

Bill Kaplan: War with Iran, then what?

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Trump and his GOP congressional sycophants, disregarding the Constitution, international law and lack of an imminent threat, have gone to war with Iran. Trump did not go to the GOP-led Congress for consultation or authorization, nor did he address the American people to explain his ever shifting rationales for war. Trump flits from regime change, to destroying Iran's nuclear capability (supposedly "completely and totally obliterated" by the U.S. and Israel last June), eliminating Iran's missiles or a preemptive U.S. attack to prevent an Iranian attack against the U.S. (no proof offered).

Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson exemplifies the arrogant and reckless disregard of Americans' overwhelming opposition to the war. Johnson opposed Congress stopping the war, saying: "What you don't want to do in a terribly divided Congress is hold a vote that shows us divided. That would not be good in a war effort" NPR's reporter responded that Congress did it in both Iraq Wars. Johnson replied: "Well, there was overwhelming support for those (wars)." An incredulous NPR reporter asked Johnson: "Are you saying we should avoid a vote because the country is not behind the war?" Johnson doubled down.

However, Wisconsin Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin denounced Trump's folly: "President Trump started a war of choice without a clear explanation, goal, or exit strategy, potentially locking us into another yearslong conflict just like Iraq and Afghanistan. I will not support another forever war in the Middle East and will continue to stand up to this President before more Americans are killed in this unnecessary war. The American people have been clear: they want President Trump focused on lowering their costs, not starting forever wars in the Middle East that will cost Americans their lives and taxpayers billions of dollars."

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The Iran War has escalated into a global war with more than a dozen countries involved. Moreover, Russia is providing military intelligence on U.S. forces in the Middle East to Iran (Washington Post). Trump and Defense Secretary Hegseth have said U.S. ground troops could be sent to Iran and U.S. bombing will continue for weeks or longer. Trump showed little empathy for the loss of U.S. troops: “Sadly there will likely be more before it ends. That’s the way it is.” A U.S. submarine torpedoed an Iranian destroyer in the Indian Ocean with great loss of life. Much of Iran’s leadership has been killed. The stock market is like a roller coaster, while gas prices shoot up. The future stability of the U.S. economy is in doubt.

Trump wants to choose Iran’s next leader. And, after Iran proposed mediation to end the war, Trump demanded unconditional surrender. Trump is appallingly ignorant of U.S.-Iran history. Iranians are still bitter about the 1953 CIA coup that reversed Iranian nationalization of their oil production. Nor have they forgotten the U.S. sale of chemical and biological agents to Iraq for use against Iran (Washington Post). Yes, Iran is a monstrous authoritarian theocracy, but Trump’s war is opening up the gates of hell. Then what?

Kaplan wrote a guest column from Washington, D.C., for the Wisconsin State Journal from 1995 - 2009.