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U.S. to World: We Are Not With You

In pulling out of the Paris Accord in August 2017, the U.S. said to the world: We are not with you. This is not a good deal for us. It punishes us disproportionately, just to save the global environment. Even though we signed it, we've reconsidered. And we're the exceptional nation. We're special.

In recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in December 2017, the U.S. again said to the world: We are not with you; we are, instead, with Israel. Our people believe God gave Israel to the Jews and that includes the eternal capital of Jerusalem. (And so what if the east part is illegally occupied Arab land and no other country on earth has moved their embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem until we did?) If Palestinians are upset, who cares?

In withdrawing from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPA) limiting Iran's nuclear plan the U.S. again states powerfully to humanity: We are not with you. We don't want peace with Iran, so long as the mullahs remain in power. We're serious about regime change, like we were in Iraq and Libya.

In pressuring European corporations to cancel contracts with Iran, or face secondary sanctions and exclusion from the U.S. market, it sends another message: We can control your trade and investment, in pursuit of our own geopolitical goals.

In brief, the U.S. is telling Germany: You cannot sell billions in civilian aircraft to Iran or build cars there—because we want to weaken and overthrow the regime. And if you're not on board the program, we will punish you.

We may be witnessing the beginnings of the fraying of the Atlantic Alliance as Trump displays an inclination to unite with Israel and its new Saudi allies against Iran. It is somewhat ironic. NATO has been expanding incessantly since Bill Clinton elected to expand it eastward, in violation with the understanding with Russia. Tiny Montenegro was brought in last June for no good reason other than to provoke Russia. The U.S. uses NATO and EU/NATO membership overlap to achieve geopolitical goals such as the application of sanctions on Russia. The Atlantic Alliance is very useful to it. But now it is jeopardizing it. What wonders if Trump knows what he's doing. Does he take May, Merkel and Macron for granted? Because they're pissed right now.

Everyone is puzzling at the stupidity of the move. Trump is demanding that Iran not just continue to abide by the existing agreement (although Trump ignorantly claims it is somehow in violation) but curb missile production and abandon support for "terrorist" organizations like Hizollah (which just won the free Lebanese elections and is a key player in Lebanese politics) as the price of peace. He is setting the bar too high, deliberately.

Europe is taking measures to protect its Iran investments and defy Washington's arrogant instructions. U.S. ambassador to Germany Richard Grenell announced May 8: "US sanctions will target critical sectors of Iran's economy," and pontificated: "German companies doing business in Iran should wind down operations immediately." Instead the Europeans are rallying to figure out how to preserve the P5+1 deal and their expanding economic ties to Iran.

It is not so much a question of the billions of investment dollars involved. Or the value of peace in the Middle East to a Europe deluged with refugees of U.S. wars in the region. It's a matter of sovereign pride. Grenell's instruction to German companies is insulting. Who is he to tell Daimler to shut down the planned Mercedes-Benz plant in Tehran? To accomplish what? Pressure Iran to abandon Hizbollah?

The U.S. is in violation of an international treaty. Boldly and abrasively so. It nauseates and frightens its allies. The thought of a joint U.S.-Israeli-Saudi-UAE war against Iran to produce John Bolton's ideal of regime change is terrifying. Europeans wonder: How can Trump, who inveighed on the campaign against regime change in general, now so be in bed with the neocons?

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire has said Europe should not accept that the U.S. as the "world's economic policeman." He asks: "Do we want to be vassals who obey decisions taken by the United States while clinging to the hem of their trousers? Or do we

want to say we have our economic interests, we consider we will continue to do trade with Iran?”

The question is, how to avoid secondary sanctions and break free from U.S. control. To realize free trade, improve relations, promote prosperity and peace, even as the U.S. influenced by the Israelis and Saudis seeks to topple the Iranian mullahs. How big a break does the outrageous U.S. action constitute, to the relationship with Europe cultivated since the Truman era?

A pundit on cable television opined that the present moment is comparable to 1944, when the U.S. signed the Bretton Woods agreement establishing the U.S. dollar as the world's reserve currency linked to the price of gold. That's when the U.S. GDP was half the world's total. Now it's maybe one-fifth. More a military juggernaut than ever, the U.S. is in long term decline as an imperialist power. The EU GDP equals or exceeds the U.S. figure. Why should Europe “wind down operations immediately” anywhere, anytime at U.S. behest?

The present moment makes crystal clear the fact that, while promoting ideals of free trade and national sovereignty, the U.S. uses access to its own market as leverage to enforce compliance to its unilaterally declared sanctions on countries. If we are not going to deal with Iran, you, as our allies, must not deal with Iran. You must join our axis with Israel and Arab absolute monarchs hell-bent on regime change. Or face consequences.

Europe must in the current situation finally break free. Sell those civilian airliners. Build those cars. Sell heavy machinery. Upgrade those oil refineries. Build those airport terminals. Buy that oil. Not to help the mullahs but to exercise sovereign rights in the face of an overbearing, decadent power led by a reckless fool. And if the U.S. and its motley crew of Middle East allies strike Iran, stay out and condemn the attack. There's no reason to be with the United States when it is not with you.