

U.S. Claims No Alternative to Larger Middle East War

by "Moon of Alabama"*

(Ed.) In the USA, too, readers of leading media outlets are guided in their opinion-forming with selected information on foreign policy. The investigative platform "Moon of Alabama" takes the time to scrutinise a recent analysis by Peter Baker, chief White House correspondent for the "New York Times". Is it necessary to bomb in Yemen or maintain military bases in Syria or Iraq? It becomes clear that Baker's selective choice of information makes the US government's policy appear to have no alternative: "There is no alternative".

* * *

Mainstream media propagandize their readers not only by what they report but also by not reporting on certain views and issues. A prime example is a recent *New York Times* "news analysis"¹ of a White House position on U.S. troops in the Middle East. The author is Peter Baker, the *New York Times* chief White House correspondent. The headline [21 January]:

As U.S. and Militias Engage, White House Worries About a Tipping Point

"The number of attacks on American troops in the Middle East increases the risk of deaths, a red line that could lead to a wider war."

Another day, another barrage of rockets and another spark that American officials fear could set off a wildfire of violence across the Middle East.

The latest attack on American troops in the region over the weekend resulted in no deaths, but President Biden and his advisers worry that it is only a matter of time. Whenever a report of a strike arrives at the White House Situation Room, officials wonder *whether this will be the one that forces a more decisive retaliation* and results in a broader regional war."

Baker fails to analyse the White House's assumption. He assumes that there is no alternative, TINA [«There Is No Alternative»] as the deceased British prime minister *Maggie Thatcher* used to say. The only response to a deadly attack would be a wider war without it being said how that war would be waged, against whom or for what purpose.

A hint comes only further down in the piece:

"As of Thursday, Iranian-backed militias had already carried out 140 attacks on American troops in Iraq and Syria, with nearly 70 U.S. personnel wounded, some of them suffering traumatic brain injuries. All but a few have been able to return to duty in short order, according to the Pentagon.

American forces have at times mounted retaliations, but in limited fashion to avoid instigating a full-fledged conflict.

Biden administration officials have regularly debated the proper strategy. They do not want to let such attacks go without a response, but on the other hand do not want to go so far that the conflict would escalate into a full-fledged war, particularly by striking Iran directly. They privately say they may have no choice, however, if American troops are killed. That is a red line that has not been crossed, but if the Iranian-backed militias ever have a day of better aim or better luck, it easily could be."

It seems like everything happening and every groups in the Middle East is assumed to be 'Iranian backed'. But neither Hamas, nor Hizbullah nor Iraqi militias nor the Houthi are 'Iranian backed'. They are allies of Iran and each other, not proxy fighters. They make their own weapons and munitions and take independent decisions.

Neither Iran nor Hizbullah nor any other entity besides Hamas knew that the October 7 attack on the Zionist state was coming. Their responses, as far as there were any, followed only after Hamas had already returned to the Gaza

* About Moon Of Alabama

This site's purpose is to discuss politics, economics, philosophy and blogger Billmon's *Whiskey Bar* writings. In 2004 *Moon of Alabama* was opened as an independent, open forum for members of the *Whiskey Bar* community. Bernhard started and still runs the site. The name of the original *Whiskey Bar* was taken from *Bertolt Brecht's Alabama Song* where the first line goes: "Show me the way to the next whiskey bar". The name *Moon of Alabama* was taken from the first line of the chorus of that song: "Oh, moon of Alabama ...".

You can reach the current administrator of this site by emailing Bernhard at MoonofA_at_aol.com (replacing `_at_` with `@`).

strip. To claim that everything and everyone who has a grudge against U.S. positions in the Middle East is 'Iranian backed' is a simplistic propaganda claim that lacks evidentiary backing.

It is evidently made, just like the rest of Baker's piece, to prepare the public for an 'inevitable' war on Iran. A war in which the U.S. would likely suffer another defeat.

To back his thesis of an alternative free decision the *Times* consults an 'expert':

"The administration confronts a problem without a risk-free solution", said *Aaron David Miller*, a longtime Middle East peace negotiator now at the *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. 'They don't want to strike Iran directly for fear of escalation, which only widens the margin for pro-Iranian groups, including the Houthis, to strike at U.S. forces. At some point, if U.S. forces are killed, they'll have no alternative but to respond directly against Iranian assets.'"

There are of course other alternatives and 'risk-free solutions':

- Under international law U.S. military bases in Syria are illegal. There is no UN Security Council resolution that allows for a military intervention in Syria nor has there been an invitation of U.S. troops from the Syrian government.
- The U.S. position in Iraq are likewise illegal. The Iraqi parliament has voted against all U.S. bases in its country. The government of Iraq *has demanded that U.S. troops leave*² and seeks negotiations to make that happen. The so called Iraqi militia and its commanders are by the way an integrated part of the official Iraqi army. Any attack on them is an attack on the Iraqi state.
- The U.S. could simply recall its troops from Syria and Iraq. That would surely end all attacks against them.
- The U.S. has intervened in Yemen by bombing troops of the Ansar Allah government which was seeking to blockade ships related to Israel until it lifts its siege from Gaza.
- U.S. related ships were only attacked after the U.S. launched what amounts to an all out war on Yemen.

- The U.S. is free to pull its military from its position in Syria and Iraq. The U.S. could stop its attacks on Yemen at any moment. That would immediately end Yemeni attacks on U.S. assets without changing anything else. The U.S. could refuse to support the genocidal war against Gaza.

All these moves would stop the current hostile action against U.S. assets.

But nether of these alternatives is ever mentioned in Baker's piece. There are no alternatives in it because he refuses to provide and discuss them.

Baker ends with a quote from the White House:

"We have to guard against and be vigilant against the possibility that, in fact, rather than heading towards de-escalation, we are on a path of escalation that we have to manage', *Jake Sullivan*, the president's national security adviser, said last week during an appearance at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

'It remains a central locus of our strategy', he added. 'Try to ensure that we manage escalation across the Middle East to the maximum extent possible, taking every possible measure that we can in that regard, and ultimately get on a path of diplomacy and de-escalation.'"

There is again, in Sullivan's view, no alternative but the simplistic task of 'managing escalation' which inevitably will lead to further clashes. This even when a clear alternative is simply to move out and to stop all military engagement in the relevant countries.

TINA as claimed by the *Times* and the White House does not exist.

There are always alternatives to war.

Source: <https://www.moonofalabama.org/2024/01/us-claims-no-alternative-to-larger-middle-east-war.html#more>, 22 January 2024

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/21/us/politics/us-militias-tipping-point.html>

² <https://www.moonofalabama.org/2024/01/mainstream-media-lies-about-us-wars-in-iraq-wear-on.html>