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THE EPOCH TIMES

# AMERICAN CROSSROADS

Iranians gather around a vehicle carrying the caskets of slain military commander Qasem Soleimani and others during a funeral procession after the bodies arrived in the northeastern city of Qom on January 6, 2020 following a ceremony in the capital Tehran.



## THE COMING IRANIAN PEARL HARBOR

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AHMAD AL-RUBAYE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

The protesters' central demand in Iran is for the mullahs' regime to step down, stop its terrorist adventures abroad, and end its massive corruption at home.

Members of the Iraqi pro-Iranian Hashed al-Shaabi group and protesters set ablaze a sentry box in front of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad on Dec. 31, 2019.

# The Coming Iranian Pearl Harbor

PETER HUESSEY



*Commentary*  
The Iranian dictatorship may be losing its grip on power. Consequently,

its historical strategy of continuous but low-level attacks on U.S. interests in the Middle East may be changing into something more deadly.

The Iran regime may be so desperate that it's planning a spectacular attack, an Iranian Pearl Harbor, to induce the United States to settle matters largely on Iranian terms, including re-embracing the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Program of Action (JCPOA) and ending economic sanctions on the regime's economy.

As the head of U.S. Central Command recently explained, the mullahs and the powerful Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) have historically engaged in acts of surreptitious terrorism to provoke the United States into military action directly against Iran. The mullahs then direct media attention to the "unprovoked" aggression by the "Great Satan" to deflect attention from Iran's horrible human rights record, terrorist nature, and growing regime

shakiness, all while Tehran claims to be innocent.

For example, in June 2019, Iran was suspected of attacking a U.S. drone in international airspace and interfering with international maritime shipping. Iran denied responsibility, and when those at-

tacks failed to provoke retaliation or change U.S. sanctions policy, the Iranians then surreptitiously executed a missile and drone attack on Saudi oil facilities and used its proxy Hamas to launch missile attacks on Israel.

Nevertheless, the U.S. response

was to refrain from directly using military power against Iran. Instead, the United States increased economic sanctions against more Iranian bad actors and enhanced the U.S. military presence in the region, particularly by augmenting U.S. and

allied missile defenses.

That Iranian con game is no longer working. And contrary to what many critics of the current U.S. administration have held, that a "maximum pressure" policy would backfire and unite the Iranian people against the United States, the opposite has happened.

Internally, the Iranian regime is weak, and its end may be soon approaching. In response to riots in more than 100 cities, the mullahs' thuggish security forces have killed thousands of demonstrators and opponents of the regime, imprisoned thousands more, beating and raping many of them. Similar anti-regime demonstrations have erupted in Iraq and Lebanon, aimed specifically at local Iranian militia and security forces. The central demand by protesters in Iran is for the mullahs' regime to step down, stop its terrorist adventures abroad, and end its massive corruption at home.

Despite these dangerous internal developments, the mullahs apparently still believe they can pull a diplomatic rabbit out of the hat of chaos and convince Europe to come to their rescue.

In particular, the mullahs apparently think that by escalating threats, they will induce Europe

to pressure the United States to back off its economic sanctions, or at least provide some sort of workaround system.

We must remember that though Iran proclaimed its innocence regarding the attacks on U.S. drones and the Saudi oil facility, Iran is now openly declaring its willingness to attack U.S. interests and allies in the Middle East, even to the point of publicly listing U.S. military infrastructure and bases in the region they have targeted.

Two respected former U.S. secretaries of defense, Leon Panetta and retired Gen. Jim Mattis, recently gave impetus to the idea of staying in the 2015 deal. Both former officials told the Reagan National Defense Forum on Dec. 7, 2019, that they would have stayed in the nuclear deal because, in Mattis's words, "it worked."

The former defense chiefs described the nuclear deal as "working," based solely on the narrow assumption that as far as enriched fuel production goes, Iran has supposedly adhered to the nuclear deal's limits. However, Panetta and Mattis admitted in further comments that the 2015 deal remained seriously deficient, in that it ignored Iran's expanding missile production, financial and weapons support for rogue terror groups, massive human rights violations, serial attacks on international maritime shipping including oil tankers, and an attack on international economic stability through missile attacks on a Saudi oil production facility.

Additionally, informed critics of the JCPOA have clearly explained that the deal doesn't "work." As the Iranian dossier

brought out of Iran by the Israelis revealed, Iran had no intention of signing up against nuclear proliferation but had adopted what the Israelis called a "glide path to nuclear weapons."

Furthermore, despite the limits on enriched uranium in the deal, the Iranians never adopted any transparency for the entirety of their nuclear weapons activities. This is especially true of the renewed work at the research facil-

ity at the Fodrow fuel enrichment plant in Iran, which was suspected of nuclear weapons activity but long denied by the Iranians. It has now been determined by the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that banned nuclear weapons work is indeed continuing at Fodrow.

Even more important than transparency was the immediate refusal by Iran, shortly after the JCPOA was signed, to abide by the central plank of the nuclear deal—to reveal all military-related nuclear weapons work it had undertaken, including activities begun after the brief 2003 pause.

Although the IAEA eventually gave Iran a pass, Washington shouldn't engage in any wishful thinking that Iran's previous nuclear weapons work can safely be ignored. After all, many members of Congress and a growing number of European allies now believe the nuclear deal is dead for that very reason.

In fact, a previous supporter of JCPOA, former head of NATO and retired U.S. Navy Adm. James Stavridis, echoed that view while recently addressing a European security conference, explaining that the Iran nuclear deal was indeed "dead" and not going to be revived.

So, two positive outcomes are possible. First, the United States and its European allies could negotiate a new nuclear deal with Iran that ends Iran's nuclear ambitions. Or second, the United States could work to change the regime, or perhaps see the regime taken down by its own people, millions of whom are now demonstrating in growing numbers, and so end Iranian nuclear ambitions once and for all.

In either case, we should turn the economic screws even tighter on the Iranian mullahs and their assets, while also assisting the protestors and opponents of the regime with needed communications equipment and strike funds to help them fight the panicking regime.

But there is also a new task we must undertake as the Iranian regime grows more and more desperate. We must take all necessary precautions beyond those already in place to protect against what historian Victor Davis Hanson recently described as a future Iranian version of "Pearl Harbor." The fear is that a desperate Iran won't only escalate its attacks as it has threatened to do, but will seek to spectacularly harm the United States to the extent that we will be coerced into caving to the Iranian regime's demands.

We must remember that the head of the IRGC recently warned that he could strike any number of U.S. military facilities in the Persian Gulf and Middle East, and some years ago, also claimed that he knew the exact location of critical infrastructure

assets inside the United States (as identified by the 1999 Gilmore Commission terrorism report). If a number of these key assets were destroyed, the United States could fall into a massive economic depression.

For example, potential Iranian attacks could be aimed at infrastructure targets such as oil and gas pipelines, refineries, tankers, transportation hubs, or other sensitive energy facilities. The IRGC list could also include terror attacks on large public gathering places such as sports stadiums, subway systems, or large shopping centers.

Iran is reaching the end of its tether. It doesn't know where to turn. The old formula of provoking Americans and then blaming the "Big Satan" for their problems no longer resonates. Europeans are becoming wobbly about their embrace of a weak and untenable JCPOA nuclear deal. And the Iranian people are clearly showing that they want to bring down the totalitarian Iranian regime. More than 65 percent of the population is too young to even remember the day the mullahs seized power!

In short, perhaps a "Pearl Harbor" attack is being planned in Tehran as I write this. Iran simply isn't a country that can be considered a normal nation with which one can do normal business, including negotiating a new nuclear deal.

Without question, Iranian military and terror attacks have increased since the 2015 nuclear deal. The \$150 billion of escrowed funds that were returned to the mullahs as part of the JCPOA were used to expand their regional "mayhem," and weren't used in any way to take care of the needs of their people.

As things now stand, supporters of the nuclear deal can't credibly promise that the current state of affairs will suddenly change if we re-engage with the JCPOA. And few supporters of it could assure us that there is a reasonable chance—after any future deal that the mullahs would sign—that Iran wouldn't remain on the same glide path to a nuclear weapons capability that the Israelis first warned us about.

At this juncture, the best strategy for the United States is to strengthen the policy of maximum pressure on Iran. And as they used to say in the old Western movies when an attack was imminent, "Keep your powder dry, boys."

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*Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.*



ATTAKENAR/APF VIA GETTY IMAGES

Iranian Revolutionary Guards commander Maj. Gen. Hossein Salami (2nd L) and Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh (L), the head of the Revolutionary Guard's aerospace division, at Tehran's Islamic Revolution and Holy Defence museum on Sept. 21, 2019.



MEGHAD MADADI/APF VIA GETTY IMAGES

Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh, head of Iran's Revolutionary Guard's aerospace division, looks at debris from a downed U.S. drone reportedly recovered within Iran's territorial waters and put on display by the Revolutionary Guard in the capital Tehran on June 21, 2019.

# The President's Decision Showed Strength, Leadership, and a Love of Country



People hold posters showing the portrait of Iranian Revolutionary Guard Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani during a protest outside the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, on Jan. 5, 2020.

ELAD HAKIM



*Commentary*  
Many Democrats in Congress are criticizing President Donald Trump's recent decision to target Iran's top general, Qasem Soleimani, in Iraq.

In doing so, they have shown that they have not learned from the failures of presidents Carter and Obama, who led from a position of weakness as opposed to one of strength.

This approach, in tandem with their other far-left policies, is far more dangerous to this country than is Trump's recent decision.

Shortly after the strike on Soleimani, many Democrats weighed in and criticized the president.

According to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi:

"Tonight's airstrike risks provoking further dangerous escalation of violence. America – and the world – cannot afford to have tensions escalate to the point of no return. ... The full Congress must be immediately briefed on this serious situation and on the next steps under consideration by the Administration, including the significant escalation of the deployment of additional troops to the region."

Former Vice President Joe Biden said that President Trump "tossed a stick of dynamite into a tinderbox." In a fundraising message he said that the United States "could now be on the brink of a major conflict across the Middle East."

Bernie Sanders stated that "Trump's dangerous escalation brings us closer to another disastrous war in the Middle East that could cost countless lives and trillions more dollars."

Elizabeth Warren called Soleimani "a murderer, responsible for the deaths of thousands, including hundreds of Americans," yet stated that Trump's "reckless move escalates the situation with Iran and increases the likelihood of more deaths and new Middle East conflict."

These Democrats share an approach that is apologetic, weak, defensive in nature, and void of any solutions. Amazingly, they ignore the imminent threat that Soleimani posed and instead focus on the president and what he allegedly did wrong.

Sadly, this is not the first time that Democrats in Congress have attacked the president. For example, Pelosi also criticized the president's decision to

**These Democrats share an approach/philosophy that is apologetic, weak, defensive in nature, and void of any solutions.**

authorize a raid in Syria in which ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed. Pelosi was wrong in that case and is also wrong in this one.

Democrats in Congress argue that the president's recent decision has endangered the nation and Americans abroad. For example, following the strike, Mayor Bill de Blasio accused the U.S. government of declaring war on Iran and of making New York less safe due to possible Iranian retaliation. However, this position shows a misunderstanding of the circumstances and is merely a method of deflecting attention away from the reality of the situation.

More particularly, do de Blasio and his Democratic colleagues in Congress honestly believe that Iran and/or its proxies would have simply walked away or left Americans and American interests alone had Trump not ordered the recent strike? If so, how would they reconcile this naïve approach with the many American deaths that have tragically occurred at the hands of Iran, Soleimani, or one of their proxies before the recent strike?

What would Democrats say to the families of the innocent Americans who recently lost their lives in Iraq or the families of the hundreds of U.S. troops who were killed during the U.S. war in Iraq (by militias that were armed and trained by the Quds Force)? Finally, what would de Blasio and his Democratic colleagues do to prevent the apparent imminent attack that was being orchestrated by Soleimani and/or Iran?

While many Democrats in Congress have been quick to attack the president's decision, they have been slow to provide any solutions as to how to deal with the Iranian threat. Rather, they have resorted to the predictably weak approach that has been consistent within their party.

This was seen in 1979, when former President Jimmy Carter was unable to obtain the release of many Americans who were taken hostage by militants at the American embassy in Tehran. The Iran crisis lasted for 444 days and portrayed Carter as weak and ineffective. It was only after Ronald Reagan was elected that the hostages were released, although some opine that it was Carter's negotiations that led to their release.

Democratic weakness and appeasement were also in full display by way of the Iran deal. Specifically, some Democrats attacked President Trump for his decision to

walk away from former President Barack Obama's terrible deal with Iran, where Iran was given ridiculous sums of money in exchange for its "promise" to forego its nuclear-bomb-making efforts.

This deal was doomed to fail from the start and portrayed the United States as a foolish and gullible nation, as Iran had no intention of stopping its nuclear-bomb-making efforts and ambitions.

Rather than pointing fingers at the president, perhaps Democrats in Congress and those running for president should consider whether their conduct and policies are enabling the nation's adversaries and making them bolder. Perhaps they should think about how others perceive their relentless and personal attacks on the president of the United States and their interminable quest to remove a duly elected president. Do they not realize that others could view this as a sign of a country that is in disarray? One that is vulnerable?

Finally, Democrats in Congress and those on the far-left should seriously consider whether their support of open borders, opposition to ICE, and other far-left policies make the nation more vulnerable. These policies don't show acceptance and tolerance. Rather, they show weakness, promote lawlessness, and increase the nation's vulnerability.

While the president does not seek war with Iran, his decision to counter an imminent threat to Americans and American interests showed strength and was well within his rights. The president of the United States must lead with strength, foresight, intelligence, and conviction, as the country cannot afford complacency, appeasement, and weakness.

As Rep. Lee Zeldin pointed out: "Iran doesn't respect weakness; only strength. W/ all the blood on Soleimani's hands, murdering 500+ U.S. troops & planning more attacks, Iran's terrorist regime should only be surprised this didn't happen sooner. Last night's strike was targeted, necessary, legal & proportional."

If not for Trump's love of country, self-confidence, and inner strength, the United States would be in big trouble. No other president could withstand what he has been forced to endure (nor should they). Rather than blaming and attacking him, it's time for Democrats in Congress to put country first and to support and praise the president for his many accomplishments.

# China-Style Censorship Going Global

When it comes to internet censorship, is the world becoming more like China?

JAMES GORRIE



*Commentary*

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) hates the free flow of information and the expression of ideas. China's leadership knows that their continued existence depends on their ability to stifle individualism, political expression, and human rights—all the ideas and rights that Hongkongers are fighting to hold onto as much as they can.

There's no way the CCP—or any totalitarian regime—could exist in such an open environment.

Unfortunately, the results of the CCP's Orwellian state are, as tragic as they are, predictable. According to the 2019 report, "China's Pursuit of a New World Media Order" issued by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), China is one of the least free nations on the planet, ranking 176 out of 180 countries.

But there's more to China's censorship efforts than most are aware.

**China, more than most people realize, is well into the process of remaking much of the world in its own image.**

**'Internet Sovereignty' Just the Beginning**

With its so-called Great Firewall, the CCP controls almost every piece of information in China via its own internet, search engines, chat apps, and other social media. Chinese are denied internet access to the outside world. All that most Chinese people know from the internet, newspapers, television, and radio is what the CCP allows them to see, read, or hear.

Furthermore, with its highly intrusive data decryption laws, AI-powered algorithms, and thousands of teams of content monitors, the CCP also controls—and sees—the vast majority of data that comes into the country from foreign business personnel, academics, and other sources. That's called "internet sovereignty" by the way, and to Beijing, is just as important as territorial sovereignty. There are good reasons why, of course. Dictatorial control over a population means controlling and shaping the perceptions of the people, and



An internet user in Beijing on June 3, 2009. The control of the internet in China is among the strictest in the world, according to a 2014 human rights report by Freedom House.

of course, their thoughts. For that to be successful, there must be only one source of information. That would be the Chinese state, i.e. the CCP. It's no surprise that China has no rival when it comes to imprisoning journalist and netizens.

But it gets much worse.

**China's 'Great Cannon' Kills Foreign Websites**

The CCP isn't just working very hard to block Chinese citizens' access to information it doesn't like, but it's also out to stop the rest of the world from seeing it as well. China's "Great Cannon" is programming code that allows the Chinese regime potential control over foreign websites and even limit users' access to data. It was first used in 2015 to target and exploit any unsecured foreign computer that communicates with China. It gives the CCP the opportunity to target and exploit any foreign computer that communicates with any China-based website.

This Great Cannon weaponizes the millions of mainland Chinese internet connections that visit unsecure websites. It downloads and runs the Chinese regime's malicious javascript, which allows them to control traffic to those sites, overwhelm them to the point of shutdown, or even launch cyberattacks against offending or opposition sites. This was the case with GitHub in 2015 and in Hong Kong in June 2019. What's more, China routinely injects software on opposition groups beyond its borders to spy on and discredit them.

**All that most Chinese people know from the internet, newspapers, television and radio is what the CCP allows them to see, read or hear.**

**China's Big Global Propaganda Spend**

In addition to shutting down offensive or threatening websites, Chinese media is making big strides in growing its presence around the world. Spending \$1.3 billion a year to push out its state-run television and radio programming, the CCP wants to tell the world China's story, in Chinese terms, rewriting history according to CCP-approved narrative. China's media expansion is considerable, with the China Global Television Network seen in 165 countries and China Radio International heard in 65 languages.

It's a bold and powerful effort to turn much of the world's thinking away from American ideas and toward China's oppressive and successful looking state capitalism, and syncs well with China's Confucius Institutes on college campuses throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. These institutes are yet another CCP propaganda tool aimed to shape young people's views of China and undermine the righteous grievances of the Hong Kong protesters, as well as the foundational concepts of Western civilization.

China's efforts to expand its global presence is a direct threat to the open, liberal democracies of the West.

"What is at stake is not only the Chinese authorities trying to spread their own propaganda ... what is at stake is journalism as we know it," Cédric Alviani, East Asia bureau director of RSF, told TIME Magazine.

It's disappointing, if not surprising, just how many authoritarian coun-

tries such as Russia, Iran, Pakistan, and others are racing to censor internet access and limit the freedoms of their own people. Without question, China is leading the way for dictators of all stripes around the globe to hold onto their illegitimate power.

Even more disappointing and dangerous is how China is influencing global mass media and entertainment companies in an extremely prolific effort to stop criticism and reshape opinions around the world. It appears as if U.S. firms have made kowtowing to Beijing just another business decision. Web and technology giants such as Facebook, Apple, and others willingly comply with Beijing's censorship demands in exchange for access to China's market of 1.3 billion people.

What's more, airlines and publishers are rewriting their maps so as not to offend China. Apparently, Tibet and Taiwan, for example, aren't real countries after all.

**The CCP isn't just working very hard to block Chinese citizens access to information it doesn't like, but it's also out to stop the rest of the world from seeing it as well.**

Beijing is showing its hand to the world, and it's quite a bloody and dirty one. It's also a much more insidious threat to Western civilization than any weapons system Beijing may deploy against the United States. China, more than most people realize, is well into the process of remaking much of the world in its own image.

The people of Hong Kong are well aware of the danger such a transformation brings, which is why they're willing to take the risk of standing up to the CCP leadership. They know that their future under Beijing's thumb is a bleak one.

American companies should take heed.

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*Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.*



Chinese youths surf the internet in a net cafe in Chongqing Municipality, China, on Jan. 21, 2008.

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