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# Peace with Russia and China, But More Wars in the Middle East? The Contradictions of Trump's Foreign Policy

Par Timothy Alexander Guzman
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*Who will replace the current Secretary of State John Kerry once the President-elect Donald Trump takes over the White House in January? It will no doubt be one of the most important decisions when it comes to Trump's foreign policy.*

The Secretary of State will define Trump's foreign policy in his first four years in office as to whether the world will witness more wars or a lasting peace. In his search for the Secretary of State, more wars seem inevitable with the several names mentioned from the political establishment as possibilities. But one of the most recent and surprising developments concerning Trump's search is the meeting he is having with former Republican Nominee Mitt Romney this weekend as reported by *CNN*:

> President-elect Donald Trump will meet this weekend with one of his fiercest critics: 2012 Republican nominee Mitt Romney, a discussion that could include the position of secretary of state

The former mayor of New York City Rudy Giuliani and extremist neocon John Bolton who held various positions in several Republican administrations have also been mentioned. Bob Corker, the Senator from Tennessee who supported the war in Iraq and led the effort to supply lethal arms to the Ukraine for the war in Donbass is also a possibility. Republican and former speaker of the US House of Representatives Newt Gingrich was on the list but he has confirmed he will not be on Trump's cabinet. *CNN* also reported that Trump will soon meet with several other politicians and a Navy Admiral for the position:

> South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley is under consideration by President-elect Donald Trump for secretary of state, and other cabinet positions, a transition source told CNN Wednesday, despite their rocky history.
>
> Trump is going to meet with Haley, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, Florida Gov. Rick Scott, Cincinnati Mayor Ken Blackwell, Admiral Mike Rogers and Rep. Jeb Hensarling on Thursday, according to Trump's communication director Jason Miller and Republican National Committee spokesman Sean Spicer

South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley is the politician who signed into law a bill to prevent

her state from doing business with any firm that boycotts Israel under what is known as the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement or the *'BDS movement.' The Jerusalem Post* published the story in 2015 *'South Carolina becomes first US state to take action against anti-Israel boycotts'* which said the following:

> South Carolina's governor has signed into law a bill to stop efforts to boycott, divest and sanction Israel on Thursday afternoon, in a first for the nation on a statewide level. The bill makes no mention of Israel directly, but prevents public entities from contracting with businesses engaging in the "boycott of a person or an entity based in or doing business with a jurisdiction with whom South Carolina can enjoy open trade." The premise of the law is that the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, colloquially known as BDS, discriminates against the people of Israel and weakens the economy of South Carolina

*CNN* also mentioned that war criminal and pro-Israel advocate Henry Kissinger is also considered for the job. Appointing Henry Kissinger would be a slap in the face for Trump's supporters. If Trump decided to appoint Henry Kissinger to run US foreign policy, a war will no doubt be on the horizon. U.S. Navy Admiral Michael S. Rogers who serves as the Commander of the *U.S. Cyber Command*, Director of the *National Security Agency* (NSA) and the Chief of the *Central Security Service* will also be interviewed for the position. According to *The Times of Israel* Rogers met secretly with Israeli officials earlier this year:

> The director of the US National Security Agency, Admiral Michael Rogers, reportedly paid a secret visit to Israel last week to discuss cooperation in cyber-defense, in particular to counter attacks by Iran and its Lebanon-based proxy Hezbollah

One thing in common with all of the candidates for Secretary of State is that they all seem to be pro-Israel which should be a serious concern for the Middle East. Trump said he would like to orchestrate a peace deal between the Palestinians and the Israeli's, but to the contrary Israeli hardliner and Education Minister Naftali Bennett declared that the *"era of the Palestinian state is over"* when Trump was declared the winner of the elections. That statement is not encouraging for the Palestinians who support a two-state solution. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called Trump a *"true friend of Israel".* So what do the Israelis know that we don't know about Trump's foreign policy in the Middle East?

*Trump's Confusing Foreign Policies towards Russia and China*

Trump wants better relations with Russia in order to fight the Islamic State. Trump also wants a better relations and trade deals with China, but calls Iran (an ally to both Russia and China) the *"biggest sponsor of terrorism around the world."* So what should we think about Trump's foreign policy when it comes to the Middle East? For sure Trump's *"element of surprise"* will surely come soon as he will announce his Secretary of State. With that said, Russian President Vladimir Putin has reached out to the President-elect to *"to offer his congratulations on winning a historic election." The Los Angeles Times* reported what the conversation between Putin and Trump had entailed:

> The release said the two men discussed "a range of issues including the threats and challenges facing the United States and Russia, strategic economic

> issues and the historical U.S.-Russia relationship that dates back over 200 years" and that Trump looks forward to "a strong and enduring relationship with Russia and the people of Russia"

*Reuters* reported on the conversation that took place between Trump and China's President Xi Jinping. Xi had told Trump that *"The facts prove that cooperation is the only correct choice for China and the United States"* according to *China Central Television (CCTV) cited Xi as saying." Reuters* also published what *The Global Times* had said if Trump went forward with his plan to charge China *"heavy tariffs"* for its exports to the U.S.:

> The Global Times, a nationalist tabloid published by the ruling Communist Party's People's Daily newspaper, said if Trump slapped China with heavy tariffs it would "paralyze" bilateral trade. "When the time comes, large orders for Boeing planes would switch to Europe, U.S. auto sales in China would face setbacks, Apple phones would essentially be crowded out, and U.S. soybeans and corn would be eradicated from China," the paper said in a commentary

There is a real possibility of a trade war looming between the U.S. and China. But what is most concerning about Trump's U.S. foreign policy so far is not that he wants a diplomatic and peaceful relationship with Russia and to renegotiate trade deals and build a better relationship with China, it is his dangerous rhetoric against Iran and their allies in the Middle East. So let's take a closer look at what Trump has said about Iran during his campaign. Here is an excerpt from Trump's *AIPAC* speech this past March:

> In Gaza, Iran is supporting Hamas and Islamic jihad. And in the West Bank, they're openly offering Palestinians $7,000 per terror attack and $30,000 for every Palestinian terrorist's home that's been destroyed. A deplorable, deplorable situation. Iran is financing military forces throughout the Middle East and it's absolutely incredible that we handed them over $150 billion to do even more toward the many horrible acts of terror. Secondly, we will totally dismantle Iran's global terror network which is big and powerful, but not powerful like us. Iran has seeded terror groups all over the world. During the last five years, Iran has perpetuated terror attacks in 25 different countries on five continents. They've got terror cells everywhere, including in the Western Hemisphere, very close to home. Iran is the biggest sponsor of terrorism around the world. And we will work to dismantle that reach, believe me, believe me.

Trump's comments that *"Iran is the biggest sponsor of terrorism"* will raise tensions with Tehran as more evidence points to the fact that Trump's will most likely appoint a pro-Israel, anti-Iran Secretary of State.

*Will there be War or Peace? US-Iran Relations under a Trump Presidency*

Those who supported Trump during the campaign will be offered a position in the White House including Rudy Giuliani, the former New York City mayor who was a vocal critic against Iran's nuclear deal:

> "We must commit ourselves to unconditional victory against them [terrorists]," Giuliani said. "This includes undoing one of the worst deals ever made – Obama's nuclear deal with Iran that will eventually let them become a nuclear power and is putting billions of dollars back into a country that is the world's

largest supporter of terrorism.

> "We are actually giving them the money to find the terrorists who are killing us and our allies. We are giving them the money – are we crazy? Donald Trump will make sure that any agreement with Iran meets the original goals of the UN and our allies – a non-nuclear Iran"

On October 12th *CBS news* reported what Trump's Vice-President Mike Pence had said about Iran's nuclear deal in a campaign rally in Raleigh, North Carolina when he said *"that a Trump administration would "rip up the Iran deal."*Trump took an aggressive stance towards Iran following recent incidents that occurred between the U.S. Navy and *Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps* (IRGC). One of the incidents happened on August 24th when U.S. battleships (the USS Nitze and the USS Mason) and Iranian ships of the IRGC confronted each other in the Strait of Hormuz which could have easily led to a conflict. *"Commenting on the incident, Iranian Defense Minister Hossein Dehghan said the nation's forces patrol the area to protect its territorial waters"* according to an *RT News* report. The report also mentioned another incident that occurred on September 4th involving the USS Firebolt coastal patrol boat and an Iranian vessel in the Persian Gulf:

> An American patrol ship had to change course in the Persian Gulf after an Iranian military vessel came within 100 yards (90 meters) and did not respond to attempts to contact it, US defense officials told Reuters. The incident happened on September 4, according to the news agency, which cites two US Defense Department officials. The USS Firebolt coastal patrol boat had to change course after a vessel of Iran's Revolutionary Guard sailed directly into its path

*The Washington Post* published an article on September 9th titled *'Trump: Iranian boats that make improper 'gestures' will be 'shot out of the water'* on what Donald Trump had said during the campaign trail in Pensacola, Florida on the incidents involving both navies:

> "And, by the way, with Iran, when they circle our beautiful destroyers with their little boats, and they make gestures at our people, that they shouldn't be allowed to make, they will be shot out of the water," Trump said to thunderous applause. Soon the crowd began to chant: "USA! USA! USA!"

Trump's posture towards Iran and its close allies including Hezbollah seems likely to be confrontational. One other problem facing the Middle East is Trump's position on Jerusalem becoming the capital of Israel which is extremely controversial and dangerous. In a provocative statement, Trump said he would move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem which would spark a conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Trump said *"I have said on numerous occasions that in a Trump Administration, the United States will recognize Jerusalem as the one true capital of Israel."* As Trump's advisor David Friedman told *The Jerusalem Post* in article titled *'Trump adviser to 'JPost': President-elect will be best friend Israel ever had'* that the *"Israelis are going to have a friend in president-elect Donald Trump "never seen before"* by the State of Israel" after Trump's victory speech in New York City. *The Jerusalem Post* continued:

> "The level of friendship between the US and Israel is going to grow like never before, and it will be better than ever, even the way it was under Republican

> administrations in the past," he told the Post. Friedman is said to be a leading candidate to become the new US ambassador to Israel
>
> He said one of the administration's first moves would be to follow through on a campaign promise that Trump's daughter, Ivanka, made last month, according to which her father would move the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. "It was a campaign promise, and there is every intention to keep it," Friedman said. "We are going to see a very different relationship between America and Israel in a positive way"

According to *The Jerusalem Post "one change he hinted at was the removal of the restriction on Israel not to ask the US for additional money."* What this means is that there is a possibility that the Trump administration will remove one of the restrictions on the 10-year $38 billion military aid deal that restricts the Israeli government to ask Washington for more U.S. taxpayer money. In other words, under a Trump administration, Israel would receive more funds if they ask for it. One other issue that will concern the Palestinians is the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and other Palestinian territories. *The Wall Street Journal* published an article titled *'Trump Adviser: Israeli Settlement Building Not an Impediment to Peace'* on Jewish only settlements in the West Bank as told by Trump's co-chair of the *Israel Policy Committee* during the presidential campaign, Jason Greenblatt:

> Jason Greenblatt, who Mr. Trump named co-chair of an Israel policy committee during his campaign in July, on Thursday played down any risk from the building activity to peace prospects.
>
> "Mr. Trump does not view the settlements as being an obstacle for peace," Mr. Greenblatt told Israel's Army Radio. "The two sides are going to have to decide how to deal with that region, but it's certainly not Mr. Trump's view that settlement activity should be condemned and that it is an obstacle to peace. It is not the obstacle to peace"

Trump called Obama's and Clinton's foreign policies in the Middle East (Iraq and Syria) and Northern Africa (Libya)*"disasters",* but Trump's policies are following in the same footsteps of previous administrations. Although Trump has suggested that he is opposed to targeting Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian government and has emphasized attacking the Islamic State with Russia, Trump's statements against Iran is provocative. Trump was called an anti-establishment candidate but is eying several Republican neoconservatives and Washington insiders from previous administrations. If Trump selects John Bolton, a neoconservative war hawk from the Bush administration who perceives Iran, Russia and China as enemies of the United States, the world would witness a rise in tensions or even a possible war against Iran. Trump believes that the Iranian nuclear deal would allow Iranian government to develop nuclear weapons that would eventually be used against the United States, Israel or Europe.

Russia is one of Iran's largest trading partners. Russia and Iran also have extensive economic ties and are jointly working on various projects in the energy sector, port facilities, hydrocarbons and railways. They also have agreements in a joint oil exchange program, agriculture and telecommunications sectors. Major Russian oil companies such as Gazprom and Lukoil have been developing several Iranian oil and gas projects as well. *RT News*reported in August that *"Russian President Vladimir Putin has praised the successful cooperation between Moscow and Tehran, and has expressed hope that a free trade zone can soon be established between Iran and the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union."* According to the report, Putin had said:

> “Iran is Russia’s longtime partner. We believe that bilateral relations will benefit from the reduction of tensions around Iran following the comprehensive agreement on the Iranian nuclear program,” Putin said in a major interview with Azerbaijani state news agency Azertac released on Friday. He added that Iranian leaders shared his approach

China also has economic, political and social ties with Iran since the 1950’s. *Press TV* recently reported that both China and Iran have signed an agreement to elevate military cooperation and to fight the scourge of terrorism:

> The agreement was inked by Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan and his Chinese counterpart General Chang Wanquan in Tehran on Monday at the end of an earlier meeting between the two sides.
>
> “The development of [Iran’s] long-term defense-military relations and cooperation with China is among the top priorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s defense diplomacy,” Dehqan said in the meeting. He added that the two countries’ defense-military cooperation would guarantee regional and international peace and security

So the prospect for peace in the Middle East seems like a slim chance under a Trump presidency although he wants peace with Russia and to a point peace and economic cooperation with China. Will Trump or his newly appointed Secretary of State come to realize that war against Iran means war against Russia and China?

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*Articles Par :* Timothy Alexander Guzman

A propos :

Timothy Alexander Guzman is an independent researcher and writer with a focus on political, economic, media and historical spheres. He has been published in Global Research, The Progressive Mind, European Union Examiner, News Beacon Ireland, WhatReallyHappened.com, EIN News and a number of other alternative news sites. He is a graduate of Hunter College in New York City.

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Contact média: media@globalresearch.ca