



Khashoggi's Killing Was Despicable, But US Needs Saudi's Help In Keeping Mideast Peace

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Let's be clear: the Saudi murder of *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi was a despicable act by a regime that, even after enacting modest reforms recently, still tolerates virtually no domestic dissent.

We should all be outraged, we should demand the truth, and we should look for ways to condemn such action in the clearest terms, such as by sanctioning the regime and the individuals involved.

But let's be clear about something else: The world can be, as Thomas Hobbes said of the natural state of humanity, "nasty, brutish, and short."

Though, particularly in the post-World War II period, the United States has promoted freedom and democracy, it also has made its necessary "deals with devils" in the interests of arms control, regional stability and other short-term demands.

Washington's relationship with Riyadh is one such deal, and our urgent needs across the Middle East do not allow us the luxury of making the morally pure decision of severing all ties with the kingdom.

The U.S.-Saudi relationship dates back to an early 1945 meeting between Franklin Roosevelt and King Abdul Aziz aboard the *USS Quincy* in the Suez Canal, in which FDR agreed to provide the Saudis with support and military training in exchange for Saudi oil and its support for the United States in the region.

That meeting came four years after FDR, in his State of the Union address, expressed hopes that, after the war, people all over the world would enjoy "four freedoms" — of speech and religion and from want and fear.

While idealistic, however, FDR had no illusions that the Saudi kingdom would abandon its hardline Islamic rule and provide such freedoms to its people. He simply made a necessary deal with this devil.

Fast forward to today's Middle East, where the adage "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" often applies.

The United States needs Saudi support to rein in the America-hating, terror-sponsoring, nuclear weapons-pursuing, regional destabilizing and human rights-abusing regime in Iran.

Directly or through proxies, Tehran now controls in large measure the governments of Syria, Lebanon and Iraq; it's propping up Syria's Bashar Assad as he slaughters his own people; and it's sending increasingly lethal weapons to Hezbollah in Lebanon, just across Israel's border.

Washington plans to reimpose sanctions against Iran next month that it hopes will cut all Iranian oil exports; these sanctions will force companies to choose between doing business with Iran and with America.

U.S. officials also hope to convince SWIFT, the global financial messaging service, to sever ties with Iran, which would more fully isolate the Islamic Republic from the global economy.

Among other things, Washington needs Riyadh, the region's leading Sunni Muslim government, to provide enough oil to calm oil markets — if U.S. sanctions against Tehran, the leading Shia power, rattle the markets enough to potentially send oil prices sky-high and threaten the global economy.

Tehran, which seeks regional hegemony, is a major concern of not just Washington but also of such unlikely allies as Jerusalem and Riyadh.

Though they share no peace treaty, Saudi-Israeli relations have never been warmer or more public, driven by their joint fear of, and cooperation to contain, an expansionist Iran that wants to destroy Israel and weaken Saudi Arabia.

To be sure, Saudi Arabia is ruled by an intolerant, sometimes vicious, regime.

Over time, we should encourage the kingdom to expand its modest reforms and provide more freedom to its people. That's no different than what we've done for decades with autocratic allies and adversaries alike.

For U.S. interests in the region, however, Saudi Arabia is clearly a lesser evil than Iran.

Put simply, we need Riyadh too much, as we seek to contain an insidious force in the Middle East, to sever ties with it.

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