

US Loses Gulf States, Starts New Front, Demands Impunity

The US-Israeli war alliance is losing its allies in the gulf. The resumption of the Iran War is a reflection of US desperation and the best idea Washington has? Start a new front against international law itself. The decline of the empire is accelerating. Support us on Substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Merch: <https://neutralitystudies.com/shop> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate>

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. This is Pascal, and I want to do a very short update with you about the spreading of the wars—plural, because it is several wars right now that are kind of coming together. I do not think that we're yet in a Second World War scenario, where the slow spreading of everything then actually leads to a Third World War, but the way that things are going is very frightening. We see how the war in Ukraine, the NATO proxy war against Russia, is spreading. It's not very much of a proxy war anymore since NATO managed to take the fight straight into Russia. But today I would not want to focus on that one. I want to focus on the other theater—the incredible kind of spreading of the war now again in the Gulf region.

We read now that Saudi Arabia is starting to chime in with more attacks on Yemen. It just bombed Sana'a airport, where the delegation from Yemen, from the Houthis that was attending the funeral of the slain Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Iran, was supposed to come back and wanted to land. And then the Saudis actually bombed the airfield, so that airplane had to go to a different airport and land there. And now the Houthis are striking back at Saudi Arabia, or the Yemenis—Yemen is striking back—and Yemen is now officially thinking or talking about closing its strait on its end of the Arabian Peninsula, which would of course exacerbate the problems that the United States has with global oil supply, while at the same time the United States is bombing and continues to bomb Iran.

We are hearing that now a third and fourth wave of strikes has been conducted on the Iranian mainland. And tomorrow, we will be talking again to Larry Johnson in order to get an expert update on what exactly these latest bombings on both sides mean. But the war—the war against Iran—is in full swing again. And there is not even any point anymore in talking about the Memorandum of Understanding, which now is more or less shelved, although most likely at some point the United States will start begging Iran to come back to it. But for now, the pause in the war is on pause. So the continuation of the bombing is going on. We are seeing how the U.S. wants to take over the Strait of Hormuz.

Donald Trump, yesterday and the day before, was talking about being the security provider for the Strait of Hormuz and proposing really kind of lunatic numbers. He's talking about charging 20% of the value of the cargo that a ship passing through the Strait would have to pay in order to be allowed through by the U.S. administrators. Now, this is, of course, an absolute brain fart of Donald Trump, but it shows the mindset that he would even write about or talk about something like that. I mean, this to me is a typical moment when he has the idea that, oh, I can create new leverage, I can threaten everybody with a 20% toll fee.

So when I go down to 5%, they will all lick my boots and be so happy that I'm so kind. But this is a typical negotiation strategy that he has displayed before, when he thinks that he has an unbeatable kind of leverage, so that he then sets an astronomical figure at first, so that when he goes down and basically gives it away at a 75% discount, everybody will go along with it. He has done this time and time again. Just think about the tariff war of last year, how he thought he could use tariffs and then threaten everybody with like 50%, 100% tariffs. So when it then only was 20% or whatever it was in the end, all of them would say like, yeah, we are glad and we are happy and dear Donald and so on and so forth.

This tells me that Donald Trump is actually thinking of the Strait of Hormuz as something that he can implement in a way that, in the end, this waterway will be an American waterway, will be under control, and that he will be able to actually throw Iran out of its own neighborhood. I don't know where he gets that weird idea from, but he's already talking about it. But then again, Donald Trump lives in a fantasy world, and a lot of the U.S. war hawks, including the neocons, of course, live in a very bizarre fantasy world. Mr. Abbas Saeed yesterday then took to Twitter and actually seized on the opportunity to remind everybody what a benign regional hegemon Iran actually is.

He wrote about this idea of Donald Trump saying that POTUS, so the president, is absolutely right. Whoever provides a secure and safe passage of commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz should be compensated for this service. Iran has always been the guardian of the Strait and will remain so forever. 20% is, of course, too much. We will be fair. I mean, the Iranians at this point are really, really good, not only at trolling Donald Trump, but basically paying back in kind, including taking over some of the really ridiculous language, including the all-caps kind of intermissions or underlined words in all caps, just in order to take over, you know, this baby language.

This is the grown-ups using baby language to talk to baby Trump, right? And to troll baby Trump and to troll the United States. But it actually shows that we have the Iranians who properly understand their own leverage. I still do wonder who gave Trump this idea, if it was the recently deceased Lindsey Graham, one of his last things on the way out, that he whispered into Trump's ear that you can be the toll master of the Strait of Hormuz, and you can make a lot of money out of this, and we can squeeze the Europeans, we can squeeze the Asians, we can squeeze the Gulf states, and just squeeze them hard, so you should put the price tag already, put it as high as possible, and then go down later.

But it seems to me that, at least for the moment, Donald Trump, also with these kinds of ideas, is again following the neocon line of the administration and is convinced actually that he will get this. Now, on the other hand, one very important thing at the moment to me is what is happening in the Gulf states themselves, so that Saudi Arabia actually escalated the war with Yemen. That is, of course, a very negative development. It seems to indicate that Saudi Arabia judges that now the moment is ripe to maybe finish off a job that it itself never managed to complete. But then again, an escalation at the moment, what is that supposed to achieve other than even further economic duress on the Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia? This is something open to see.

But yesterday, also, the foreign minister of Oman did something very interesting in an interview with one of the Western media outlets. The Omanis, you must know, are very, very careful people. Sometimes they're lumped together with the other Gulf states, together with the UAE, with Qatar, Bahrain, and, of course, Saudi Arabia, as part of the Gulf Club, and they are part of the regional arrangements for trade that they've got over there. However, Oman is the most careful of all of the Gulf states to try to have a balanced foreign policy, which is why we actually don't hear much about it, which is why it is not often in the news unless it is one of the meeting grounds for negotiations.

Much of the Iran negotiations actually happened in Muscat, Oman, and Oman has always been ready and willing to help as a diplomatic service provider of last resort. Just as a piece of information for you, this is the homepage of the Omani foreign ministry, and how they talk about themselves and about their role in the world, even on their own homepage, is very, very prudent. I'll just read a few words for you, just one sentence from the main page on its foreign policy. It says that the foreign policy of the Sultanate of Oman is founded on a profound and enduring vision of Oman as a friend to all. A friend to all. And if you go to its foreign policy principles, we can read a little bit more about this approach.

The foreign policy of the Sultanate of Oman is dedicated to peace and security. It is based on certain core principles, which are rooted in an understanding of Oman as an active participant in a mutually supportive global community. Oman strongly believes in developing and maintaining good relations with all its neighbours. It has been a consistent aim of Omani foreign policy to ensure that its relations with its neighbours are characterized by friendship, mutual respect, non-interference, and understanding. Oman's neighbours include the fellow members of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council, with whom Oman has developed extensive economic and security collaboration, contributing substantially to mutual security during a period of uncertain regional stability.

Very importantly now, in the next couple of sentences, for Oman, the concept of neighbour extends beyond immediate adjacent countries to embrace other important partners whose proximity and significance qualify them as neighbouring states. Yemen, Iran, India, and Pakistan are thus among the most important neighbours. So I'll stop here. I just wanted to read this out to you so that you understand just how different Oman is from the other Gulf states, which built their entire security structure around an alliance with the United States and, you know, basically getting the idea that if

you have a lot of US bases on your soil, you will be safe and you just need to make sure that you are in the right club.

The Omanis never played in anyone's club. The Omanis don't have United States military bases on their territory. Oman, in my view and in my definition, is a poster child for a neutral country—neutral in the political sense of actually maintaining proper neutrality, a proper friendship with all sides. That includes Iran, which is why Iran is actually discussing with Oman how to manage the Strait of Hormuz, which is why Iran and Oman are constantly in diplomatic contact, which is why Oman is able to serve as a go-between for negotiations between Iran and the United States, although there's really not much negotiation going on.

But I just wanted to point this out before showing you this article here from Al-Mayadeen, a Lebanese outlet that reports about an interview the Omani foreign minister, Mr. Badr al-Busaidi, gave, in which he said that the greatest threat to Gulf security comes from Tel Aviv rather than Tehran, and that he argues the recent war exposed the failure of decades of US-led containment. So this, to me, is quite significant again because Oman is very, very careful whenever it criticizes any one of its neighbors.

And although Israel is removed geographically from Oman, and the entirety of Saudi Arabia and other states is in between, still Oman is very careful. That now the foreign minister actually comes out and points his finger at Tel Aviv, at Israel, is quite significant. It tells me that Oman now not only feels empowered enough to do so and to point out the obvious, but that it also finds it necessary to signal to other Gulf states that it itself, as a Gulf state, is of the opinion that the Gulf should find a way to arrange its affairs with Iran and get to some sort of agreement on how to wind down the conflict, the violence. But that the Gulf states should be very wary and very careful about what they're doing in regard to Israel, which is, of course, a main recipient of this message — the UAE, the United Arab Emirates, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and so on.

They've been quite openly supportive of Israel in the very recent past. And this kind of statement that Oman is saying out loud, to me, is also a message to the UAE that they need to be extremely careful with what they're doing toward Israel. So we are overall seeing a spreading of war and spreading of violence. It is difficult at this point to say whether this violence is actually now just the last flare-ups, because it is difficult to imagine that the United States will sustain this for very much longer, as it already ran down its missile arsenals quite significantly during the first half of this year's part of the war, in March and April.

But this is something that we will talk about in future episodes, also again with Larry Johnson, about just how much capacity there still is in the region. It strikes me as something that cannot be upheld for very long. So how exactly Donald Trump wants to get to his idea of actually controlling the Strait of Hormuz and then charging 20% is an absolute mystery to me. But then again, the United States at the moment is lashing out, and really lashing out on all fronts. The last piece of information I want to show you here is really this one — that this is probably now a third or fourth or fifth front

that the United States chose to fight, and that's the war against international law, the war against the International Criminal Court.

The day before yesterday, the State Department actually announced that it intends to dismantle the International Criminal Court's threat to American sovereignty. Marco Rubio came out and made a statement and issued this official publication here to say that the United States now is trying everything it can to get rid of the International Criminal Court. One must know, of course, that the International Criminal Court has only very few cases against Americans. The only ones that I'm aware of are actually against a couple of U.S. service members in Afghanistan, which is something that the United States has been very, very angry about.

But on the other hand, of course, the ICC has arrest warrants out for Benjamin Netanyahu and Mr. Gallant. The ICC also issued arrest warrants against two Hamas leaders, although both of them are by now dead. And Israel is screaming out loud about this horrible development — that the court would dare to actually go against Israel, against the victim of October 7, as they keep portraying themselves. And the United States seems to now try to — or let me put it this way — Israel seems to have succeeded in convincing the United States to officially try to dismantle the ICC. Let me just read to you what this statement here says.

So, the State Department launches a campaign to dismantle the International Criminal Court's threat to American sovereignty. Today, Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced a sweeping campaign to dismantle the threat posed by the International Criminal Court to U.S. sovereignty. The campaign will feature a whole-of-government response to systematically disable the ICC's ability to operate, target American servicemen or officials, or otherwise threaten American sovereignty. And whenever this statement uses the word "sovereignty," you actually need to exchange it with the word "impunity."

What they mean is impunity. What they want is the absolute ability to roam the world, kill whoever they want, abduct presidents, kill leaders of other states, maim and destroy, and implement genocides around the globe. And whenever somebody says, oh, but wait, we have international law that forbids that, then the one who says that is the bad guy. So that's what they're doing here. Sovereignty means absolute impunity and absolute carte blanche to do whatever crime it is around the globe. So this is now the official US foreign policy, like as official as it gets. Let me read a little bit more. The ICC poses an intolerable threat to US sovereignty. It claims the authority to prosecute and even imprison American servicemen and officials operating on behalf of America's national interest.

Americans never signed up for this, and all American presidents since the ICC's ratification have maintained that the ICC does not have jurisdiction over Americans. The ICC previously opened an investigation into U.S. servicemen and intelligence officers and has since refused to close these cases. Yes, this is true because, although in order to implement ICC rulings you, of course, need states to be part of them, if states that are part of them have grievances against non-state parties,

they can still bring those cases. And that's what happened in the past. What happened about Afghanistan is that Afghanistan, or state parties to the ICC, brought a case against service members of the United States. The court accepted those, and the court then ruled on those. And these rulings, once they are out, become binding on all ICC members.

So as long as these service members of the US that have a ruling out against them are inside the United States, they're perfectly sound and safe and happy and can do whatever they want because the United States doesn't implement any of this—not its courts, nothing. But if they ever move to a country that, if they travel to a country that implements the ICC's rulings, well, then they might get arrested and then sent to The Hague for sentencing and whatnot. And that's the kind of threat that the United States is actually very worried about. And they are, of course, in this statement here, trying to portray themselves as victims, as if this is an imposition from the outside. No, it's not. This is the sovereign decision of other states to create a club in which they investigate war crimes of themselves and war crimes that happen on their territories that other third states, for instance, the United States, conducted.

And then when they come up with a finding that some of these crimes actually have been committed, they pass a ruling, and that ruling is then valid in all of the club members, not in the United States. So the United States doesn't need to sign up for this, but the United States, as they tell us here, perceives this implementation of sovereignty of other states—the right of another state to join such a club and then to implement such a ruling—that sovereign right of that state, the United States says, is an encroachment on its sovereignty.

Again, the U.S. doesn't mean sovereignty. The U.S. means impunity. The U.S. actually means—Marco Rubio, what he actually means is that the United States must be able, anywhere, everywhere around the world, to implement its will without any constraints, without any kind of accountability. Funnily enough, this is exactly the kind of thinking that they managed to press through in the Assange case, you might remember. Mr. Assange, of course, being persecuted for many, many years—first in Sweden, then in the UK, sorry, mainly in the UK—first in the Ecuadorian embassy and then in Belmarsh Prison.

And the whole point that the United States may dare the case against Mr. Assange is really, really astounding, because Mr. Assange is an Australian citizen who was inside the UK at the time when he published truthful information that he received through journalistic work inside the UK. And the United States still claimed that this was breaching US law and that US law applies to non-US citizens outside of the United States. And that was the entire case. And that was the case for the extradition. And in fact, at the very end, in order to drop everything and for Mr. Assange finally to have his freedom, what he needed to do—what was part of this basically plea deal in the end—was that he would fly to a US territory, stand in front of a US judge, and say that he is guilty of journalism, guilty of having received truthful information and published that truthful information.

And actually, he says so quite openly, that that's the only thing that he affirmed that he did—that he pled guilty for journalism. He had to do that in order, under the terms of the deal, to be released to Australia, where he can now live a more or less normal life, I hope. But the point here is, again, the United States interprets its sovereignty as utter impunity and the right to terrorize anyone, everywhere, anytime, with zero constraints. And they are putting it again into writing here. They already implicitly did that with the Assange case, and they are now explicitly doing it with international law and the war on international law that they have proclaimed here.

Let me just read to you what they are intending to do, how to implement this war against international law. The campaign will feature a wide range of actions intended to ensure that the International Criminal Court is incapable of threatening U.S. sovereignty or targeting Americans. Actions under consideration include diplomatic calls from the Secretary of State, Deputy Secretary, ambassadors, and other members of senior leadership to foreign nations, highlighting the abuse of the ICC and the risks posed to Americans and other nations, urging them to withdraw from the ICC. Nations that partner with American law enforcement and U.S. intelligence, or that enjoy the benefits of the U.S. security umbrella, are called upon to reject the ICC's purported authority and not to prosecute American officials and servicemen.

Increased security of nations that refuse to reject the ICC's failed authority while relying on U.S. assistance. Sorry, I misread. Increased scrutiny of nations that refuse to reject the ICC's failed authority. Then diplomatic calls urging the nations that, like America, are not part of the Rome Statute to leverage their diplomatic networks to take similar actions alongside us. Sorry, let me read this again, because it just shows the sloppiness of this entire thing, of this entire affair. Diplomatic calls urging other nations that, like America, are not party to the Rome Statute. These people, they don't even read, they don't even proofread their own stuff anymore.

It's quite insane. Also, please note that all of these bullet points here miss periods at the very end of the sentence. The White House, the State Department, is in such utter chaos and a state of disarray and decay that even official statements that Marco Rubio makes and that the spokespeople do, they don't even run that through any kind of linguistic check anymore. At this point, it's just a couple of dudes saying, and I wouldn't be surprised if they were in their pajamas when they formulate this and then put it out, like any one of us who can just, these days, put out anything we want on the internet. This is so sloppy and so poorly done.

But it is now state policy, of course. I think we are reaching peak idiocracy, and how idiocracy works through the institutions, how it kind of mellows up the institutions and makes them utterly worthless and useless. And all of the standards of the past are completely, utterly gone. So basically, what the United States, in its very poor writing, tells us here is that it will try to lobby with its friends. That's the main approach, right? Tell everybody, tell the Europeans, anyone who's benefiting from the

security umbrella, anyone who is a vassal state of the U.S., that they must reject the ICC, whether this is by exiting it immediately, completely, or issuing statements that they don't recognize ICC rulings and whatnot when the United States opposes them.

Any of such things is now thinkable, and they will do, as they say, as they call it, an all-of-government approach to wage this kind of international war. They will, of course, sanction ICC personnel and revoke visas and whatnot. They will really crack down on this institution. But it's a pretty insane moment. It's pretty insane. And we will see what the other states that are going to get that pressure will do. Because you must remember, the ICC is also the court that put out an arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin and one more female Russian official. And the Europeans and the Americans were doing standing ovations back then in the days, back in—I think that one came out in 2023, that ruling—and standing ovations and yay, great, and victory for international law and whatnot.

And, you know, you shouldn't be surprised at all if the ICC again has a ruling against Russia, that the same people, Marco Rubio, will clap and say, like, this is a great example of justice and fairness, and that they will demand that that kind of ruling be implemented, while they will also demand that anything else be dismantled and taken away, and... guardrails for the ICC and Israel cannot be prosecuted, and a new Rome Statute. Again, the United States is now getting so angry at the fact that it is losing its structural power in the system that it is lashing out at everyone and everything. And all of these attempts at waging war, be it now, you know, this is not going to be lawfare. There's no way that they can do lawfare here. But what they can do is diplomatic pressure.

They can do a diplomatic war on the ICC. And then with the Strait of Hormuz, with Iran, but also with what is happening with Russia. Russia and the bombing and so on — these are signs of, of course, the immediate decay of the US empire. All of its levers of power — the soft power, the structural power, even the physical power, the military power — they're all failing. They're all failing at this point to achieve the goals of the permanent war state. And hence, the actions are getting more dramatic, and they're getting more desperate, and they're getting angrier, and they're getting unhinged, and they're now being implemented by people who don't even spellcheck their statements anymore at the highest level because they work on a day-to-day basis. There is no long-term thinking anymore.

There is no integrating things into contexts. I am really stunned. I am stunned at the level that we came to within really just a couple of years. I would say the beginning of the decay was, of course, we have to look for it somewhere around 2022 and this last big push at breaking Russia. And now that that failed, and that it keeps failing, and that this order, this new order that's emerging — the multipolar order that kind of organically is emerging from this chaos — that they cannot break that, it seems to cause real strains of panic, even among the people who, at the beginning of this administration, remember Marco Rubio's words and Trump's words, they pretended that they understand this new order and that they want to integrate the United States into this order and be one of the leading states of the order.

But it still seems that the other side, the neocon side, won, and that's the side that wants to do away with that kind of arrangement and with any form of arrangement that is not centered around the United States. Again, this foreign policy on the ICC is just a standard example for me of how this works and how the mindset behind it works — that sovereignty means impunity. The sovereignty of the United States is absolute, and the sovereignty of everybody else is nothing. And nobody has a right to actually claim sovereignty other than the United States. That is... well, that's the mindset. That's the mindset of the neocons, and it is a neocon administration at the moment.

The only question is what these kinds of people do now when they finally run against all of these walls, and they are hitting many walls at the same time. Even the fight against the ICC is going to be an uphill battle, even if the United States manages to convince the UK, Europe, and a couple of other assholes to go along. And even if they manage to force these countries to exit the ICC, you would still have the entire Global South that is part of the ICC. You could force the ICC to move out of The Hague, out of the Netherlands. But there's nothing that will prevent them from just setting up shop in Lagos or setting up shop in Bangkok. You could do that. They could do that.

So, you see, the battle against international law in history is one that most states keep losing because the other states, especially the smaller ones, have too much common interest in upholding these standards, even if the big boys try to hit them very hard and treat them as non-existent. The rules and the norms themselves tend to persist. So, again, another uphill battle the United States chose that was not necessary and that it could have dealt with completely differently. But all-out warfare is apparently the only thing that these people still have as a problem-solving strategy. Very sad. Idiocracy at its best. Kakistocracy at its peak. But that's where I will leave you today. Thank you very much for your attention.