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Will More US Troops in Saudi Arabia Make America Great?

President Trump deserves credit for resisting the war cries from neocons like Sen. Lindsey Graham and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo after last week's attack on two Saudi oil facilities. Pompeo was eager to blame Iran because he wants war with Iran and anything that can trigger such a war is fine with him. So he put the president in a difficult spot by declaring Iran the culprit: suddenly the president's options in the media and in Washington were limited to "how to punish Iran."



A week has now passed since the attack and Pompeo's rush to judgement has been shown for what it was: war propaganda. That is because there has still been no determination of who launched the attack. Yemen's Houthis took responsibility right away and Iran denied any involvement. We have seen nothing to this point that contradicts this.

President Trump likely understands that a US war on Iran will be his undoing as president. Who knows, maybe that's what his closest advisors want. But according to a Gallup poll just last month, only 18 percent of Americans were in favor of military action against Iran. Seventy-eight percent of Americans — including 72 percent of Republicans — want the president to pursue diplomatic efforts over war. Iran has made clear that any attack on its territory will trigger a total war. The Middle East would be engulfed in flames and the US economy would be in the tank. Suddenly we'd see Democrat challengers pretending to be antiwar!

The message to Trump is pretty clear — war with Iran would be deeply unpopular — and it seems clear he understands the message. Just hours after his Secretary of State put the US on war footing with Iran, President Trump was forced to walk back Pompeo's aggression. When asked about going to war with Iran, President Trump said, "Do I want war? I don't want war with anybody."

Unfortunately, with pressure on President Trump to "do something" even as Iran has not been found to have been behind the attack, the president has settled on two measures — one pointless and the other dangerous. On Friday Trump announced yet even more sanctions on Iran, leaving many of us to wonder what is possibly left to sanction. He also announced a deployment of US military forces to Saudi Arabia of a "defensive nature." Why should the military be sent to "defend" one of the wealthiest and most repressive countries on earth? It is hard to see how putting US servicemembers into harm's way — into a war zone — to defend Saudi Arabia can in any way make America great again. I believe most Americans would agree.

President Trump should immediately cancel the order to send US troops to Saudi Arabia and should immediately remove what troops are already on Saudi soil. Then the Saudis would understand that they must end their aggression against Yemen.

Attempting to placate the neocons is a fool's errand, because they are never satisfied even up to and including war. The tide is turning in America — and even in Washington — against Saudi Arabia. After



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the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi and a catastrophic four-year Saudi war on Yemen, no American politician is any longer in the mood to stick his or her neck out to defend Saudi Arabia. President Trump would be wise to use caution: it's always dangerous sticking one's neck out when the Saudi government is around.

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