

## On the first anniversary of the assassination of General Qasem Soleimani

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Most everyone recognizes the right to self-defense, including most Jews, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, atheists, etc.

However, once in agreement with the principle of self-defense, one must then attempt to reconcile it with admonishments from their particular sacred books or philosophical principles or notions of common sense, including: “Thou Shalt Not Kill” (Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17) or “Whoever kills a person, it is as if that person killed all of humankind” (Quran 5:32) or “Avoid killing, or harming any living thing” (No. 1 of the Five Precepts of Buddhism), or the Wiccan Rule of Three which states that whatever energy a person puts out into the world, either positive or negative, will be returned three-fold to the initiator, or the Hindu principle of *ahimsa* (Sanskrit for “noninjury”) which holds that one should avoid harming any living thing, and also avoid the desire to harm any living thing, etc.

And some even restrict acts of self-defense itself. There are those like Socrates who held that “On no account... ought we to act unjustly.... Neither ought one who is injured to return the injury, as the multitude think, since it is on no account right to act unjustly” (Plato, *Crito*, 399 BCE). As well, Jesus of Nazareth stated similarly: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also” (Matthew 5:38-42).

But as humans, we learn quickly in this life that unless one stands up and defends oneself and those we love, others will abuse us, taunt us, steal from us, malign us, lie to us, walk all over us, hurt us, enthrall us, or destroy and kill us. Fighting to defend oneself and those we love is a primary lesson of natural law, because we all desire life over death and freedom over slavery.

A maxim of political science holds that when equal right confronts equal right, then superior force prevails. At this point in a conflict, politics transforms into war, for, as Clausewitz says, “war is an extension of politics by other means” (*On War*, 1832), which was rephrased and clarified by Lenin when he stated: “war is an extension of politics by other, namely violent, means” (*Socialism and War*, 1915).

Thus, when we take a stand, we should thus always query ourselves if our actions serve justice, are indeed in self-defense either of our self or of those we love, are proportional to the harm inflicted, will not detriment us more than we are willing to accept, and that we have first peacefully attempted to resolve a dispute with an antagonist. Failing to be honest with ourselves in this self-examination will find us committing the sin of pride, and hubris is the Achilles’ heel of all tyrants.

Because we humans are not angels, meaning we are not always motivated by love in all of our actions, we have a long history of justifying the killing of other beings, human and non-human alike, and such ratiocinations will vary according to the degree to which politics (i.e. power) informs and motivates the relevant parties involved in a dispute. With regards to creatures (e.g.

animals, insects, etc.), while major advances have been theoretically made in the last century with regards to the injustice of killing non-human beings, killing of such beings is still a practice widely engaged in by the majority of humanity.

As such, am confining this short essay to the practicality of killing other human beings by focusing specifically on the assassination of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani on January 3, 2020 by the United States. This one case study exemplifies and illustrates the unreasonableness of U.S. actions against Iran and its peoples.

Qasem Soleimani was a major general in the Iranian military. He was a formidable leader of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and commander of the Quds Force which spent much of the period from 2013 to 2020 effectively fighting Al Qaeda, ISIS, ISIL, or whatever name or packaging the U.S. and its allies marketed their external terrorists takfiri mercenaries, commonly referred to as Daesh to peoples of the region, to wage havoc on the countries of the Middle East and North Africa in an attempt to either destabilize existing representative governments, prevent representative governments from arising, and generally sowing chaos to keep the peoples of the region discombobulated and demoralized while continuing to promulgate U.S. and western hegemony in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

On January 3, 2020, on the orders of President Trump, the U.S. initiated a drone strike in proximity to the Baghdad International Airport in Iraq killing 62-year-old General Soleimani along with four other Iranians and five Iraqi nationals.

Justifying the attack, U.S. officials initially rested their primary arguments on the necessity of a preemptive war, the 2002 notion advanced by then-U.S. President George W. Bush to justify the U.S. invasion of Iraq in order to counter an immediate or perceived future threat to the security of the United States. Later—as this preemptive argument does not sell too well among western or international audiences—U.S. apologists commenced to blaming Iran for initially provoking U.S. retaliation by threatening U.S. troops in the region which, they argued, prompted this particular U.S. response.

The fact that this assassination is a blatant violation of international law, that the U.S. military presence in the region (over 6,100 miles away from the U.S.) is against international law, that the killing of an Iranian national on the soil of the sovereign Iraqi nation is against international law was, of course, not explained to the peoples of the United States, as continuous crimes are regularly committed internationally without the knowledge of the U.S. citizenry by our corporate capitalist elite who are only interested in lining their pockets and maintaining their privileged status within the American empire. At the current stage, most Americans are against endless regime-change wars and know that U.S. military leaders are guns for hire for top corporations which control the millionaire club of Congress to allow them to utilize the Middle East and other regions as laboratories of imperialism to test new weapons systems, game-play tactics and strategies, and recruit and educate allies etc. to become what famed U.S. General Smedley Butler once summed up when he stated:

I spent thirty-three years and four months in active military service as a member of this country's most agile military force, the Marine Corps. I served in all

commissioned ranks from Second Lieutenant to Major-General. And during that period, I spent most of my time being a high class muscle-man for Big Business, for Wall Street and for the Bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism (Butler, USMC, 1933).

Going forward, U.S. leaders hope that the killing of General Soleimani and other high-profile Iranian leaders (e.g. nuclear scientist Dr. Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, et al.) will deter Iran from retaliating against these blatant acts of state-sponsored terrorism. For the Iranians' part, they have, through much discipline, restrained themselves from lashing out for what they clearly see as western provocations to trap them into yet another U.S. war in the Middle East. How long such restraint can be maintained without upending domestic support is where the conflict between Iran and the United States currently hangs. It is clear that, to date, the Iranians have exhibited the mental, spiritual, and intellectual depth necessary to restrain their response, resist the temptation of allowing anger to guide their actions, and proceed with circumspection, deliberation, and caution.

U.S. regional allies—particularly Israel and Saudi Arabia—would like very much for the U.S. to attempt to overthrow, for a second time, a sovereign Iranian government, and some U.S. leaders are definitely contemplating such a strike in order to divert domestic U.S. attention away from the collapsing U.S. economy, pandemic-ridden, racially polarized, class divided, and internally politically-disunited population.

Having never formally declared war on the Islamic Republic of Iran, the U.S. murder of General Soleimani, a prominent Iranian state and military official by surprise attack on the soil of a sovereign nation, Iraq, is, by all credible definitions of international law, an assassination. And not only does international law overwhelmingly condemn acts of assassination but, moreover, international law restricts the methods parties to a conflict may utilize if such acts of warfare “cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering (Article 35 of the 1977 First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions).

Practically, however, one must note that killing off a major general of a rival state is a blatant declaration that the U.S. does not seek to genuinely negotiate with Iran in good faith and, indeed, holds the leadership of that state in contempt. In effect, by assassinating General Soleimani, the U.S. is declaring its intention to overthrow the government of Iran and eliminate its leadership. Such a stance is not only a threat to Iran and the region but, as well, to the entire world.

There are some who may hold out hope for a different American approach should Joseph Biden get inaugurated on January 20, 2021, as do many in the U.S. and around the world. However, experience reinforces the resolve of those who have been repeatedly subjected to deceit, artifice, and hypocrisy.