

After Soleimani assassination Dems denounced & Reps cheered Trump. But he refused to start all-out war and everyone feels cheated

by Michael Rectenwald



Donald Trump's response to the Iranian missile attack on US military bases in Iraq is defying the expectations (and perhaps the hopes) of both Democratic and Republican neocon hawks.

After he ordered the drone strike that killed Iran's "[second-most popular](#)" leader, General Qassem Soleimani, Trump has faced condemnation from Democratic lawmakers, as well as criticism from a prominent member of the otherwise pro-Trump media and at least one member of his own party. They claim that he has been treading dangerously close to a war with Iran.

"President Trump just tossed a stick of dynamite into a tinderbox," [stated](#) former vice president and 2020 presidential hopeful Joe Biden, in response to the action.

Lawmaker [Ron Paul](#) (R-TX) and Fox's [Tucker Carlson](#) have also argued that Trump's handling of Iran has been teetering on disaster. This contingent of the Republican Party and sponsors is non-interventionist and opposed to the "globalist" neocons in their midst.

Even after his [address](#) to the nation on Wednesday, which he ended by offering an olive branch to Iran, Trump continues to take incoming fire from the Democrats, one of whom [compared](#) him to an arsonist and firefighter that sets fires only to be the hero who extinguishes them.

But the neocons within the Republican Party have relished every sign of bellicosity from Trump, trotting out the old "good versus evil" tropes and calling on Trump to ratchet up attacks on Iran, even going so far as to say that the US and Iran are already at war.

"This was an act of war," Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) [declared](#) on Fox News with Sean Hannity. "By any reasonable definition. The missiles were launched from Iran. The president has all the authority he needs under Article II to respond. It was an act of war by the regime that for the last 40 years has been a cancer in the Mideast."

One way to understand the political imbroglio in the US is to realize that traps galore have been set for Trump by his opponents in both parties. The greater part of his own party consists of neocon hawks bent on regime change in the Middle East, while the greater part of the Democratic Party, a party that has impeached him in the House, seeks to cast him as the world's most dangerous menace, liable to end all life on planet Earth if left in office.

In point of fact, both the Democratic and Republican parties

harbor neocon imperialists who demand regime change in the Middle East. Had Hillary Clinton won the 2016 presidential election, bombs would likely be raining on Iran right now.

But the Democratic hawks despise Trump more than they love war. Thus, they are letting their party's left wing, which seeks to criminalize Trump's presidency, dictate the terms of engagement. This contingent of frenzied hysterics treats Trump's every presidential act, especially his use of the military, as a harbinger of the apocalypse.

This criminalization of Trump has given license to adversarial elements like those in Iran that read the discord in the US as weakness in leadership and seek to ride the tidal wave made by Trump's domestic opponents. Tehran likely has bet that the opposition has tied Trump's hands and disabled retaliatory actions.

But it appears as if Trump may have out-maneuvered both poles of the political opposition by refusing to take the assorted bait and going for de-escalation instead.

First published in