and deception.

On Wednesday, the Trump regime's Treasury Department imposed new illegal sanctions on Iran. Mahan Air and Iran's shipping industry were targeted.

A Treasury Department statement falsely said Tehran “uses its aviation and shipping industries to supply its regional terrorist and militant groups with weapons (sic), directly contributing to the devastating humanitarian crises in Syria and Yemen (sic),” adding:

“US persons will be prohibited from engaging in transactions involving Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) or E-Sail, including transactions for the sale of agricultural

commodities, food, medicine, or medical devices.”

“(N)on-US persons that knowingly engage in certain transactions with IRISL or E-Sail, even for the sale to Iran of agricultural commodities, food, medicine, or medical devices, risk exposure to sanctions under additional sanctions.”

Fact: US sanctions on Iran constitute economic terrorism, war by other means, a high crime against humanity.

Fact: Nonbelligerent Iran threatens no other nations. The US and its imperial allies threaten humanity.

Fact: Iran is actively involved in combatting regional terrorism, not supporting or waging it.

Years of US aggression, blockade, illegal sanctions, and Pentagon-orchestrated Saudi terror-bombing since 2015 are what high crimes of state terrorism against Yemen and its long-suffering people are all about.

The same goes for US aggression in Syria and other war theaters, part of bipartisan support in Washington for permanent wars on humanity.

US war on Iran by other means is all about wanting to crush its economy, isolate the country, immiserate its people, and starve them into submission – a strategy aiming to transform the Islamic Republic into a US vassal state and eliminate Israel’s main regional rival.

Trump hardliners don’t seek negotiations with Tehran as envoy for regime change in the country Brian Hook falsely claimed.

US strategy is all about seeking unconditional Iranian surrender to its demands, its sovereign independence eliminated.

A recent University of Maryland Center for International and

Security Studies report explained that 86% of Iranians despise the US – based IranPolls data.

Pompeo earlier said Tehran must bend to US demands “if they want their people to eat.”

On Friday, he falsely accused Iranian-backed elements for December 9 and 11 rocket attacks near Baghdad International Airport, saying:

“Any attacks by (Iran) or (its) proxies of any identity that harm Americans, our allies, or our interests will be answered with a decisive US response,” adding:

“Iran’s proxies have recently conducted several attacks against bases where Iraqi security forces are co-located with US and international coalition personnel (sic).”

Separately, US war secretary Mark Esper warned Iran of “decisive military force should our forces or interests be attacked.”

Since around mid-year, the Pentagon deployed around 14,000 more troops to the Middle East, falsely claiming it’s to deter Iranian malign actions that don’t exist.

US rage for unchallenged dominance over the oil and gas rich Middle East risks greater regional war(s) than already by accident or design.

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Sino/US Phase One Trade Deal: The Devil in the Unannounced Details and Implementation

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Details and Implementation**

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According to China's official People's Daily broadsheet, Beijing and Washington "agreed on the text of a phase one economic and trade agreement based on the principle of equality and mutual respect," adding:

"The text includes nine chapters: the preface, intellectual property rights, technology transfer, food and agricultural products, financial services, exchange rate and transparency, trade expansion, bilateral assessment and dispute settlement, and the final terms, according to a statement issued by the Chinese side Friday night."

"Both sides have reached consensus that the US side will fulfill its commitments to phase out its additional tariffs on Chinese products, so as to achieve a switch from hiking to cutting additional tariffs."

The above remarks omit details of what was agreed on, likely to remain unpublished in full.

According to China's Vice Commerce Minister/deputy trade

representative Wang Shouwen, Beijing will increase imports of US agricultural products – no specific amount agreed on, Wang adding:

The US pledged to eliminate duties on Chinese imports “phase by phase, (its) tariffs undergo(ing) a change from going up to going down.”

Beijing’s Vice Minister of Finance Liao Min said eliminating US tariffs on Chinese products is the “core concern” of its government.

A statement by Trump regime trade representative Robert Lighthizer said the following:

The US and China “agree(d) on a phase one trade deal that requires structural reforms and other changes to China’s economic and trade regime in the areas of intellectual property, technology transfer, agriculture, financial services, and currency and foreign exchange,” adding:

China “commit(s) (to) make substantial additional purchases of US goods and services in the coming years” – no amounts in dollars or quantity mentioned.

US 25% tariffs on around \$250 billion worth of Chinese imports remain unchanged, 15% US duties on another \$120 billion worth of Chinese goods cut to 7.5%.

New 15% US tariffs on another \$156 billion worth of Chinese imports scheduled for December 15 are suspended. Trump tweeted:

“We will begin negotiations on the phase two deal immediately, rather than waiting until after the 2020 election.”

Barron’s claimed unexplained phase one “details weren’t as important as what the agreement stopped from happening.”

Perhaps it’s so for the short-term, the devil in them and what

follows in further talks key to the US and Chinese economies and how markets will react in the weeks and months ahead.

Wall Street Journal editors said Friday's announced phase one deal "isn't VE Day, but it's still welcome economic news," calling it "modest," adding:

What's agreed on in principle are "merely promises," fulfillment another matter entirely, notably by the US side, viewing China as a threat to its hegemonic aims.

Beijing's Vice Minister of Commerce Wei Jianguo struck a positive note, saying:

"The trade war has taught the US a lesson. They finally realize that engaging in a prolonged trade war will bring no good, and that ending it as soon as possible is their best option."

Beijing-based Chinese Academy of Social Sciences analyst Gao Lingyun warned that what's agreed on in principle hangs in limbo. Major bilateral differences on trade and other issues remain unresolved.

According Chinese government advisor Shi Yinhong said momentum in talks "for the time being" doesn't dispel longterm confrontation.

"It just pushes the difficulties into the future. And the future could be very quick to materialize because Trump is a very volatile person."

China knows the US side can change things any time for any reason because of uneasy bilateral relations.

A phase one signing date hasn't been announced, nor where it will take place and who'll represent both countries.

Chinese purchases of US products are likely to depend on internal needs, its contractual import arrangements with

other countries, whether the Trump regime fulfills its obligations, and its other policies toward Beijing.

Clearly, bilateral relations are greatly strained, trade one of many areas of disagreement, including Sino/Russian unity, the US considers a strategic threat.

It represent a vital counterforce against US rage for unchallenged global dominance by whatever it takes to achieve its objectives.

It's why unthinkable nuclear war is ominously possible, Sino/US trade relations a minor issue by comparison.

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NAFTA 2.0: Revising the 1994 Agreement

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According to the Wall Street Journal, it's a "template for deals to come," adding:

"The new US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (has) implications for agreements beyond North America, including new bilateral deals being contemplated for China, Japan, the European Union, and the UK."

On Thursday, Mexico's Senate approved the deal after top North American officials agreed on its terms, ratification by the US and Canada expected in early 2020 – Trump, Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau, and Mexican President Obrador to sign it into law.

Commenting on the deal, Global Trade Watch director Lori Wallach explained the following:

The deal is better than the 2018 US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), a jobs-destroying neoliberal ripoff, a corporate coup d'état, empowering corporate predators at the expense of ecosanity, worker pay, benefits and other rights.

Trade deals, including NAFTA 2.0, are all about maximizing corporate profits, offshoring US jobs to low-wage countries to continue, worker rights steadily eroding.

Still, NAFTA 2.0 "remove(d) Big Pharma giveaways and improve(d) labor and environmental terms" over USMCA's 2018 provisions, said Wallach, adding:

Despite much in the agreement that's unacceptable, it's "better than the original NAFTA."

Trump's approval of anti-worker, anti-ecosanity provisions in last year's USMCA betrayed ordinary Americans he pledged to serve – how he's governed across the board throughout his time in office, serving corporate and high-net households interests at the expense of the public welfare.

After pledging to seek lower drug prices last year, last year

he agreed on “new Big Pharma giveaways that lock in high drug prices and labor and environmental terms that were too weak to stop NAFTA’s original sin of job outsourcing,” said Wallach.

NAFTA 2.0 changes improved some, not all, pro-business, anti-consumer, anti-worker provisions of the 1994 agreement.

“(M)any NAFTA flaws were not fixed,” Wallach stressed. “The best (NAFTA 2.0) feature...is the gutting of Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS).”

It grants corporate predators the right to sue governments for virtually unlimited compensation before a rigged panel of three corporate lawyers – their ruling final, not subject to appeal.

Favorable rulings can be gotten by claiming laws protecting public health or ecosanity violate corporate trade agreement rights.

If a nation refuses to pay, its assets can be seized for compensation. ISDS incentivizes offshoring of jobs by providing special privileges and rights for firms relocating operations abroad – facilitating a global race to the bottom.

Most 1994 NAFTA provisions have nothing to do with trade – everything to do with maximizing corporate profits, compromising ecosanity, worker rights, as well as human health and welfare.

Last year’s signed but not ratified USMCA empowers corporate predators to continue offshoring jobs.

It lets them ignore ecosanity, worker rights, and human health and welfare. ISDS let corporate predators ripoff around \$400 million from North American taxpayers.

Wallach: “That a US (NAFTA 2.0) pact largely eliminates extreme ISDS protections for foreign investors and anti-democratic tribunals sends a signal worldwide about the

illegitimacy of the ISDS regime.”

Trump’s claim about the deal bringing back hundreds of thousands of new manufacturing jobs is pure rubbish.

At the same time, “labor and environmental standards and enhanced enforcement terms may help raise wages in Mexico, and this may also reduce US corporations’ incentives to outsource US jobs to Mexico to pay workers less,” said Wallach, adding:

NAFTA 2.0 “shows that to be politically viable, trade pacts can no longer include extreme corporate rights like ISDS or new monopoly protections for Big Pharma that have been featured in past US trade deals and that they must have enforceable labor and environmental standards.”

“This is a significant shift after decades of US trade pacts, expanding corporate rights and Big Pharma monopoly protections.”

Wallach may be overly optimistic. Since the neoliberal 90s, worker rights steadily eroded – along with fundamental freedoms and a nation safe and fit to live in.

Policies now pursued by congressional Dems aim to improve their November 2020 electoral prospects.

The Clinton co-presidency was responsible for the original NAFTA. Will Dems today govern differently if control the reigns of government? It’s highly unlikely.

Their pro-endless wars, pro-business, anti-worker, anti-consumer, anti-rule of law record since the 1990s speaks for itself.

Fixing NAFTA falls way short of “negotiating a truly progressive trade agreement from scratch, which would additionally require climate provisions, truly enforceable currency disciplines, and the elimination of limits on consumer protections for food, product safety, the service

sector and online platforms,” Wallach stressed.

Unlike the Wall Street Journal’s rosy scenario, “(t)he new NAFTA is not the template for future agreements, but establishes the floor from which we will continue to advocate for a new model of trade and globalization that puts people and the planet first,” she added.

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Western funded White Helmets in Syria operate in terrorist controlled areas.

Falsely calling them volunteer rescue workers conceals their real mission – aiding US-supported terrorists.

They've been photographed and videotaped together with al-Nusra terrorists during beheadings and other atrocities.

The Syria Solidarity Movement earlier called them al Qaeda "with a facelift," fostering terrorism and imperial ravaging on the phony pretext of saving lives.

People associated with the group are enemies of fundamental freedoms – jihadists, not peacemakers, foreign-supported dark forces wanting tyranny replacing Syrian sovereign independence.

An NGO in name only, the group receives millions of dollars from the US, UK, and other NATO countries.

Their mission is all about serving imperial interests, harming long-suffering victims of US-led aggression, not helping them.

On Thursday, Russian Reconciliation Center in Syria head General Yury Borenkov said he "received information that (US-supported al-Nusra) terrorists, together with members of the White Helmets pseudo-humanitarian organization, plan to stage the use of poisonous substances and destruction of civilian infrastructure facilities in settlements in the southern part of the Idlib de-escalation zone," adding:

"The aim of the provocation is to prepare photo and video materials to distribute them on the internet, in Middle Eastern and Western media, (falsely) accusing Syrian government forces of using chemical weapons against civilians and of delivering indiscriminate strikes" – as a pretext for Pentagon-led terror-bombing of Syrian targets.

Borenkov also explained that (US-supported) terrorists deployed heavy weapons in range of targets in Aleppo, saying:

"Russian surveillance means detected, over the last two days,

the deployment of rocket launchers and armored vehicles by illegal armed groups near the city of Aleppo and the town of Abu al-Duhur in Idlib.”

On Wednesday, Russia’s special envoy on Syria Alexander Lavrentiev said White Helmets terrorists increased their numbers in Syria’s Idlib province, likely ahead of another false flag CW incident to be wrongfully blamed on government forces.

Separately, Southfront reported that Turkey boosted its (illegal) occupation force strength in northern Syria, US/Ankara-supported terrorists shelling government troops and residential areas, using weapons supplied by these countries, adding:

“Turkish-backed (jihadists) are deploying anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) launchers along Idlib’s administrative borders with southwest Aleppo.’

“These developments suggest that (they’re) preparing a large-scale attack in southwest Aleppo, or even on the city itself. Such an attack is highly possible due to the suspension of major SAA operations in Greater Idlib.”

On Thursday, Syrian media reported that the Pentagon evacuated about 300 ISIS family members cross-border to Iraq.

Fars News issued numerous earlier reports about US involvement in redeploying ISIS and other terrorists in Syria from one part of the country to another.

On Friday, it reported that al-Nusra terrorists and White Helmets “transferred chemical substances to several cities in Idlib Province under the supervision of European and Turkish experts,” citing local eyewitnesses, adding:

“(T)wo vehicles belonging to the White Helmets carried chlorine gas capsules and arrived in Al-Nusra Front military

bases in Saraqib city on Wednesday morning.”

“The French, Belgian and Turkish militants of Al-Nusra Front helped White Helmets transfer the chemical substances.”

As earlier, plans apparently are to photograph and videotape what’s planned to air on anti-Syria Western and regional media.

War in Syria is far from resolved because bipartisan hardliners in Washington reject conflict resolution in all US war theaters.

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With ballot counting nearly completed, Boris Johnson-led Tories appear to have won a near 80-seat House of Commons majority – 364 seats to Labor’s 203, Scottish National Party’s 48, Liberal Dems 11, DUP 8, Sinn Fein 7, other small parties 8, a Conservative landslide.

The results were far more decisive for Tories than expected, more than enough to “get Brexit done.”

Biggest losers were Labor’s Jeremy Corbyn and Liberal Dems’ Jo Swinson. She lost her seat and is stepping down as party leader over their dismal showing.

Despite reelected to his own constituency, Corbyn announced he “will not lead the party in any future general election campaign,” adding:

“I will discuss with our party to ensure there is a process now of reflection on this result and on the policies that the party will take going forward.”

“And I will lead the party during that period to ensure that discussion takes place and we move on into the future.”

“This is obviously a very disappointing night for the Labor Party, with the result that we’ve got” – its worst showing in decades at a time most Brits suffer from the scourge of neoliberal harshness, supported by most MPs.

One observer noted that Britain “ranks among the top most depressed (Western) countries” – a ruling class triumph over the rights and welfare of ordinary people, benefitting hugely at their expense.

Governance in the US, UK, and other Western societies prioritizes war over peace, dominance over democracy, profits over populism, and private interests over public ones – a

zero-sum game benefitting monied interests over all others, societies made unfit to live in.

The system empowers powerful interests to set self-serving policies at the expense of beneficial social change – social justice fast eroding under governance of, by and for the privileged few alone, ruling authorities and business partnering against the public welfare.

It begs the question. Why would majority Brits, largely ordinary people hugely burdened by what's going on, vote for more of the same?

Johnson-led Tories benefitted hugely from UK establishment media criticism of Corbyn, including phony anti-Semitism charges – an Anglo-Zionist plot against him because of his anti-war, progressive agenda.

He called for reversing force-fed austerity, greater social justice, preserving and protecting the National Health Service, higher public sector pay, peace over endless wars, nuclear disarmament, ecosanity, and other policies benefitting all Brits equitably.

Phony anti-Semitism charges against him stem from justifiable criticism of Israeli apartheid abuses and support for long-suffering Palestinians.

At a 2018 Labor conference, Corbyn said the following to Britain's Jewish community:

“This party, this movement, will always be implacable campaigners against anti-Semitism and racism in all its forms.”

Yet anti-Semitism propaganda charges against him persisted by major UK media (including the state controlled BBC), the Israeli lobby, and right wing/dirty business as usual politicians, hardline Labor MPs among them.

Pre-election, the so-called Jewish Labor Movement (JLM) falsely accused Corbyn and Labor of becoming a “refuge for anti-Semites, (sic)” the party “no longer a safe space for Jewish people or for those who stand up against anti-Semitism (sic).”

An anti-Labor/anti-Corbyn smear campaign centered around this phony issue, Brits manipulated to believe the deception.

What Johnson called a “very real (Corbyn anti-Semitism) threat” was a dominant media repeated Big Lie that worked by the power of repetition, truth and full disclosure getting short shrift.

Britain’s chief rabbi Ephraim Mirvis was enlisted against him, falsely saying he’s “unfit for high office,” his publicly expressed view a first in UK pre-election history.

The same goes for Archbishop of Canterbury/Church of England head Justin Welby, tweeting about a “deep sense of insecurity and fear felt by many British Jews” about Corbyn.

Mike Pompeo warned that the Trump regime wouldn’t tolerate a Corbyn-led Labor government, vowing to “push back” to prevent it.

Thursday’s UK election results reflect the triumph of mind manipulating propaganda over truth-telling – Brits getting the best “democracy” money can buy.

How else would governance of, by, and for the privileged few triumph over peace, equity and justice!

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According to the Wall Street Journal, China and the US agreed on “roll(ing) back existing tariffs on Chinese goods and cancel(led) new (15%) levies” on another \$156 billion worth of its imports scheduled to be imposed on December 15.

The deal involves large-scale Chinese purchases of US agricultural products and “other concessions, according to people familiar with the matter,” the Journal adding:

“(T)he deal calls for China to buy \$50 billion worth of agricultural goods in 2020, along with energy and other goods. In exchange the US would reduce the tariff rate on many Chinese imports, which now ranges from 15% to 25%.”

A snapback provision calls for reimposing tariffs if Chinese purchases aren’t fulfilled as agreed on.

According to Bloomberg News, US duties on Chinese imports will be reduced “by as much as half,” ones scheduled for December 15 “delay(ed),” adding:

“(T)here is nothing in this tentative deal that wouldn’t have existed in the absence of the past two years of wrangling.”

China’s phase one “commitments on farm purchases...won’t even be in writing.” The Trump regime accomplished little in trade talks with China over the past two years.

Temporary ceasefire leaves major issues unresolved. China wanted tariffs relief to boost its weakening economy. Trump hopes the phase one deal will help his reelection prospects.

China’s Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying stopped short of agreeing with reports that a phase one trade deal with the US was agreed on by both sides, saying:

“As soon as reports suggesting the phase one deal was reached emerged, the major stock markets in the US and Europe jumped,” adding:

“This illustrates that a deal through negotiation is beneficial to both nations and their peoples, and it is what the international community wants.”

“The agreement has to be mutually beneficial to each other.” On Friday, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi said updated information on trade talks would be released shortly.

China’s Global Times editor Hu Xijin tweeted: “Chinese authorities and official media so far haven’t given any information on China and the US are close to a deal.”

“As the US side released optimistic information through various channels, the Chinese side has basically kept silent. This is a delicate situation.”

On Friday, China’s Global Times reported that a phase one deal was agreed on, citing “multiple US media” reports, adding:

“Neither the White House nor the Office of the United States Trade Representative responded to requests for comment on the

status of the agreement.”

“China has yet to confirm whether it will push ahead with postponing its own tariffs of between 5 and 10 per cent on US goods, also set to go into effect on Sunday.”

Currently, US tariffs up to 25% exist on about \$375 billion worth of Chinese imports, Beijing duties on around \$110 billion worth of US products.

According to State Department consultant John Sitalides, a phase one deal “does not halt or even suspend the US-China trade dispute, which is strategic in nature and will continue in ongoing phases for years if not decades so long as Beijing flouts the free, open and rules-based global trading system (sic) that has propelled it to the top ranks of the world economy.”

What Pompeo earlier called “the China challenge” is all about its high-level economic growth and technological advances for decades – compared to US stagnation and decline.

It’s largely a service economy, its manufacturing base hollowed out, millions of its high-pay and other jobs offshored to China and other low-wage countries.

Beijing’s system threatens the US-led Western neoliberal model. Its growth heads the country toward becoming the world’s largest economy in the years ahead, an intolerable notion in Washington.

This threat cuts to the heart of the Trump regime trade war. The US wants China and other countries it doesn’t control transformed into client states.

Beijing won’t let itself be trapped the way other nations subordinated their sovereign rights to US interests.

China’s successful economic model fueled its growth – free from US control, not victimized by its exploitive practices,

clearly what it's not about to sacrifice in dealings with the US now and ahead.

A phase one trade deal belies major irreconcilable differences on major issues.

They're all about the US side wanting China contained, weakened and isolated politically, economically, financially, technologically and militarily.

China is rising, the US declining because of its arrogance, rage for dominance over other nations at their expense, endless wars on invented enemies, and unwillingness to change.

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After elections in April and September, neither Netanyahu's Likud or Gantz/Lapid's Blue and White party were able to cobble together a 61-seat ruling Knesset majority to form a new government.

Coalitions always run Israel. No single party ever won a majority of Knesset seats on its own. Most often, majority right-wing hardliners run things – notably under Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon, Gantz likely to operate the same way if becomes prime minister.

The former IDF chief is an unindicted war criminal. He headed Israel's Ground Forces Command during the 2006 rape of Lebanon.

Strategy focused on inflicting mass casualties, including against civilians – notably maximum deaths, injuries, destruction, displacement and human suffering, core international humanitarian law breaches, accountability never forthcoming.

Gantz was IDF chief of staff during Israel's 2012 Pillar of Cloud and 2014 Protective Edge aggression against Gaza, responsible for massacring thousands, injuring many thousands more, mostly civilians, along with widespread destruction.

Using banned weapons against Gazans, doctors reported treating horrific injuries never seen before, much of the Strip turned to rubble during 51 days of premeditated naked aggression in summer 2014 alone.

Three Israeli wars of aggression on besieged Gaza since December 2008 devastated the Strip and its two million people.

Gantz bragged about returning parts of Gaza "to the stone ages," implying he'll do it again as prime minister.

He's an unapologetic warrior likely to govern that way if he emerges as Israeli prime minister.

On Wednesday at midnight, Israel's Knesset dissolve, a third election in less than a year scheduled for March 2.

The country remains in political limbo. On Thursday, Israel's High Court of Justice said Netanyahu can remain prime minister for the time being, rejecting a petition for his resignation.

A second petition to the high court has yet to be ruled on. The rejected petition cited three reasons for his removal:

1. He's incompetent.
2. His indictment on charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust obligates him to step down.
3. He's been unable to form a new government, leaving Israel in political limbo.

Though Israeli law permits an indicted prime minister to remain in office unless convicted, the issue was never judicially ruled on in Israeli history.

Its Supreme Court may have final say on it given serious wrongdoing Netanyahu is charged with, making him politically damaged goods. Polls show most Israelis want him to step down.

What's going on is unprecedented in Israeli history. Since indicted on November 21, he's weaker than ever before in his political life as prime minister.

On Thursday, he said he'll relinquish his health, social welfare, diaspora, and agriculture ministries on January 1 while remaining prime minister.

After neither he or Gantz was able to form a coalition government, MKs had 21 days to nominate one of their own to try cobbling together what the two front-runners failed at.

No nomination emerged when time elapsed, MKs passing legislation for a third election in 90 days before the body

was dissolved.

Is coalition rule likely to emerge from a third election or will stalemate continue? A Tuesday poll showed Blue and White expanded its one seat advantage over Likud to four – 37 to 33 seats.

It's a long time to March 2. Much can happen from now to then, including a possible Likud primary challenge from MK Gideon Sa'ar.

Netanyahu accused Gantz of "forcing" new elections. Rallying support from his base, he said "to prevent this happening again, there is only one thing we must do: win and win big."

Is he dead man walking politically and judicially or a survivor like throughout his political life?

According to Haaretz editors, "the 'magician' is running out of rabbits to pull out of his hat, which is full of holes, and all that's left are empty political stunts meant to create background noise that might make people forget that (he's) charged with criminal offenses in three different cases," adding:

He should resign "from politics...for the benefit of the country (and to try) salvag(ing) what little remains of his own honor."

The fullness of time in the new year will tell how things turn out.

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The post [Stalemate Sends Israel to Third Election](#) appeared first on [Stephen Lendman](#).

Media Cheerlead Tory Electoral Triumph in Britain

Media Cheerlead Tory Electoral Triumph in Britain

by Stephen Lendman (stephenlendman.org – [Home](#) – [Stephen Lendman](#))

Throughout the political campaign ahead of Thursday's UK parliamentary elections, establishment media one-sidedly supported hardline PM Boris Johnson-led Tories over Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn's progressive change agenda.

Now basking in the afterglow of preserving dirty business as usual – wealth, power, and privilege benefitting at the expense of ordinary Brits – they're cheerleading Thursday's triumph of continuity over the public welfare.

The UK owned, funded and controlled BBC featured anti-Corbyn propaganda throughout the campaign.

On Friday, it headlined "Boris Johnson hails 'new dawn' after historic victory." His Tory triumph over progressive change under Corbyn-led Labor assures continued neoliberal war on ordinary Brits to more greatly enrich privileged ones – what the BBC and other UK establishment media support.

Other UK media headlines were as follows:

London Guardian: "Tories secure majority as Corbyn says he won't lead Labour into next election...Boris Johnson leads Tories to historic general election win"

UK Independent: "Boris Johnson thanks switching Labour voters for landslide victory, as Corbyn under pressure to quit immediately"

London Telegraph: "Johnson meeting with Queen after landslide victory"

London's Daily Mail quoted Johnson in bold upper case letters, saying: **I WON'T LET YOU DOWN**" – meaning privileged Brits exclusively at the expense of ordinary people.

The London Times: "Johnson hails emphatic win for Tories"

The London Observer showed an image of Johnson with a figure dressed up as Santa Claus.

Media cheerleading for Johnson and Tories resonated on the other side of the pond.

NYT: "How Conservatives Won in a Landslide," saying:

"(W)ith a solid majority now, Mr. Johnson will have command of his party and of the House of Commons, and the power to press on with his domestic agenda" – featuring neoliberal harshness the Times ignored.

WaPo: "Boris Johnson wins majority, while Jeremy Corbyn says he won't lead another general election campaign"

Johnson was quoted boasting: "Getting Brexit done is now the irrefutable, irresistible, unarguable decision of the British people."

Brits for Brexit will likely have second thoughts when Johnson begins privatizing the National Health Service and stiffens neoliberal harshness with a mandate to do what he pleases for

Britain's privileged class.

Wall Street Journal: The Tory triumph "vindicates Mr. Johnson's gamble on throwing the Brexit question back to the voters by seeking a mandate for his revised deal with Brussels," adding:

"(L)arge Tory gains also offer hope of restoring some semblance of sanity to British politics" – likely meaning dirty business as usual continuity on steroids ahead.

AP News: "UK's Johnson claims Brexit mandate as Tories secure majority"

Reuters: "Britain speeds towards Brexit as Johnson wins large majority in election"

Fox News: "Trump congratulates UK's Johnson after historic wins, hints at new trade deal"

CNN: "Boris Johnson storms to victory"

ABC News: "Conservatives win landslide majority in UK election"

CBS News: "UK election landslide prompts Boris Johnson to tout an 'irrefutable' Brexit mandate"

Al Jazeera: "After election victory, Boris Johnson promises January 31 Brexit"

When reality of what Johnson and Tories have in mind for Britain's privileged class at the expense of ordinary people follows post-election harras, they'll know his "new dawn" comes at the expense of their rights and welfare.

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Trump Wants Criticism of Israel Equated with Anti-Semitism

Trump Wants Criticism of Israel Equated with Anti-Semitism

by Stephen Lendman (stephenlendman.org – [Home](#) – [Stephen Lendman](#))

Trump wants anti-Semitism redefined. An executive order perhaps already signed is all about stifling legitimate criticism of Israel.

It’s about wanting the Jewish state absolved of occupation, colonialism, and apartheid crimes against humanity.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) affirmed self-determination as an essential principle of international law.

Colonial occupation is in clear violation. UN General Assembly Res. 151, the Declaration on Colonialism, condemns the practice “in all its forms and manifestations,” including illegal settlements.

According to the Apartheid Convention (1973), the practice is

state-sponsored “inhuman” racism “committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them.”

That’s what Israeli repression of the Palestinian people is all about – Gazans harmed most of all by suffocating siege, cross-border incursions, frequent terror-bombing incidents, and naked aggression at Israel’s discretion.

Ignored by the Jewish state, the US and other Western countries is that self-determination is a universal right, affirmed by the UN Charter and other international law.

The West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza are illegally occupied territories, Palestinians ruthlessly persecuted by Israel.

Land seizures and dispossessing Palestinians are flagrant international law violations. So are breaches of Security Council resolutions, Israel guilty time and again, accountability never forthcoming.

All of the above are relevant to Trump’s expected executive order. It’s notably all about wanting legitimate criticism of Israeli high crimes silenced, notably on college campuses by student activists for equity and justice – targeting them and others a flagrant First Amendment violation.

According to the Constitution Center, presidential executive orders (EOs) have “much of the same power as federal law.”

Congress can pass legislation to override an EO, a super-majority needed in case of a presidential veto.

The Congressional Research Service explained that there is no direct “definition of executive orders, presidential memoranda, and proclamations in the US Constitution. There is, likewise, no specific provision authorizing their issuance.”

Every US president since George Washington issued EOs. During

WW II, Franklin Roosevelt authorized internment camps for Japanese Americans.

In 1861 during the Civil War, Lincoln suspended habeas rights by this way.

Two EOs were used for his Emancipation Proclamation that didn't free a single slave at the time. He wanted them deported at war's end to maintain America as a white supremacist society.

He was a war criminal. He suspended the Constitution and habeas rights, forcefully closed courts, arbitrarily ordered arrests, conscripted US citizens without congressional authorization, and closed newspapers opposing his policies.

Glorifying him as a great president ignores his dark side, the same true of all US warrior presidents and others beholden to privileged interests exclusively at the expense of the public welfare.

Executive branch and congressional support for Israel is overwhelmingly one-sided. Few in Washington dare criticize its actions, no matter how egregious. The same goes for establishment media.

According to AP News, citing three unnamed US officials, "Trump is set to sign an executive order Wednesday targeting anti-Semitism on college campuses," adding:

"Officials say the order will broaden the federal government's definition of anti-Semitism and instruct it to be used in enforcing laws against discrimination on college campuses."

Henceforth, will advocacy for Palestinian rights and wanting Israel held accountable for denying them be criminalized – and not just on college campuses?

According to the NYT, Trump's order "will effectively interpret Judaism as a race or nationality, not just a

religion.”

It'll permit withholding federal funds from colleges and universities that fail to crack down on criticism of Israel. Trump's EO calls anti-Semitic.

It aims to stifle BDS activism on college campuses, a vital global initiative to counter its persecution of the Palestinian people.

Separate and unequal is fundamental Israeli policy, Muslims especially demeaned.

The Trump regime's definition of anti-Semitism matches the State Department's, falsely calling it criticism “of the state of Israel.”

It considers the legitimate global BDS movement and other groups critical of Israel anti-Semitic.

Congressional Anti-Semitism Awareness legislation was introduced this year and earlier but not passed.

Anti-Zionism and anti-Israel are unrelated to hostility and bias toward Jews.

Israel is a nation-state, Judaism a religion. Some of Israel's fiercest critics are Jews, clearly not self-hating ones.

Calling Jewish state critics anti-Semitic is a long-ago discredited canard.

The same goes for criticizing Zionism, tyranny by another name. The ideology is extremist, undemocratic, hateful, ruthless, racist, destructive, and hostile to peace, equity and justice.

It's contemptuous of fundamental legal, moral and ethical principles, Jews unacceptably considered a chosen people superior to others.

Anglo-Zionism is a hugely destructive force threatening everyone everywhere. Israeli persecution of Palestinians is well documented – criticizing both a moral and ethical obligation.

US Campaign for Palestinian Rights executive director Yousef Munayyer slammed Trump's EO, calling it part of a campaign "to silence Palestinian rights activism" by equating legitimate criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism, adding:

"Israeli apartheid is a very hard product to sell in America, especially in progressive spaces, and realizing this, many Israeli apartheid apologists, Trump included, are looking to silence a debate they know they can't win."

Three years ago this month, in response to the proposed congressional Anti-Semitism Awareness Act of 2016 legislation, the ACLU said the following:

"The bill poses a serious threat to the First Amendment free speech rights of those on campus who may hold certain political views," adding:

"(T)he First Amendment prevents the federal government from using its great weight to impose severe penalties on a person simply for sharing a political viewpoint critical of Israel."

On Tuesday, Jewish Voice for Peace said "Trump doesn't care about Jewish safety. (His) Executive Order is about silencing criticism of Israel," adding:

His EO "will usher in a climate of fear on college campuses, where university administrations will be incentivized to silence student activism, faculty research, and teaching about Palestine – while white supremacist organizing, which has been steadily increasing under Trump, will go unchecked."

Unobstructed speech, press and academic rights are fundamental. Compromising them is the hallmark of totalitarian

rule, the slippery slope where the US and other Western societies are heading – Trump’s new EO the latest example.

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Stopping (Nonexistent) Malign Activities from Russian Terrorism (SMART) Act

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by Stephen Lendman (stephenlendman.org – [Home – Stephen Lendman](http://stephenlendman.org))

According to proposed Senate legislation, the world’s leading state sponsor of terrorism USA wants leading advocate of global peace and stability Russia labeled with this designation.

The measure also calls for Donbass freedom fighters in Donetsk and Lugansk, unwilling to accept fascist rule by Kiev, designated foreign terrorist organizations.

The legislation has nothing to do with preserving and protecting US national security, everything to do with its imperial interests, its endless wars, economic terrorism, and other hostile actions aimed at advancing hegemonic control over planet earth, its resources and populations.

The so-called SMART Act (S.1189) was introduced last April by hardline Senator Cory Gardner. Earlier he said:

“The State Department should consider adding (Russia) to its list of state sponsors of terrorism, alongside its close allies Iran and Syria.”

“The moral case for such a designation is sound (sic). Russia has invaded its neighbors Georgia and Ukraine (sic).”

“It supports...Bashar al-Assad and our enemies in Afghanistan, and it is engaged in active information warfare against Western democracies (sic), including meddling in the 2016 United States elections (sic).”

Hardline US Senators Mike Coffman, Robert Menendez, Marco Rubio and Ben Sasse also called for designating Russia a state sponsor of terrorism.

In August 2018, Gardner, Lindsey Graham, Menendez, Ben Cardin, John McCain (on his death bed), and Jeanne Shaheen introduced the Defending American Security from Kremlin Aggression Act of 2018.

It called for “increas(ing) economic, political, and diplomatic pressure on the Russian Federation in response to Russia’s continued interference in our elections (sic), malign influence in Syria (sic), aggression in Crimea (sic), and other activities.”

No action was taken on the measure. Nor did followup Defending American Security from (Nonexistent) Kremlin Aggression Act of 2019 advance so far.

On Wednesday, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved the SMART Act. If passed by the full House and Senate and signed into law by Trump, it calls for the State Department to enforce the measure within 90 days.

Iran, North Korea, Syria, and Sudan alone are falsely declared state sponsors of terrorism by the State Department – defining the designation as follows:

“Countries determined by the Secretary of State to have repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism are designated pursuant to three laws: section 6(j) of the Export Administration Act, section 40 of the Arms Export Control Act, and section 620A of the Foreign Assistance Act.”

“Taken together, the four main categories of sanctions resulting from designation under these authorities include restrictions on US foreign assistance; a ban on defense exports and sales; certain controls over exports of dual use items; and miscellaneous financial and other restrictions.”

“Designation under the above-referenced authorities also implicates other sanctions laws that penalize persons and countries engaging in certain trade with state sponsors.”

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee advanced SMART legislation a day after Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met with Trump and Pompeo in Washington.

Asked about the timing of his visit during a joint press conference, Lavrov said “regardless of the day you choose to visit Washington, it will surely coincide with either sanctions or impeachment or something else.”

Separately on Wednesday, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved a measure to sanction Turkey for buying Russian S-400 air defense missiles, calling its legitimate purchase unacceptable.

The so-called "Promoting American National Security and Preventing the Resurgence of ISIS Act (sic) also imposes sanctions on Russia for helping Syria buy weapons for self-defense.

House members passed a similar bill earlier, the full Senate likely to follow suit.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee also approved four energy bills, including the "Energy Security Cooperation with Allied Partners in Europe Act of 2019."

It opposes Russia's Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline to Europe, encourages NATO countries not to buy Russian gas, and calls increased US liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports.

A provision initially included in the bill to sanction companies involved in constructing Russia's Nord Stream 2 was removed as the action is part of the FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

Approved by the House on Wednesday, Senate passage to follow this month, Trump certain to sign the measure into law.

Nord Stream 2 construction is nearly completed. The NDAA provision won't stop it becoming operational early next year.

Congressional legislation is all about furthering exports of expensive US LNG at the expense of much cheaper/readily accessible Russian natural gas.

It's also part of longstanding US war on Russia by other means, a failed strategy.

US sanctions war encouraged greater self-sufficiency. In 2018, Russia's economy grew 2.3%, currently growing at a 1.7% pace, further growth expected in 2020.

Note: Last week, US Under Secretary of State David Hale said the State Department does not consider Russia a state sponsor

of terrorism.

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