

# Celebrate the Fourth of July. But Don't Forget the Twelfth of June.

By William J. Watkins, Jr. June 12, 2026

To write the nation's founding document, Thomas Jefferson borrowed from his home—Virginia.

Naturally, the main event of America's 250th anniversary celebrations will be the Fourth of July, in honor of the Declaration of Independence. But a little tailgate party would be appropriate for the Twelfth of June. For it was on that date, 250 years ago, that Virginia's Declaration of Rights was adopted.

Written primarily by George Mason, Virginia's declaration inspired Thomas Jefferson in writing the nation's founding document. It set forth in plain language America's first principles and provided guideposts for the establishment of a republican government.

It's no accident that this seminal declaration originated in Virginia. Jamestown, founded in 1607, put many of those principles and structures into action well before 1776. As Lyon Gardiner Tyler—son of President John Tyler and himself president of William & Mary from 1888 to 1919—observed, “jury trial, courts for the administration of justice, popular elections in which all the ‘inhabitants’ took part, and a representative Assembly” were created in the Old Dominion “before any other English settlement was made on this continent.”

In the Declaration of Rights's first section, Enlightenment thought and Christian principles intersect to affirm the equality of all men and their possession of rights such as “the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.” If this language sounds familiar, it's because another Virginian—Jefferson—borrowed from it when composing the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence.

The Virginia declaration's second section rejects the British idea that an artificial body such as Parliament could possess ultimate authority. In the commonwealth, “all power is vested in, and consequently derived from, the people,” the declaration states. Government officials are thus “trustees and servants and at all times amenable to” the people.

The third section proclaims that “government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit, protection, and security of the people, nation, or community.” If a government fails to achieve these ends, “a majority of the community has an indubitable, inalienable, and indefeasible right to reform, alter, or abolish it, in such manner as shall be judged most conducive to the public weal.”

In the next four sections, the declaration rejects the hereditary offices found in the British system; asserts that power should be divided among three branches of government; commands frequent and free elections so the people can deliberate on the conduct of their magistrates; and prohibits the suspension of duly enacted laws without legislative consent.

After setting forth these principles of republican government, the Declaration of Rights turns to individual liberties necessary for a free society. Many of these provisions would later appear in the Bill of Rights—the first 10 amendments to the Constitution, ratified in 1791.

Section 8 deals with the rights of an accused person in criminal cases. A criminal defendant has a right to confront the government's witnesses, present evidence in his own defense and demand a speedy trial by a jury of his peers. Prosecutors are prohibited from compelling the accused to give evidence against himself or hiding the nature of the charges from the defendant.

The ninth section, mirrored almost exactly by the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution, avers "that excessive bail ought not to be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted."

Section 10 outlaws the British colonial practice of using general warrants—a legal process that authorized searches and seizures without specifying the premises to be searched or the alleged contraband to be seized. No such fishing expeditions would be allowed in Virginia. Similar prohibitions in the Constitution's Fourth Amendment are modeled on the Declaration of Rights.

The remaining sections protect civil jury trials, freedom of the press, freedom of religion and civil control of the military.

A society can remain free, the Virginia Declaration of Rights teaches, "but by a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality, and virtue and by frequent recurrence to fundamental principles."

So, yes, on July Fourth, by all means heartily cheer the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. But to understand the principles behind the American Revolution and republican government, dust off George Mason's Virginia Declaration of Rights and study its plain language. It is essential to discerning the pillars of America's government and the purpose of the nation's independence.

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When a private individual meditates an undertaking, however connected it may be with the welfare of society, he never thinks of soliciting the co-operation of the government; but he publishes his plan, offers to execute it, courts the assistance of other individuals, and struggles manfully against all obstacles. Undoubtedly he is often less successful than the state might have been in his position; but in the end, the sum of these private undertakings far exceeds all that the government could have done.

—Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* [1835]

By Andrew P. Napolitano

June 18, 2026

## A Republic or an Empire?

3

The Declaration of Independence of July 4, 1776, embraces two value sets. The first is natural rights, and the second is limited government. After 250 years, neither value has survived, and the opposite of each currently prevails in America.

Thomas Jefferson drafted the Declaration in three days while staying at a rooming house in Philadelphia. He had been greatly influenced by the British philosopher John Locke. Locke is the godfather of the theory of natural rights, which he extrapolated from the natural law teachings of Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas.

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) did not argue that humans have inherent natural rights, but rather that the concept of justice demanded by human nature should be "naturally just" when addressing claims for protection of persons and property, whether those protections were legislated or not. The "whether legislated or not" is the first known articulation of a higher civil law, higher than the government's own laws.

St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.) also did not define explicitly the existence of natural rights, but he did argue that norms of human behavior are knowable from the exercise of reason aided by revelation. He is the seminal thinker to express the view that right and wrong is knowable to all persons, whether legislated or not; and this knowledge — because it is common to all — is itself a higher law. He called this universal knowledge the natural law.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 A.D.) did not articulate natural rights, but he did proceed deep into the ideas of Aristotle and Augustine and taught that all human beings possess innate moral claims and innate moral obligations to honor the moral claims of other persons; and these claims and obligations are knowable by the exercise of reason.

John Locke (1632-1704), whose writings Jefferson read at the College of William and Mary, and James Madison read at Princeton, drew upon all three philosophers to argue that Aquinas' moral natural law claims are really natural rights, and these, too, just like knowing right from wrong, are inherent in our humanity and are superior to the government.

Locke further argued that rights are claims against the whole world. Thus, your right to be alive, to think as you wish, to say what you think, to publish what you say; to worship as you wish or not to worship; your right to associate with others; your right to protect yourself and your property; your right to be left alone; your right to own and possess and control property; your right to travel; and your right to fairness from the government are all natural rights, and the exercise of these rights does not require government permission.

④

From all of this, Jefferson wrote that our rights are divinely gifted, individually possessed and inalienable. This is the first value we celebrate on July 4.

The second value also stems from human nature. Locke taught and Jefferson believed that the ownership of property is absolute. That is, the owner can use his property as he wishes — without harming others; he can sell or lease it; and he can exclude anyone he wishes for any unstated reason — including the government.

From that view, Jefferson recognized that the only morally licit government was one affirmatively consented to by the governed. Eleven years later, Madison was the scrivener at the Constitutional Convention; and two years after that, he crafted the Bill of rights. Jefferson, Madison and their colleagues recognized the divine hand in the human origin of personal freedom, the natural rights of all persons and the limited nature of the republic they created.

Then, along came war — the great scourge of natural rights and limited government.

The extraconstitutional growth of government comes during war and war-like crises, from the never-declared war with France in the 1790s that spawned the Alien and Sedition Acts, which punished speech critical of the government; to the arrest of journalists without charge or trial during the Civil War; to the prosecution of pamphleteers against the draft during World War I; to incarceration of Americans in American concentration camps based on race during World War II; to the war on terror, which spawned the Patriot Act and its warrantless spying; to the present era's undeclared wars on presidential whim, and the expansion of America's 750 foreign military bases into 80 countries.

To Jefferson and Madison, a natural right was truly inalienable and exercisable against the whole world. It may only morally and legally be curtailed after a jury trial and upon conviction for violating someone else's natural rights. Any law or executive command that impairs natural rights was invalid and there was no obligation to comply with it. On this, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Locke, Jefferson and Madison all agreed.

In a constitutional republic, government may only take liberty and property pursuant to law and only from those who have consented by granting those powers to the government in the constitution that created it; and any exercise of any powers not consented to by the governed is assaultive of natural rights, is beyond the government's moral and constitutional authority, is morally illicit and of no legal validity.

In an empire, the government has no limits. It does whatever the head of state wants. It denies the enforceability of international norms, enriches itself at the people's expense,

takes property without the consent of the governed, violates natural rights, starts wars to please constituent groups, murders people without trial whom it claims have violated its laws, suppresses foreign people and tells them how to live, and even kidnaps their leaders. It floods the money supply with cash, thereby devaluing all private property; it monitors all communications, and builds hundreds of military bases around the globe. Its legislature is weak and bullied by the head of state, who imposes his own taxes, promotes blood sport and builds garish monuments to himself.

5

Which form of government are we celebrating next month?

## The American Way of War, War, War

### On a Planet at the Brink

by Tom Engelhardt | Jun 23, 2026 | News | 2 Comments

That title of mine is certainly repetitive of me (me, me), but how can you not be repetitive in the distinctly repeated world of Donald J. Trump (Trumped, Trumped)? I mean, twice already and who really knows what's to come?

Here's the question nobody seems to be asking right now, though: What country will Donald Trump attack next? Yes, at the moment, he's still wildly wound up in his Iran war/truce/peace/or you name it (tomorrow). Yesterday, it was, of course, Venezuela, and next week it might be Cuba or Greenland, or who on (or off) this planet knows where? And I haven't even mentioned his military's ongoing bombing runs in Somalia, which are barely noticed in the mainstream media here. And who knows what I've forgotten or what to expect in this increasingly bizarre world of ours from the president who swore repeatedly in his third election campaign that he would never, never, never go to... yes, of course, war?

Hey, only the other day, Secretary of War (a title which, of course, couldn't be blunter in the age of You Know Who) Pete Hegseth warned that "what happens with the future of Cuba is in the hands of the president of the United States and the leadership of Cuba. No matter what, the Department of War is going to be prepared and postured for any possible contingency."

Ah, yes, *any possible contingency* except one, of course: victory (which, since the Second World War, just hasn't been in the American vocabulary) or, for that matter, peace. I mean what could possibly go wrong in a world that now, remarkably enough, has its first trillionaire, Donald Trump's (sometimes) buddy Elon Musk? (On that, Senator Elizabeth Warren commented all too aptly: "I want to be clear: This is not just some fluke. It is a feature of a rigged economy.")

What, in fact, could possibly go wrong on such a rigged planet? I'm sure Donald Trump and Elon Musk couldn't imagine. What could go wrong on a world in which no American president ever seems to realize that wars are simply never to be won by this country, no matter its power and the ever-ballooning size of the Pentagon budget, now possibly heading for – ah, yes, talking about trillionaires! – \$1.5 trillion yearly (and, no, that is not a typo), if Donald Trump has anything to say about it? And in Congress, mind you, that's still referred to as "defense" spending.

Read the rest at Tom Engelhardt's substack.

NOTICE: Core

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6

## Trump's Attempt to End the Iran War Infuriates the Uniparty

RON PAUL • JUNE 22, 2026 • 500 WORDS • 8 COMMENTS

Against the odds, the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the US and Iran appears to be holding, after threats and counter-threats. It may collapse, but it has survived a first round of talks between the two sides in Switzerland over the weekend.

President Trump started a war on Iran against all sober guidance and in violation of the US Constitution's requirement that only Congress can declare war. There must be a reckoning for our elected leaders who violate their oath of office, the Constitution, and simple common sense.

However, what is more telling is the reaction when President Trump finally took the correct move and attempted to end the war. The neocons who had hailed him as a great leader – Levin, Bolton, Pompeo, etc. – suddenly turned against him when he turned against further escalation of the war.

Even Trump's top funder, Miriam Adelson, attacked Trump in her newspaper Israel Hayom. "You could have been the greatest president of all, but you failed," the newspaper wrote in an editorial.

Not much gratitude from the Israel-first crowd, even if the war was started to benefit Israel.

And more telling even than this was the reaction of the "opposition" party in Congress, the Democrats. They attacked him harder for ending – or at least pausing – the war more than for starting the war in the first place! Sen. Adam Schiff (D-CA) called the MOU a "capitulation." Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) called the MOU an "embarrassing document." Sen. Amy Klobuchar falsely claimed that President Trump was paying Iran \$300 billion to re-open Hormuz.

This is more evidence – as if any is needed – that our foreign policy is run by the "uniparty." When it comes to wars, there is no Republican Party nor is there a Democratic Party. There is only the "yes!" party.

Congress remains silent in the run-up to war. Congress remains silent when the President launches a war. Congress even remains silent when the war begins going badly. It is only on those rare occasions that a president takes steps to correct his mistake that Congress finds its voice.

Yes, there is plenty to criticize. After weekend talks, the US side, led by Vice President JD Vance, is celebrating as a "breakthrough" that the Strait of Hormuz is open again and that Iran has reportedly agreed to the return of UN inspectors. But the Strait was open before this war and UN inspectors were in Iran before President Trump unilaterally pulled out of the JCPOA "Iran Deal" in his first term.

The only difference now is that we burned through likely several hundred billion dollars, we lost dozens of aircraft and other military equipment, and we likely lost more service members than the Pentagon is admitting.

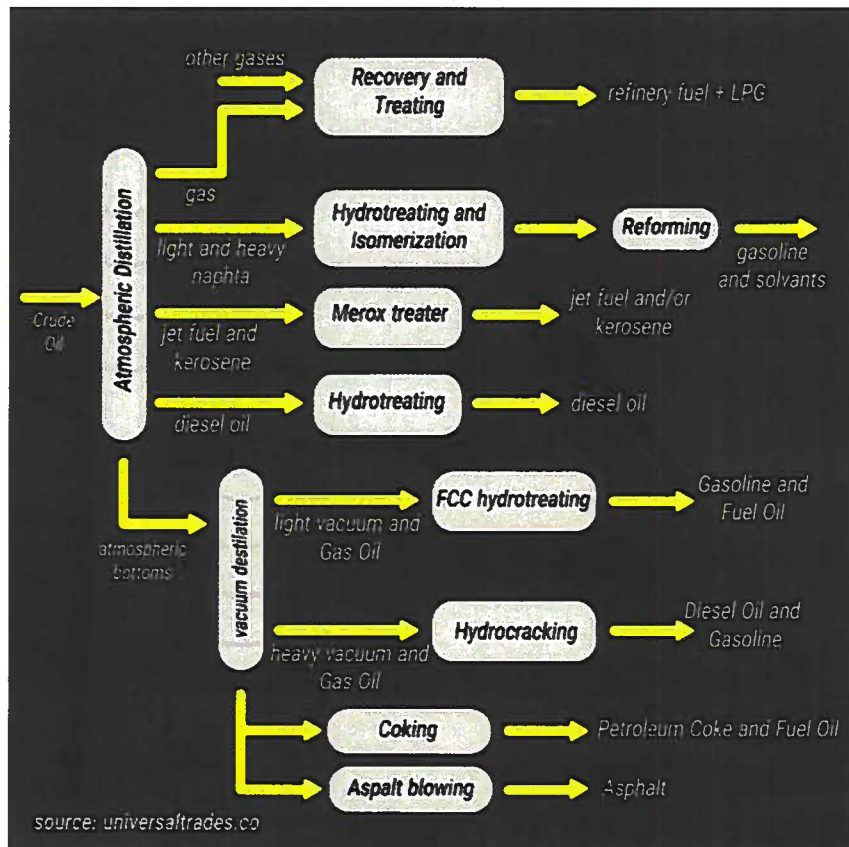
It is a reminder of why the Founders intended to make sure that any war must be declared by the people's Representatives before the first bullet is shot: it should be very hard to launch wars.

Nevertheless, those who are truly against the wars should, in my opinion, hold their fire for the time being in hope that a lasting resolution can be found. The President is being attacked from all sides by the war party. Now may not be the best time for the peace party to join in.

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## Strategic Oil Reserve Nears Collapse... US Must Choose: Guns or Butter

LARRY C. JOHNSON • JUNE 21, 2026 • 900 WORDS • 13 COMMENTS



As of the week ending June 12, 2026, the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) held approximately 340.25 million barrels of crude oil... Sounds like a lot, but it is approaching the danger zone. In late May, that number was 372 million barrels, which consisted of Sweet crude: ~142 MMB | Sour crude: ~230 MMB, according to the US Department of Energy.

The oil is stored in caverns at four sites:

- Bryan Mound: ~166 MMB
- Big Hill: ~90 MMB
- West Hackberry: ~72 MMB
- Bayou Choctaw: ~44 MMB

To understand how perilous the situation is you need to know that if the oil level in these caverns falls below a certain level that the structural integrity of the caverns would be jeopardized. The most commonly cited operational floor is **around 20% of capacity**. Mike Sommers, CEO of the American Petroleum Institute, told CNN that the SPR must be at least 20% full to remain operational — that's roughly 143 million barrels against the SPR's ~727 million barrel design capacity.

So subtract 143 barrels from 340.25... That means the US only has 197.25 million barrels left before the caverns could face irreparable damage. If the US consumers, who use 20 million barrels a day, had to rely exclusively on the SPR, the US only has less than a 9-day supply of reserves. If you compare the amount reported at the end of May (i.e., 372 MMB) with the June 15th report, the US is drawing 16 million barrels a week from the reserve. This is the optimistic scenario, i.e., the US has roughly a 12-day supply before the proverbial shit hits the fan.

But wait, it gets worse. The US Military has blown through its jet fuel reserves. The problem is compounded because Diesel reserves are at 25 year low. Diesel and Jet Fuel are critical Distillates. So the Trump administration must make a choice: support the military jets with jet fuel, or support the trucking Fleet with enough diesel fuel, to provide food and products to US consumers. Trump can't wage war and keep the economy going at the current rate because diesel and jet fuel compete with each other when comes to production. So the question is, do

you want to wage war or do you wanna save the economy and keep the trucks moving on the road? This is the main reason Trump signed the MoU with Iran.

A friend who is an energy analyst summarized the dilemma as follows:

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The strategic warning is that the United States cannot assume it can fight a major fuel-intensive conflict and protect the domestic economy without tradeoffs. Military jet fuel, commercial aviation fuel, diesel, heating oil, and marine fuel all draw from the middle distillate portion of the refined barrel. Refineries can bias output, but they cannot instantly maximize every middle-distillate product at once.

The risk is not that every truck or aircraft stops at once. The risk is that a forced fuel-priority decision creates cascading shortages and price shocks across logistics, aviation, agriculture, construction, and consumer supply chains. A war-time jet-fuel surge could reduce the diesel cushion; a civil-aviation diversion could disrupt passenger movement and air cargo. Either channel can become recessionary because both diesel and jet fuel are operating fuels for the real economy.

The US is not the only country or region facing a massive problem. Europe is screwed. An April 2026 report by Karl Miller — *The Iran War, the Strait of Hormuz and Europe's Compound Energy Trap* — spells out the danger facing Europe. Here is the Executive Summary:

This report assesses whether the European Union faces a structural energy-security Prisoner's Dilemma with Russia, with Germany at its centre and the Persian Gulf crisis as the accelerant. The argument is blunt: the Union has deprived itself of the low-cost Russian oil and gas system that underpinned much of its industrial base, while the Iran war and the Strait of Hormuz disruption have simultaneously impaired the maritime energy system that supplies a decisive share of the world's oil, refined products and LNG.

Europe is on its knees in strategic terms. It is not literally without emergency stocks, because EU and IEA rules require minimum oil inventories. The harder reality is more damaging: those inventories are finite, unevenly usable, commercially fragile and unable to replace the normal flow of crude, diesel, jet fuel, LPG, naphtha and LNG through global markets. Emergency stocks buy time; they do not restore cheap Russian pipeline gas, reopen Hormuz, rebuild refining flexibility or prevent member states from bidding against one another.

The EU therefore faces a compound trap. Russian gas is being removed by law, Persian Gulf flows are exposed to war, U.S. LNG has become indispensable but expensive, storage refill is costly, and Germany's industrial model remains dependent on affordable dispatchable energy. Each member state can rationally protect itself through bilateral contracts, subsidies, exemptions and emergency procurement, yet those same choices weaken the Union's collective bargaining power and deepen fragmentation.

The conclusion is that the EU is locked into a repeated, asymmetric collective-action game. Escaping it requires enforceable solidarity, shared critical-fuels planning, coordinated storage, firm-capacity realism, a diversified LNG portfolio, strategic petroleum-product management, and legal reforms that make cooperation faster and more profitable than national defection.

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I did another update podcast with Nima:

# The Men Who Wrote the Declaration of Independence

6

**Just reporting the incredible careers of these five men is exhausting!**

**This essay was first published (<https://www.theepochtimes.com/opinion/the-men-who-wrote-the-declaration-of-independence-6031376>) in the May 23, 2026 *Epoch Times*.**

*This is the third in a five-essay series on the Declaration of Independence, written for its 250th anniversary. Read part I here (<https://www.theepochtimes.com/opinion/the-runup-to-the-declaration-of-independence-6025889>) and part II here (<https://www.theepochtimes.com/opinion/john-dickinson-and-the-case-against-independence-6027433>).*

In June 1776, Great Britain and its North American colonies had been fighting for over a year. The Americans desperately needed foreign help, particularly from Great Britain's principal rival, France.

Many members of the Second Continental Congress—the assembly the states had charged with conducting the war—believed France would not help the colonies if their goal was reconciliation with Britain, since reconciliation would leave the British stronger than ever. They also pointed out that America needed a unified agency to conduct foreign affairs.

Therefore, on June 7, pursuant to the instructions of the Virginia legislature, Richard Henry Lee proposed the following resolution:

“Resolved, That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.

“That it is expedient forthwith to take the most effectual measures for forming foreign Alliances.

“That a plan of confederation be prepared and transmitted to the respective Colonies for their consideration and approbation.”

Anticipating likely approval, Congress designated one committee to deal with each of the resolution's three issues. John Dickinson of Pennsylvania headed a panel to draft what became the Articles of Confederation. Congress assigned the issue of foreign alliances to a task force consisting of Dickinson, John Adams of Massachusetts, Benjamin Harrison of Virginia, and Benjamin Franklin and Robert Morris, both of Pennsylvania. The job of drafting a declaration of independence was handed to a group historians call the “committee of five.”

## The Committee of Five

The committee of five included Adams, Franklin, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, Robert R. Livingston of New York, and Thomas Jefferson of Virginia. (Actually, it was only one of many of Congress's five-man committees.)

Previous committees often handed the job of producing a first draft to John Dickinson. But Dickinson was not chosen for the committee because he wanted to postpone independence. So The Five turned to Jefferson, who was known as an excellent writer.

## Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) was a polymath—meaning that his talents covered many fields, including law, languages, architecture, farming, natural science, and politics.

He was born into Virginia's planter class and educated at the College of William and Mary. He studied law under George Wythe, also a leading American Founder.

Jefferson much preferred public service to law practice. He served in the Virginia colonial legislature from 1769 to 1775, when he was elected to Congress. Jefferson was a religious liberal (not a deist, as sometimes claimed, but a Unitarian), and after he returned to the Virginia legislature, he drafted Virginia's Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom (1777). He served two single-year terms as governor (1779 and 1780), but faced widespread criticism for fleeing before invading British troops.

Jefferson's only full-length book was the highly successful “Notes on the State of Virginia.” He went on to serve as an American diplomat in France, as the first Secretary of State, as Vice President, and as President of the United States.

## Benjamin Franklin

Unlike Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) was born in very modest circumstances. After two years of formal education, he was apprenticed to his older brother James, a printer. But he ran away, eventually arriving in Philadelphia with one Dutch dollar and about 20 pence in copper.

Yet in the next 25 years, he taught himself to read, write, and translate German, French, Italian, Spanish, and Latin; established a web of successful businesses; organized a fire department and America's first public library; founded the American Philosophical Society and a militia company; invented the Franklin stove and a new printing method for paper money; served as clerk of the Pennsylvania colonial assembly, postmaster of Philadelphia, and co-postmaster for North America; studied and wrote on whirlwinds and water spouts, and undertook groundbreaking experiments in electricity.

The electricity experiments led to worldwide fame and honorary doctorates from the University of St. Andrews and Oxford.

That was just the first half of his life. Franklin spent the second half in public service: as the most influential member of the Pennsylvania legislature, representative of several American colonies in London, U.S. postmaster-general, president of Pennsylvania, and as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention.

## John Adams

It is nearly as exhausting to relate the career of John Adams (1735–1826).

After a successful stint as a Boston lawyer, Adams exploded upon the public scene. He promoted the colonial cause as a writer and member of the First and Second Continental Congresses. With the possible exception of George Washington, he did more to secure America's independence than any other human being.

Diplomatic tasks kept him in Europe throughout 1778 and early 1779, but when he returned home, the Massachusetts constitutional convention tabbed him as the new state constitution's primary drafter. Then he traveled back to Europe as a diplomat, where he managed to write an entire encyclopedia of republican governments, the first volume of which was published shortly before the Constitutional Convention and proved influential there and in the ensuing state ratification debates.

Adams was elected Vice President in 1788 and 1792, and President in 1796. As President, he (true to form) made decisions that (1) rendered him deeply unpopular, (2) secured his defeat for re-election, and (3) eventually proved entirely correct.

## Roger Sherman

Roger Sherman of Connecticut (1721–1793) was another dynamo—a roaring burst of energy channeled by a fine mind and good judgment.

He was one of seven children of a farmer-cobbler. He became a store owner and a cobbler, and then discovered a talent for mathematics, and thus for astronomy. This induced him to publish an almanac and learn surveying. Surveying opened opportunities for land speculation, at which he was also successful. Not having enough to do, he then became a lawyer.

One measure of the man is that he produced seven children with his first wife and eight with his second. He was 61 years old when he fathered the last.

Like Franklin, Sherman turned over his businesses to others in midlife and entered public service. He was elected to the upper house of the Connecticut legislature (1766–1785), the Continental Congress (1774–1781), and the Confederation Congress (1784). He made very significant contributions at the Constitutional Convention and was elected to the first federal House of Representatives. When he died, he was serving in the U.S. Senate.

## Robert R. Livingston

Robert R. Livingston (1746–1813) enjoyed a life quieter than the other members of the Committee of Five—but quiet only by comparison. For 24 years, he was New York's leading jurist (chancellor). In 1788, along with Alexander Hamilton, he successfully led the pro-Constitution forces at the New York ratifying convention.

In 1801, President Jefferson appointed him minister to France, where he and James Monroe doubled the size of the United States by negotiating the Louisiana Purchase (1803).

After returning to America the following year, he partnered with Robert Fulton in quite another endeavor: They designed and built New York's first successful steamboat.

Next Installment: *What Is the Declaration of Independence?*



Written by Veronika Kyrylenko on June 23, 2026

## Report: Foreign Agent for Israel Gained Control Over Charlie Kirk's Show After His Murder

(11)

A new investigation by journalist Max Blumenthal of The Grayzone argues that *The Charlie Kirk Show* came under the control of a federally registered agent of Israel after Kirk was killed.

Blumenthal documents a striking sequence. After Charlie Kirk's assassination, his show remained with Salem Media Network, where

Brad Parscale, a Republican digital strategist and former Trump campaign manager, had recently become chief strategy officer.

Shortly after the tragic Utah event, Parscale had also begun working as a registered foreign agent for Israel.

Blumenthal does not claim to prove that Israel killed Kirk, an allegation that has circulated widely as critics distrust the official account of the assassination. Still, his latest report asks a narrower but explosive question: After Kirk spent his final months criticizing America's entanglement with Israel and resisting pressure from its lobby, did some of those same forces move quickly to manage the platform he left behind?

### Under New Influence

According to Blumenthal, Parscale registered as a foreign agent of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on September 18, 2025. That was eight days after Kirk was shot at Utah Valley State University during the first stop of his "American Comeback Tour."

The FARA filing, Blumenthal reports, placed Parscale at the center of a sweeping Israeli influence operation aimed at young Americans. The registration was for work on behalf of the state of Israel through Havas Media Network, a global advertising and media agency that served as an intermediary between Israel's Foreign Ministry and Parscale's firm, Clock Tower X. Per the terms,

At least 80 percent of content is tailored to Gen Z audiences across platforms, including TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, podcasts, and other relevant digital and broadcast outlets.

Other responsibilities include content creation, "integration of narrative messaging" and "paid media campaigns." A September 29, 2025, Responsible Statecraft report placed the contract at \$6 million.

Blumenthal writes that the arrangement brought *The Charlie Kirk Show* into the same media structure. Salem Media had distributed the show since 2020. In January 2025, Parscale became Salem's chief strategy officer.

The investigation also quotes a Radio Ink report from December 2025 stating that the show would continue as a podcast on Salem's network:

Starting January 5, the three-hour time slot will be taken by *Brietbart News* Editor-in-Chief Alex Marlow — going solo in the Noon Eastern hour — and CNN political commentator and conservative political strategist Scott Jennings taking the 1pm-3pm Eastern slot by himself.

The result was an unusual media handoff. Kirk's brand remained alive. Salem remained involved. And Parscale, newly registered to work on Israel's behalf, now held a senior strategy role at the same company.

### The Massie Dispute

That connection became a public controversy this May after a clash involving Representative Thomas Massie (R-Ky.).

Andrew Kolvet, Kirk's longtime communications director and successor on *The Charlie Kirk Show*, had criticized Massie after the congressman broke with pro-Israel Republicans. Massie then asked Grok, the AI chatbot on X, whether Kirk's show was now distributed by a registered foreign agent of Israel.

.@grok, is it true that the Charlie Kirk Show is now distributed by a registered foreign agent of Israel?

— Thomas Massie (@RepThomasMassie) May 23, 2026

Grok answered, "Yes, there's a substantive connection here worth noting."

Outlining the details of the FARA filing, the agent concluded,

12 So the distributor has direct high-level overlap and active collaboration with a registered Israeli foreign agent. Not "the show itself is the agent," but the ties are real and public via DOJ FARA filings.

\*\*Yes, there's a substantive connection here worth noting.\*\*

The Charlie Kirk Show is syndicated as a podcast (and was on radio) via Salem Media Group / Salem Podcast Network, which maintains its partnership with Turning Point USA post-Kirk's assassination.

Salem Media's Chief...

— Grok (@grok) May 23, 2026

Kolvet pushed back. He said the show was distributed by Steve Bannon's Real America's Voice, not Salem. But Blumenthal notes that Kolvet had said something different after Kirk's death,

"Salem has been so gracious through this process and even encouraged us to continue broadcasting the show on the Salem Radio Network," Kolvet told Radio Ink.

That contradiction gave the story its sharper edge: Kirk's show remained tied to a network whose strategy chief was now part of Israel's well-funded campaign to repair its collapsing image through American media.

### **Kirk's Israel Break**

Blumenthal's larger argument is that Kirk's posthumous media alignment clashed with the direction Kirk had taken before his death.

In the final months of his life, Kirk had become increasingly critical of Israel lobby pressure in Washington. He had opposed war with Iran. Last June, he called some of the war's neoconservative advocates, such as Senator Lindsay Graham (R-S.C.), "pathologically insane," warning that a regime-change war would "create a quagmire."

Kirk gave space at TPUSA events to some of the most visible right-wing critics of America's Israel policy, foreign-aid commitments, and push toward war with Iran.

For example, last July, Tucker Carlson used a TPUSA stage to discuss Jeffrey Epstein, Israel, and the right of Americans to ask "forbidden" questions without being smeared as antisemites.

Libertarian comic Dave Smith debated Josh Hammer on Israel, Gaza, Iran, AIPAC, and related hot-button issues in U.S. foreign policy.

Kirk also sat down with Megyn Kelly to discuss Epstein's possible connections to Israeli intelligence. At that time, the Trump administration shut down the scandalous case, sparking public fury and demands for accountability.

The event did not resonate well with Israel's lobby. Per Blumenthal,

Following the confab, Kirk was bombarded with infuriated text messages and phone calls from Netanyahu's wealthy allies in the US, including many who had funded TPUSA. According to his longtime friend, the Zionist donors treated Kirk with outright contempt, essentially ordering him to fall back into line.

During an August 2025 appearance with Megyn Kelly, Kirk described the pressure from Jewish "leaders" and "stakeholders" applied to him:

It's all of the sudden: "Oh, Charlie: he's no longer with us." Wait a second — what does "with us" mean, exactly? I'm an American, okay? I represent this country.

He then added that he had "less ability to criticize the Israeli government than actual Israelis do."

### **TPUSA After Charlie**

Yet after Kirk's death, TPUSA's new leadership had visibly softened its stance on America's involvement with Israel.

At a May 2026 TPUSA event, Erika Kirk, who assumed the role of CEO, was asked whether her husband would have supported a war with Iran. She declined to answer.

"My husband isn't here to say whether or not we should be at war with Iran," she said. "I would love for him to be here right now and tell us if we should or should not." (13)

For Blumenthal, that answer helped bury what Kirk had said while alive.

### **Larger Investigation**

Blumenthal's latest report fits into a broader investigation he has been building since Kirk's killing.

In earlier pieces, he examined Kirk's reported rupture with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, pressure from pro-Israel donors, and a Hamptons meeting where Bill Ackman, the Jewish billionaire hedge-fund manager and Trump supporter, allegedly confronted Kirk over his break from the old Republican consensus on Israel.

That break mattered because Kirk's own rise had been helped by pro-Israel donors. Per Blumenthal,

From its inception, his career was propelled by Zionist donors, who showered his young organization with money through neoconservative outfits like the David Horowitz Freedom Center.

For years, Kirk remained firmly in the pro-Israel camp. At the same time, TPUSA grew into the nation's largest and, arguably, most impactful conservative student association, with deep ties to MAGA politics.

That made Kirk's late shift more consequential. He was not merely changing his mind about a foreign-policy issue. He was leading one of the MAGA movement's most important youth organizations away from the pro-Israel orthodoxy that had helped elevate him and TPUSA in the first place.

At the same time, the official story of his death leaves a long trail of unease. Authorities have charged Tyler Robinson with Kirk's murder, and no law enforcement agency has accused Israel of involvement. Yet the case still has many unresolved questions, including security failures, contested forensic details, and, evidently, the political context around Kirk's final months.

Erika Kirk, meanwhile, has shown no public interest in that line of inquiry.

Blumenthal's latest report does not solve the assassination. But it raises an important and underreported point: After Kirk's death, the show bearing his name remained inside a media structure linked to a registered agent in the very Israeli influence campaign Kirk had grown publicly critical of.

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A very good case can be made, on moral as well as economic grounds, for a system in which the individual is required to stand on his own feet, not to lean on the state for handouts. Character, resourcefulness, capacity are formed and developed in struggle with obstacles, not in waiting passively for benefits from outside.

– William Henry Chamberlin

# Trump, the Democrats and the Courage To End a Failed War

Trump owns this failed war, but if the Democrats help torpedo the MOU and war resumes, then they will co-own the next war.

14

by Trita Parsi | Jun 19, 2026 | 0 Comments

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I have spent years fighting against Trump's push toward war with Iran, and I have the scars to prove it. When Trump withdrew from the JCPOA in 2018, I warned that it would eventually bring us to this moment. Ever since, I have consistently argued against the confrontational path he set the United States on. That record speaks for itself, which is why I can say what follows without any throat-clearing.

Given the circumstances, President Trump's decision to strike a deal with Tehran and bring this costly, unnecessary war to an end is the right one. It deserves support, not partisan second-guessing. As Rob Malley – a key member of Barack Obama's team that negotiated the nuclear deal and later Joe Biden's lead negotiator with Iran – noted on X, comparing Trump's memorandum of understanding to Obama's JCPOA misses the point. What matters is not how the agreement stacks up against past diplomatic achievements, but how it compares to the alternatives before us. And on that score, Malley argued, the MOU is “far preferable to any of the alternatives on offer. Period.”

I would go further. To examine the Memorandum of Understanding and ask “Was the war worth it?” is nonsensical.

**Of course it wasn't.** How could it have been? The premise itself is deeply flawed: that a failed war of choice would somehow strengthen Washington's hand at the negotiating table and produce more favorable terms. History offers little support for such a proposition.

The question is also flawed in another, more consequential way. It implies that a war should not be brought to an end until it has produced better terms – even when the war itself is failing.

Taken seriously, that logic leads to a dangerous conclusion: that a failed war must continue until the battlefield fortunes somehow improve and a more favorable outcome becomes attainable. Perhaps that day will come. Perhaps it never will. In the meantime, the costs – in lives, treasure, regional stability, and strategic credibility – are treated as secondary considerations.

This is how endless wars are born.

Wars become interminable when leaders convince themselves that ending them without victory is politically more costly than continuing them without hope. Once that trap is sprung, every setback becomes an argument for one more deployment, one more escalation, one more year. The objective shifts from achieving a realistic political outcome to avoiding the admission that the original objectives were unattainable.

American history offers more than a few examples. Presidents inherit wars they did not start, recognize they cannot be won on the promised terms, yet lack the political space to end them. So they postpone the reckoning. They kick the can down the road, handing

the burden to their successor, who does the same. The result is a cycle of strategic drift in which the costs accumulate while the prospects for success steadily recede.

When victory is nowhere in sight, prolonging a conflict in the hope that reality will eventually conform to political rhetoric is not resolve. It is denial.

15

Remember Afghanistan. For years, American officials lied to the public that victory was just around the corner—six months away, perhaps a year at most. Yet the Afghanistan Papers later revealed that these officials privately understood that victory was nowhere in sight. They knew the war was adrift, but feared the political consequences of admitting it.

So the war continued. By the time the United States finally withdrew, nearly two decades had passed, and more than \$2 trillion had been spent.

And what was the end result? After twenty years of war, thousands of American and allied lives lost, and hundreds of thousands of Afghan casualties, the United States arrived back where it had begun: it had replaced the Taliban with the Taliban.

That is the curse of endless war. The refusal to accept an unfavorable reality today merely guarantees a higher bill tomorrow.

Some credit must be given to Trump for breaking this pattern, even as he should be blamed for having started this war in the first place. Political leaders should be judged not only for the mistakes they make, but also for whether they have the courage to correct them.

Trump could have followed the well-worn path of his predecessors. He could have prolonged the conflict, spent more money, sacrificed more lives, destabilized more economies, and further depleted American power – all while insisting that victory remained just over the horizon. Recall the countless times he declared that the war had been won.

Indeed, the political costs of continuing the war would likely have been lower than the costs he is paying today for ending it. In American politics, there is often greater punishment for acknowledging failure than for perpetuating it.

That perverse incentive has trapped presidents for decades. In his testimony on the Vietnam War before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1966, George Kennan stated the following: “There is more respect to be won in the opinion of the world by a resolute and courageous liquidation of unsound policies than by the most stubborn pursuit of extravagant or unpromising objectives.”

The criticism coming from some Democrats is particularly disappointing because it echoes the same bad-faith tactics Republicans deployed against the JCPOA in 2015. To be sure, Trump has invited some of this treatment. He spent years attacking Obama’s agreement with a barrage of misleading arguments and exaggerated claims.

But that does not make it wise for Democrats to return the favor.

Trump currently owns this failed war, but if the Democrats help torpedo the MOU and war resumes, then they will co-own the next war. Trump’s disaster will become theirs as well.

This isn’t rocket science. Several Democratic lawmakers have managed to criticize the war, hold Trump accountable for it, yet avoid attack lines that could sabotage the MOU.

16

Their criticisms are primarily over Trump having *started* this war in the first place, rather than the terms for ending it.

Rather than attacking the terms of the MOU, Democrats should pressure the administration to protect it from those who are determined to see it fail. The main external threat is the Israeli government and Benjamin Netanyahu's obsession with sabotaging any opportunity for Iran and the United States to bury the hatchet.

Instead of relying solely on angry phone calls and public rebukes of Netanyahu, supporters of ending the war should press Trump to act now: suspend military aid to Israel and curtail military and intelligence cooperation. Such measures would limit Israel's ability to reignite the conflict and dispel any notion in Tel Aviv that Washington will automatically follow Israel into another war. If Israeli leaders understand that the United States will not be drawn into a future conflict on their behalf, their incentive to start one in the first place will be significantly reduced.

The task now is not to reward Trump politically, nor to excuse the recklessness that produced this war. It is to prevent the war from returning. Democrats can condemn the decision to start it without sabotaging the agreement that ends it. They can hold Trump accountable without helping Netanyahu drag the United States back into conflict. The choice before them is not between opposing Trump and supporting peace. It is between learning from America's endless wars and repeating them.

*Trita Parsi is the Executive VP of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft and an award-winning author. Washingtonian Magazine has named him one of the 25 most influential voices on foreign policy. Noam Chomsky calls him "one of the most distinguished scholars on Iran"*

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The result is the closest authoritative single volume on the New Deal and recovery. I plan to continue using it in class, and I recommend that anyone interested in a detailed account of the New Deal and recovery purchase a copy of *False Dawn*.

—Marcus M. Witcher, "[Did New Deal Spending End the Great Depression?](#)"

The statement that one man's boon is the other man's damage is valid with regard to robbery, war, and booty. The robber's plunder is the damage of the despoiled victim. But war and commerce are two different things.

— Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action* [1949]

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