

**A Courageous Trump Call on a Lousy Iran Deal**

By Bret Stephens

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**President Trump said pulling out of the Iran nuclear deal sends a message that “the United States no longer makes empty threats.”**

Of all the arguments for the Trump administration to honor the nuclear deal with Iran, none was more risible than the claim that we gave our word as a country to keep it.

“Our”?

The Obama administration refused to submit the deal to Congress as a treaty, knowing it would never get two-thirds of the Senate to go along. Just 21 percent of Americans approved of the deal at the time it went through, against 49 percent who did not, according to a Pew poll. The agreement “passed” on the strength of a 42-vote Democratic filibuster, against bipartisan, majority opposition.

“The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (J.C.P.O.A.) is not a treaty or an executive agreement, and it is not a signed document,” Julia Frifield, then the assistant secretary of state for legislative affairs, wrote then-Representative Mike Pompeo in November 2015, referring to the deal by its formal name. It’s questionable whether the deal has any legal force at all.

Build on political sand; get washed away by the next electoral wave. Such was the fate of the ill-judged and ill-founded J.C.P.O.A., which Donald Trump killed on Tuesday by refusing to again waive sanctions on the Islamic Republic. He was absolutely right to do so — assuming, that is, serious thought has been given to what comes next.

In the weeks leading to Tuesday’s announcement, some of the same people who previously claimed the deal was the best we could possibly hope for suddenly became inventive in proposing means to fix it. This involved suggesting side deals between Washington and European capitals to impose stiffer penalties on Tehran for its continued testing of ballistic missiles — more than 20 since the deal came into effect — and its increasingly aggressive regional behavior.

But the problem with this approach is that it only treats symptoms of a failure for which the J.C.P.O.A. is itself a major cause. The deal weakened U.N. prohibitions on Iran’s testing of ballistic missiles, which cannot be reversed without Russian and Chinese consent. That won’t happen.

The easing of sanctions also gave Tehran additional financial means with which to fund its depredations in Syria and its militant proxies in Yemen, Lebanon and elsewhere. Any effort to counter Iran on the ground in these places would mean fighting the very forces we are effectively feeding. Why not just stop the feeding?

Apologists for the deal answer that the price is worth paying because Iran has put on hold much of its production of nuclear fuel for the next several years. Yet even now Iran is under looser nuclear strictures than South Korea, and would have been allowed to enrich as much material as it liked once the deal expired. That’s nuts.

Apologists also claim that, with Trump’s decision, Tehran will simply restart its enrichment activities on an industrial scale. Maybe it will, forcing a crisis that could end with U.S. or Israeli strikes on Iran’s nuclear sites. But that would be stupid, something the regime emphatically isn’t. More likely, it will take symbolic steps to restart enrichment, thereby implying a threat without making good on it. What the regime wants is a renegotiation, not a reckoning.

Why? Even with the sanctions relief, the Iranian economy hangs by a thread: The Wall Street Journal on Sunday reported “hundreds of recent outbreaks of labor unrest in Iran, an indication of deepening discord over the nation’s economic troubles.” This week, the rial hit a record low of 67,800 to the dollar; one member of the Iranian Parliament estimated \$30 billion of capital outflows in recent months. That’s real money for a country whose gross domestic product barely matches that of Boston.

The regime might calculate that a strategy of confrontation with the West could whip up useful nationalist fervors. But it would have to tread carefully: Ordinary Iranians are already furious that their government has squandered the proceeds of the nuclear deal on propping up the Assad regime. The conditions that led to the so-called Green movement of 2009 are there once again. Nor will it help Iran if it tries to start a war with Israel and comes out badly bloodied.

All this means the administration is in a strong position to negotiate a viable deal. But it missed an opportunity last month when it failed to deliver a crippling blow to Bashar al-Assad, Iran’s puppet in Syria, for his use of chemical weapons. Trump’s appeals in his speech to the Iranian people also sounded hollow from a president who isn’t exactly a tribune of liberalism and has disdained human rights as a tool of U.S. diplomacy. And the U.S. will need to mend fences with its European partners to pursue a coordinated diplomatic approach.

The goal is to put Iran’s rulers to a fundamental choice. They can opt to have a functioning economy, free of sanctions and open to investment, at the price of permanently, verifiably and irreversibly forgoing a nuclear option and abandoning their support for terrorists. Or they can pursue their nuclear ambitions at the cost of economic ruin and possible war. But they are no longer entitled to Barack Obama’s sweetheart deal of getting

sanctions lifted first, retaining their nuclear options for later, and sponsoring terrorism throughout.

Trump's courageous decision to withdraw from the nuclear deal will clarify the stakes for Tehran. Now we'll

see whether the administration is capable of following through.

## After Obama's Iran Deal

By The Editorial Board

**Trump can exit because Obama never built U.S. support for the pact.**

President Trump on Tuesday withdrew the U.S. from the Iran nuclear deal, rightly calling it "defective at its core." Yet he also offered Iran a chance to negotiate a better deal if it truly doesn't want a nuclear weapon. Mr. Trump's challenge now is to build a strategy and alliances to contain Iran until it accepts the crucial constraints that Barack Obama refused to impose.

The Obama Administration spent years negotiating a lopsided pact that gave Tehran \$100 billion of sanctions relief and a chance to revive its nuclear-weapons program after a 15-year waiting period. Instead of cutting off "all of Iran's pathways to a bomb" as Mr. Obama claimed, the deal delayed the country's entry into the nuclear club and gave the mullahs cash to fund their Middle East adventurism.

Mr. Trump outlined a more realistic strategy in October, promising to work with allies to close the deal's loopholes, address Tehran's missile and weapons proliferation, and "deny the regime all paths to a nuclear weapon." An Iranian nuke would be a modest problem if Iran were a democracy. But the Islamic Republic is no India and has a four-decade history of oppressing its own people, taking foreign hostages and threatening neighbors with extinction.

State Department policy chief Brian Hook spent months shuttling between European capitals to get an agreement to strengthen inspections of suspected nuclear sites, stop Iran from developing ballistic missiles and eliminate the deal's sunset provisions. Deal signatories China and Russia don't share U.S. strategic goals in the Mideast, but the Trump Administration's reasonable presumption is that Britain, France and Germany do.

Mr. Trump's case for fixing the deal was bolstered last week when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu revealed intelligence that Iran repeatedly lied to U.N. weapons inspectors about past nuclear activity. As Mr. Trump noted Tuesday, Tehran doesn't allow inspectors access to many military sites. Mr. Netanyahu also revealed that Iran hid an extensive nuclear archive, which would still be secret if not for Israeli intelligence.

Regimes that have peaceful intentions don't behave this way. When South Africa decided to denuclearize in the early 1990s, President F.W. de Klerk ordered the destruction of all sensitive technical and policy documents and gave U.N. inspectors "anytime, anywhere" access to inspect nuclear facilities. In Moammar Gadhafi's case, U.S.

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officials physically removed sensitive nuclear-weapons documents, uranium and equipment from Libya.

Yet Britain, France and Germany waved away Israel's intelligence, and European Union chief Federica Mogherini said the evidence doesn't "put in question Iran's compliance" with the nuclear deal. The Europeans may think they can maintain commercial dealings with Iran and wait out Mr. Trump through the 2020 election.

This is risky because Mr. Trump said in the next 90 to 180 days the U.S. will reimpose "the highest level of economic sanction" on Iran's energy and automotive industries, ports, shipbuilding and more. The sanctions will cut Iran off from the global financial system even as the regime faces labor strikes and political protests amid a struggling economy. The country may find fewer buyers for its oil exports, and the rial has plunged.

Iran may try to drive a wedge between the U.S. and Europe to keep euros flowing to Tehran. But the U.S. has leverage. As Mr. Trump said Tuesday, "Any nation that helps Iran in its quest for nuclear weapons could also be strongly sanctioned by the United States." Attempting to isolate the U.S. could present European companies with an eventual choice of doing business with the U.S. or Iran. The smarter play is for Europe to persuade Iran that to maintain commerce with the world it should renegotiate the pact.

Mr. Obama issued his own broadside Tuesday against withdrawal, but then he made it easier for Mr. Trump by never winning domestic support for the deal. He refused to submit it for Senate approval as a treaty, which would have had the force of law. Mr. Trump is walking away from Mr. Obama's personal commitment to Iran, not an American commitment.

But this is also a warning to Mr. Trump that his Administration has more work to do to execute his Iran strategy. This means building bipartisan support in Congress for sanctions; diplomacy to deter Iran's adventures in Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East; and more diplomacy with Europe to fix the nuclear deal's fatal weaknesses.

Perhaps the best part of Mr. Trump's remarks came at the end when he spoke to "the long-suffering people of Iran." He said "the people of America stand with you" and made the offer of better relations and a more prosperous future if their leaders will shed their destructive nuclear and imperial dreams. Political change in Tehran remains the best hope for a non-nuclear Iran.

## With or Without the Nuclear Deal, the Islamic Republic May Be Headed for Collapse

By Sohrab Ahmari

commentarymagazine.com

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### A lesson from the fall of the Qajars.

One day in 1891, Nasser Eddin Shah, who ruled Iran for half of the 19th century, woke from a deep slumber in his grand bedchamber and sent for his customary morning tobacco, only to be informed that there was none to be found in the palace. The tobacco boycott that was afoot on the streets of Persia had reached the Peacock Throne, the seat of his power. We might imagine the grimace that crossed the shah's walrus-like countenance before he exploded into a fit of anger, striking his servants, wives, and children with his cane as he rampaged through the palace.

The tobacco boycott of 1891 was a remarkable act of popular resistance against a humiliating monopoly concession granted by the shah to a British firm. Under its terms, the Persian treasury was to receive less than a fourth of net tobacco profits, estimated at £500,000 annually, while the shah himself drew £15,000 a year. Responding to a boycott call by the ulama, or clerics, tobacco shops shuttered their doors, and millions of Iranians quit smoking almost overnight, including the members of the royal harem. The shah would rescind the concession by the end of the year.

Five years later, while the shah was supplicating the Almighty at a shrine outside Tehran, a cloaked figure approached him from behind, aimed a rusty revolver at the "king of kings," and fired. Reeling from the assassin's bullet, Nasser Eddin Shah reportedly croaked that "I will rule you differently if I survive." He didn't survive, however, and the pair of events—the 1891 boycott and the 1896 assassination—marked the beginning of the end of his Qajar dynasty.

Today, the evidence is mounting that the Islamic Republic has entered a similar death spiral. The nationwide eruption of labor strikes is only the latest sign. The Wall Street Journal's Asa Fitch reported over the weekend:

Teachers went on strike in central Iran's city of Yazd. Steelworkers and hospital staff walked off the job in the southwest city of Ahvaz. Railway employees protested near Tabriz. And a bus drivers union in Tehran battled the private companies that control many city routes.

These were among the hundreds of recent outbreaks of labor unrest in Iran, an indication of deepening discord over the nation's economic troubles. Workers are turning not only against their employers but also Iran's government, piling pressure on leaders who promised but failed to deliver better times in the two years since economic sanctions were lifted in the nuclear deal.

While working-class Iranians struggle to put food on the table—prices have climbed more than 10 percent a year, unemployment hovers north of 12 percent, and having a job is no guarantee that one gets paid—the Tehran regime has spent the lion's share of the proceeds from the nuclear deal on military adventures from Yemen to Syria.

As Fitch noted, labor unrest is far from the mullahs' only headache. The current strikes follow the New Year's uprising, which saw thousands of Iranians pour into the streets in December and January. Their slogans initially concerned graft and corruption but quickly morphed into outright opposition to the Islamic Republic in toto. Then came the (ongoing) movement of women who publicly remove their headscarves in protest against compulsory veiling. In the most bizarre twist yet, last month's discovery of a mummified body believed to belong to Reza Shah Pahlavi, the great modernizing monarch who deposed the Qajar dynasty, galvanized anti-regime sentiment, with soccer fans taking to their stadiums to chant "Long live Reza Shah!"

All this is reminiscent of the chaos and pandemonium that accompanied the collapse of the Qajars. In the final years of the dynasty, the Qajar fisc was perennially empty. Tribal chiefs refused to pay taxes. Radical underground societies of various stripes—Islamist, nationalist, communist—were spreading across the country. Prophets and assassins and prophetic assassins shook the land. The only difference is that the mullahs combine the venality and corruption of the Qajars with a fanatical and deeply anti-Iranian Islamist ideology, which makes them all the more vulnerable to a renascent Iranian nationalism.

One detail in Fitch's report stands out especially for those alert to the rhyming patterns of history. "Standing on a wooden box outside Iran's Haft Tapeh sugar plant," the Journal correspondent wrote, "Esmail Bakhshi, armed with a microphone, exhorted a crowd of striking workers to take over the operation if they weren't paid several months of back wages. The company which employs about 5,000, grows sugar cane and makes granulated sugar." Bakhshi, the labor leader, told his comrades: "They say they have no money. We have no money either. But the difference is that we are experts in sugar cane processing, and we will manage the operations ourselves."

Sugar, after tobacco, was the commodity that finally undid the Qajars. In the winter of 1905, the governor of Tehran ordered the flogging of some merchants over the scarcity of sugar. In protest, dissident clerics from Tehran migrated to the holy city of Qom and took refuge, or *bast*, in the mosques. By June 1906, some 2,000 clerics and their supporters had taken refuge in Qom, and there were another 12,000 *bastis* in Tehran. What began as a protest against the flogging of a few merchants soon turned into a demand for representative government.

On August 6, 1906, Mozzafar Eddin Shah (1853-1907), Nasser Eddin's son and successor, issued a firman, or royal proclamation, granting a constitution "for the peace and tranquility" of Persia. A Majlis, or parliament, was established. Mozzafar Eddin Shah died six months later. It would take another two decades for the last Qajar shah to abdicate. The constitutionalist order that was born was short-lived; it was crushed under Russian cannon.

Even so, the dynasty that today misrules the same realm might look back on the decline and fall of the Qajars with

not a little anxiety.

## Iran's Currency Crisis Is an Opportunity for the U.S.

By Saeed Ghasseminejad, Richard Goldberg

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**An alliance between rich and poor could overthrow the regime.**

While the debate over the future of the Iran nuclear deal and U.S. military strategy in Syria rages in Washington, policymakers cannot afford to miss the historic events unfolding inside Iran. The United States' response to these developments will not only affect the future of the Islamic Republic but Syria and the broader Middle East, too.

Over the first three months of 2018, Iran's currency collapsed into total free fall, with the dollar gaining 37 percent against the rial — accelerated in part by John Bolton's appointment as U.S. President Donald Trump's national security advisor. Iran started the year with widespread protests across the country, fueled by low-income Iranians' economic grievances. These protests cast a shadow of doubt over the regime's stability and put a downward pressure on the rial.

Tehran spent February and March fighting its currency depreciation and flight of capital without much success due to the increasing probability of the United States leaving the nuclear deal. On April 9, Bolton's first day on the job, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani rolled out a series of draconian steps to halt the crisis.

The regime first adopted a single unified exchange rate of 42,000 rial to the dollar for both official and "street" transactions. Fearing a likely run on foreign currency, Rouhani then prohibited the practice of foreign currency trading and acquisition. Private foreign currency trading became a crime, with regime officials likening it to drug trafficking. Security forces arrested traders who didn't listen — and Iranians who stood in line to buy dollars faced the threat of imprisonment.

Even more shocking, the Central Bank of Iran prohibited Iranians from keeping more than 10,000 euro at any given time. Any amount held in excess had to be immediately sold back to the government — at a loss — or put into government-owned bank accounts with the knowledge that the regime could freeze or access the funds at any time. Additionally, Rouhani declared that Iranians could buy only 1,000 euro, once per year, before traveling to another country.

These decrees are not only signs of a regime in severe crisis. They are direct assaults on the livelihoods and lifestyles of Rouhani's last remaining supporters: Iran's upper-middle class. The measures target those looking to protect their wealth by hedging against the rial and those looking to have enough money to travel abroad. Long-distance travel with less than 1,000 euros in spending money makes leaving the country a significant challenge for the average upper-middle-class Iranian family.

Back in 2009, these wealthier and more educated citizens of Tehran — those who have traditionally backed the so-called reformist movement — took to the streets to protest then-President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's stolen election. In 2013, these same people helped elect Rouhani, believing he was a reformist capable of moderating the regime and moving it into the 21st century.

This bloc of Iranians long ago abandoned the hard-liners, believing they could change a totalitarian state from within by supporting regime officials with more moderate tendencies. Once these people abandon Rouhani, they have nowhere else to go but the direction of pro-democracy activists such as Shirin Ebadi, writing off the potential for the regime to change from within and instead favoring a change of political system entirely.

More significantly, this is a different segment of the Iranian public than the one that began pouring into the streets in late December 2017. The more recent protests comprise blue-collar Iranians who live in traditional hard-line strongholds. The mullahs now run the risk of seeing a coalition of opposition to the regime emerge, combining the working class and the upper-middle class — the former asking where their paychecks went, the latter asking why their money is being taken away and their travel restricted.

An anti-regime alliance of rich and poor could be the key to ending Iran's clerical rule. The Trump administration should aggressively pursue policies that widen the gap between Iran's government and its people, strengthening the pro-democracy movement along the way. The Trump administration should aggressively pursue policies that widen the gap between Iran's government and its people, strengthening the pro-democracy movement along the way.

One way to quickly exacerbate the regime's currency crisis is to restore the congressionally enacted sanctions on the central bank. That law, which is currently suspended as part of the 2015 nuclear agreement, did more than just prohibit financial transactions with the central bank and force importers of Iranian oil to significantly reduce their purchases. It also put all the bank's foreign-held accounts on lockdown, denying the regime the ability to freely access or transfer its foreign exchange reserves.

With the foreign currency market shut down by Rouhani, the regime has two options right now: back all imports with cheap foreign currency by depleting its foreign exchange reserves, or face a shortage of goods and certain social instability. The government is likely to choose the first option, and if it loses all access to foreign-held reserves at the same time, the mullahs will soon face a balance of payments crisis that could bring down the regime.

Trump has already threatened to bring back sanctions on the Central Bank of Iran by May 12 if U.S. and European negotiators can't agree on a way to fix the nuclear deal. Others have suggested that Trump should reimpose these sanctions regardless of those negotiations because of the bank's role in backing Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. In case Trump needed any more reasons, here's one: It might just help the people of Iran bring an

end to the Islamic Republic before its 40th anniversary in February 2019.

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## Between Them, Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas Clarify Israel's Options

By Jonathan S. Tobin

jns.org

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### Anti-Semitism, violence, or the status quo?

For many American Jews, the story of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is one about blaming Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for resisting peace and building settlements. The fact that most Israelis view the issue very differently is an inconvenient fact.

American liberals see the reluctance of Israelis to abandon the West Bank as they did Gaza in 2005 as the result of misguided extremism or foolish fears.

Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas speaks during a meeting with members of the Central Committee in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Jan. 14, 2018. Photo by Flash90

What explains the gap between Israeli opinion and that of the Diaspora?

The answer lies in an unwillingness to think clearly not only about what the Palestinians want, but what they're doing and saying. In the last week, those who were willing to listen got an explanation for why even most of those Israelis who are in favor of a two-state solution in theory don't think it makes sense to withdraw from the West Bank and Jerusalem in the foreseeable future.

Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas just provided yet another example why Israelis don't trust the person most of the world refers to as their peace partner. In a rambling anti-Semitic rant before the Palestine National Council in Ramallah, he denounced Zionism as a European plot. Giving his listeners what he called a "history lesson," he told them that "Israel is a colonial project that has nothing to do with the Jews. Europeans wanted to bring the Jews here to preserve their interests in the region."

Abbas went on to dispute the more than 3,000-year-old connection between the Land of Israel and the Jewish people. He recycled discredited anti-Semitic myths about modern-day Jews being descended from the Khazars, rather than the ancient Israelites.

Just as bad, he said the Holocaust was not caused by anti-Semitism, but by the "social behavior" of the Jews, "[their charging] interest and social matters." He also sought to link the Zionist movement to Adolf Hitler, arguing that an agreement that allowed many German Jews

to escape the Shoah was proof that the Jewish return to their land was a Nazi-Zionist plot.

For those who are aware of Abbas's biography, this latter accusation is nothing new. Abbas was the author of a 1982 doctoral dissertation that focused on the Nazi-Zionist smear, as well as on Holocaust denial in which the Palestinian claimed that the figure of 6 million Jewish victims was an exaggeration.

While this is far from the first time he has engaged in anti-Semitism, it was the sort of thing that even those who normally bend over backwards to rationalize Palestinian misbehavior couldn't swallow. The European Union and former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry condemned Abbas's anti-Semitism. The left-wing lobby J Street went to so far as to note his use of "anti-Semitic tropes," as well as his "deeply offensive comments." Nor could Amira Hass—a rabidly anti-Zionist columnist for Haaretz—avoid noting the "scent of anti-Semitism" in his comments.

Nevertheless, some still argue that it doesn't matter if Abbas is an anti-Semite as long as he wants a two-state solution. They believe that Israel's presence in the territories is both corrosive to the country's character, and ultimately, a threat to the nation's claims to being both a democracy and a Jewish state. They say better to have a people who share Abbas's hateful opinions on the other side of a border defended by the Israel Defense Forces as opposed to inside of it.

The problem is that it means Israel is being asked to trade its only bargaining chips in the form of territory in exchange for something that—as even most peace advocates acknowledge—will be an armed truce at best, rather than peace. Abbas's speech is a tip-off that the Palestinian state that peace advocates clamor for would be a stepping stone to new campaigns aimed at the end of the Jewish nation.

Israelis know this because they saw what happened the last time Israel gave up territory, when former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon withdrew every last soldier, settler and settlement from Gaza in 2005. Instead of trading land for peace, Israel traded land for terror. Instead of protesting the Israeli settlements in their midst, Hamas-ruled Gaza now protests the "settlements" inside the borders of pre-1967 Israel.

The Friday “March of Return” demonstrations at the border between Israel and Gaza being orchestrated by Hamas are not civil-rights protests. The point of these weekly efforts, in which Palestinians armed with guns, Molotov cocktails, rocks, burning tires and lit kites try to tear down the security barrier that protects Israel (though outlets like The New York Times pointedly try to ignore the violence, as this cartoon portrays) is to destroy the Jewish state.

As an essay by one of the participants, published in The New York Times last week, states that the use of the term “return” is not a figure of speech. Fadi Abu Shammalah made it clear that the goal is to tear down the border and allow the descendants of the 1948 refugees to invade pre-1967 Israel, effectively ending the Jewish state’s existence. Evacuating Gaza didn’t inspire its people to accept the notion of two states for two peoples. It merely

## Removing Mahmoud Abbas Won’t Bring Peace

By Yossi Kuperwasser

**The problem lies in the Palestinian national movement itself.**

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas’ outrageous remarks about Jews may have rocked the world, but they also exposed the international community’s disinterest in the positions held by Abbas and the Palestinians in general. In 1977, Abbas published his book “Zionism, Beginning and End.” The book, which has never been translated into Hebrew, explains at length all the claims he has repeated publicly in recent years.

According to Abbas’ book, Zionism was forced on the Jews by European colonialists, who forced them against their will to see themselves as a nation and immigrate to Palestine. To this end, Zionism concerned itself with exacerbating the hardships faced by the Jews of Europe and the Arab world in an effort to convince them to emigrate. One such effort according to Abbas’ book and his doctorate thesis consisted of collaborating with the Nazis.

According to Abbas, the way to bring an end to Zionism is to cooperate with Jews who face discrimination in Israel, in particular Jews from Arab states such as Iraq, to convince them to return to their countries of origin, where they were of course treated very well.

In light of the recent calls for Abbas to step down, one must emphasize that his remarks are not just a reflection of his personal opinion but rather the Palestinian belief system. They constitute the basis of the false Palestinian narrative that holds there is no such thing as the Jewish people. The Jews are merely a religious group and as a result, they have no right to a nation state. In a statement following the outcry over his remarks, Abbas apologized not to the Jewish people but “members of the Jewish religion.” The Jews have no historical connection to Palestine and there is therefore no basis for their demand for a return to Palestine. As the descendants of the

whet their appetite to continue their century-old war on Zionism which, contrary to the claims of some on the Jewish left, they have yet to concede is a lost cause.

So the question for Jews who carp at Netanyahu and claim that Israel is the obstacle to peace is: Which Palestinian state do you want? The one in the West Bank led by a fanatical anti-Semite who is determined to whip up hatred for Jews among his people? Or the one led by Islamist terrorists in Gaza who are already actively seeking Israel’s destruction?

If Israelis say, “no, thank you,” to either and insist that as bad as things are, repeating Sharon’s disastrous Gaza experiment in the West Bank will make things infinitely worse, it’s because they are paying attention to what Abbas and Hamas are saying. American kibitzers and critics ought to do the same.

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Canaanites, the Palestinians are the only indigenous people here. The Jews are intolerable beings, which is why the Europeans created Zionism in a bid to both rid themselves of the Jews and defend against the strengthening of the Arab nations and Islam.

“The March of Return” in the Gaza Strip and the Nakba Day events commemorating the displacement of the Palestinian refugees during Israel’s War of Independence on May 15 are a reflection of the Palestinian commitment to the long-term goal of ending Zionism, as outlined in Abbas’ book.

The struggle against Zionism is at the root of Palestinian identity and is at once national and religious in nature. It is just that for now, Abbas believes certain means of struggle are less beneficial to the Palestinian cause. The Palestinians are the only victims in this conflict, and they must fortify this status through the perpetuation of their refugee status and the strengthening of the public’s consciousness of the Nakba. As victims, one should not demand the Palestinians take responsibility for their actions and their plight.

Palestinian incitement is the effort to instill this narrative into their consciousness; and the campaign to deligitimize Israel in the international arena is the campaign to instill this narrative in global opinion.

It is not enough to replace Abbas. We must replace the Palestinian narrative, which is a much harder goal to accomplish. As the Fatah party’s last living founding father, Abbas could have tried to change the narrative, but he has preferred to deepen his commitment to the narrative by connecting it, and rightly so, to the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Hajj Amin al-Husseini.

“The March of Return” in Gaza and the Nakba Day events next week reflect the Palestinian commitment to the long-term goal of putting an end to Zionism. Whoever believes they can promote peace under these conditions by

merely presenting some plan and sermonizing to the Palestinians, as some senior U.S. officials continue to do today, is continuing to ignore the problem.

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to live,” says a refugee from Yarmouk, now in London.

## Why Israeli Intelligence about the Iranian Nuclear Program Matters

By Matthew Kroenig

atlanticcouncil.org

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Yes, there’s a lot that’s new.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on April 30 provided a twenty-minute PowerPoint presentation of secret Iranian nuclear documents, acquired by Israeli intelligence. The information revealed will be unlikely to change many minds about the wisdom of the nuclear deal with Iran, but it is significant. It shows that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was concluded under false pretenses and that Iran may currently be in violation of the accord.

To understand the significance of the information acquired for the nuclear deal, however, we must first review the steps necessary to build nuclear weapons. For Iran to go nuclear, it must complete three steps: (1) enrich significant quantities of uranium to weapons-grade levels; (2) develop a functioning nuclear warhead; (3) and possess a ballistic missile or other means to deliver the device to an enemy. Step 1 is the most difficult technical hurdle and the subject of the most contentious debates on the Iran nuclear deal. But all of the revelations in Netanyahu’s presentation were about Step 2.

That is why the revelations will be unlikely to change any minds. Iran deal proponents are pleased that the JCPOA puts caps on Iran’s uranium enrichment program in a manner that buys time and forestalls difficult decisions about bombing Iran or allowing Iran to get the bomb. Deal opponents dislike that the JCPOA gives a stamp of approval to Iran’s enrichment program and that the limits on enrichment expire in several years due to sunset clauses. The information presented by Netanyahu does not affect either of these calculations.

But, the revelations are, for lack of a better word, revealing.

Most importantly, Netanyahu claimed that illegal nuclear weaponization work continues to the present day. He said that “today, in 2018, this work is carried out by SPND, that’s an organization inside Iran’s Defense Ministry.” His presentation claimed that the name of the program for Step 2 changed in 2003, but that substantive work has continued under a new label with the same lead scientist and some of the same staff under the euphemism of “scientific knowhow development.” If true, this would be a clear violation of the JCPOA, which explicitly prohibits work on nuclear warhead design in Section C, Part 16 and Annex 1, Part T. This is a subject that deserves

further scrutiny and on which the international community should press Iran.

Next, these revelations show that the Iran nuclear deal was consummated under false pretenses. A condition of the deal in a section labeled “Transparency and Confidence Building Measures” (Section C, Part 14) was that Iran “fully implement the ‘Roadmap for Clarification of Past and Present Outstanding Issues.’” This was a euphemism for Iran coming clean about the possible military dimensions (PMD) of its nuclear program. Netanyahu’s presentation shows that Iran did not come clean, but lied about many aspects of the PMD of its program in its reporting to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 2015. The IAEA certified in December 2015 that it was satisfied with Iran’s answer to inquiries about PMD, but we now have 55,000 new pages related to this subject. At a minimum, the IAEA should reopen its investigation into PMD based on this new information.

Finally, this information helps to resolve a key debate between deal supporters and critics. Many supporters argued that Iran’s willingness to sign the JCPOA in 2015 reflected a strategic decision to give up the nuclear weapons option altogether. Netanyahu’s briefing lends more support to critics who have argued all along that Iran is merely waiting out the clock in order to resume its march to the bomb.

What does all of this mean for US policy toward Iran? It largely depends on one’s predisposition before Netanyahu’s presentation. Supporters can argue that this shows the value of remaining in the deal and constraining Iran on Step 1. Opponents can claim that these revelations provide grounds for pulling out of the deal because it was concluded under false pretenses and Iran may be in violation at present. Those in the middle can argue that we should use the mechanisms within the deal to press Iran on this new information and, if necessary, snap back international sanctions consistent with the deal’s terms.

The only untenable conclusion is the widespread, but incorrect hot take that Netanyahu’s briefing contains nothing new.

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## Discouraging the Use of Chemical Weapons Should Be an End in Itself

By Dr. Max Singer

besacenter.org

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**Achieving what's possible.**

**The attack on Syria's chemical weapons (CW) sites wasn't intended to influence the outcome of the war;** it was designed to prevent the future use of CW. This won't save many lives, because regular bombs can kill as many people as CW. But ending the horrors of chemical warfare is a worthwhile and feasible international goal. The way we react to the attack on Assad's CW assets can affect the possibility of future use. We should applaud the international actions against Assad's CW instead of complaining about what the attacks didn't accomplish.

Paradoxically, one reason we can prevent the use of Chemical Weapons (CW) in the future is that in doing so we won't save many lives. People are naturally horrified by a vision of being killed in a gas attack, but generally speaking, CW are not much more effective at killing people than are ordinary high explosive (HE) weapons. Anyone killed by an HE bomb is just as dead as someone killed by CW.

On the one hand, the limited killing power of CW means that preventing Assad or the next Assad from using CW will not save many lives (hundreds or perhaps thousands; certainly not millions). But this also means the Assads of the world won't lose much if they give up their CW. It is therefore relatively easy for the world to impose costs on anyone who uses CW that would outweigh the small gains they might get from using CW.

It is possible to get the world to enforce moral values when it can do so without incurring large costs. In cases like Syria, the world cannot stop the killing without a military force stronger than the local forces, and nobody is willing to sacrifice their soldiers. But the world can support the ban on CW by using only missile attacks from a distance.

There is no way the US-British-French attack on Assad's CW facilities could have a major influence on the struggle for control of Syria, or stop the killing of civilians. The purpose of the attack was not to change the outcome of the war in Syria; the purpose was to make sure Assad and his successors understand that he loses more from his use of CW than he gains – which is certainly true.

The dictators of the world don't use CW because they are cruel; they use them because CW are a slightly easier

and cheaper way to kill and frighten their enemies. But they have other ways of killing and frightening people. So if the example of what happened to Assad convinces them that they would lose more from international retaliation for using CW than they might gain from their use, they will not use their CW. Others might decide it is a mistake to build or buy CW in the first place. Why spend money on weapons you can't use?

CW are officially classed as "weapons of mass destruction," along with nuclear weapons (NW) and biological weapons (BW). But this is misleading. Nuclear or biological weapons have an entirely different potential than CW. NW or BW can kill millions of people.[1] The politics of any conflict are changed if one side or both sides might use NW or BW. The world will not be very different if many countries have CW and sometimes use them (terrible though that would be), but it will be radically different – and much worse – if many countries have, and some countries use, NW or BW.

Does the limited harm from CW mean it is not worthwhile to enforce the ban on CW or reinforce the taboo against their use? Not at all. We should make small improvements in the world even if we cannot yet make bigger ones. A world in which CW are not used is better than a world in which they are – even if there is only a small reduction in the number of people killed. Perhaps a world in which international agreement achieves some moral goals, even modest ones, is better than a world in which nations cannot succeed in enforcing any moral values at all.

We should applaud the governments that acted in Syria to support the world's rejection of CW, not weaken the precedent they created by complaining that the attack didn't stop the killing in Syria or end the rule of the dictator. Our reaction to the attack should be designed to convince potential users of CW that international hatred of CW is so strong that anyone who uses them will be punished enough so that he will regret having used them.

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## Most Israelis Understand That Israel Can Be Right and the Whole World Wrong

By Yossi Klein Halevi

nytimes.com

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**Israel must keep those who seek to destroy it from breaching its borders.**

In 2002, when much of the international community was severely criticizing Israel for its tough military response to the wave of Palestinian suicide bombings known as the Second Intifada, the United Nations secretary general, Kofi Annan, asked with rhetorical

exasperation, "Can Israel be right and the whole world wrong?"

Most Israelis would have surely answered: Of course.

After all, only two years earlier, Israel had offered to withdraw from virtually the entire West Bank and Gaza. In return, it received the worst wave of terrorism in its history. That Israeli narrative of why the peace process failed transformed Israel's politics for a generation, leading

to the near-total collapse of the left as a viable political force. Meanwhile, much of the world ignored Israel's spurned overture and continued to fault the Jewish state for the continuing occupation it had sought to end.

Today, we Israelis are experiencing another moment of radical disconnect with much of world opinion.

Every Friday for the past several weeks, the Islamist Hamas has mobilized tens of thousands of demonstrators, who have embarked on a "march of return" toward Israel. The initial goal is to destroy the fence and cross Israel's internationally recognized border. The long-term goal is to demographically destroy the Jewish-majority state through a "return" of descendants of Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war.

In response, Israel has used live fire against the demonstrators, killing dozens and injuring over a thousand in the last month of protests.

Israel has been fiercely condemned by United Nations officials, European leaders and human rights organizations, who insist that the Israel Defense Forces is, once again, resorting to disproportionate force. But for Israelis, the weekly demonstrations — which are accompanied by firebombs and burning kites dispatched into Israeli fields and breakthroughs by small groups of Hamas members into Israeli territory — are an intolerable threat.

Israelis view these demonstrations as part of a wider assault that includes continual attempts, along every border, to penetrate the country's defenses — whether through tunnels from Gaza, periodic waves of missiles and rockets fired from Gaza and Lebanon and, most worrying of all, threats from the growing Iranian military presence in Syria. Those assaults are part of an increasingly successful Iranian plan to surround Israel's borders with what Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has called "the golden ring in the chain of resistance."

While the world sees images that confirm the Jewish state as the region's Goliath, many of us regard our country as Goliath and David simultaneously. In our conflict with the Palestinians, we are the overwhelming power. But in our conflict with much of the Arab and Muslim worlds, we are vulnerable. Israel has in the past been the underdog. And if we lessen our alertness, we could be again. The presence of terrorist enclaves on almost every one of Israel's borders helps explain the determination of the I.D.F. to prevent demonstrators from trying to break through the fence.

But that resolute posture creates another strategic threat for Israel. The very tactics that keep us relatively safe in one of the world's most dangerous regions are undermining our moral credibility abroad. This, then, is Israel's dilemma: Can it maintain its deterrence in the Middle East without fatally undermining its position in the West?

One of the lowest moments in the Israeli disconnect with world opinion occurred in 2010, when the Turkish ship, Mavi Marmara, tried to break the Israeli sea blockade of Gaza. Israeli commandos boarded the ship and in the ensuing skirmish, 10 Islamist activists were killed and several dozen wounded, along with 10 wounded Israeli soldiers. Israel argued that enforcing its sea blockade was essential in preventing Iranian missiles from reaching Hamas. Moreover, insisted Israel, its soldiers were in mortal danger from armed passengers. But the international consensus against Israel was devastating: Israel had killed supposedly peaceful humanitarian aid workers, and its blockade against Gaza was a war crime.

A year later, the United Nations released the surprising results of its inquiry into the incident. While it faulted Israel for excessive force, it acknowledged that soldiers faced organized violence. Most surprising of all, the investigation supported both Israel's right to board the ship and to impose the blockade as acts of self-defense consistent with international law — the first time in memory that the United Nations had upheld an Israeli position.

Yet today those findings are almost entirely forgotten, and Israel once again stands accused of maintaining an immoral blockade of Gaza.

The moral dissonance between Israel and the international community only strengthens the Israeli hard right, which argues, in the words of an old Israeli song, that "the whole world is against us." Disproportionate criticism — for example, the fact that Israel is criticized in United Nations forums more often than all the other countries in the world combined — reinforces that isolationist mind-set. When critics trivialize a threat to Israel's border as "peaceful demonstrations," Israelis conclude that world opinion is either obtuse or hostile. The result is a dismissal of any criticism.

By contrast, when Israelis sense a willingness in the international community to consider their concerns, they tend to respond with greater openness to the moral critiques of outsiders. The Oslo peace process was born in part because of the changed atmosphere toward Israel in the early 1990s, when the collapse of the Soviet Union, which had led the diplomatic campaign against Israel, resulted in numerous countries establishing relations with the Jewish state.

The promise of the State of Israel to the Jewish people was to end its seemingly eternal otherness and restore it to the community of nations. Part of remaining faithful to that vision is to heed the warnings of outsiders, especially friends, and not withdraw in bitter isolation. But no less important for the fulfillment of Israel's promise is to ensure that those who seek to destroy it are kept from breaching its borders. How to balance those two imperatives defines the challenge facing Israel today.

*Mr. Klein Halevi is a senior fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. His latest book, "Letters to My Palestinian*

*Neighbor," will be published this month.*

## **The only woman on the GT Factory Racing Enduro team is Israeli**

**By Abigail Klein Leichman**

**israel21c.org**

**April 25, 2018**

**Mountain biker Noga Korem competes in the Enduro World Series known for its heart-stopping uphill, downhill, turns and drops.**

Two broken ribs would send most of us to an easy chair, wincing in pain. Extreme biker Noga Korem from Israel isn't like most of us. Speaking to ISRAEL21c from Chile just before the Enduro World Series (EWS) first race of the season in March, she acknowledged that the bones cracked in training hurt – but so what?

"That's just part of the game; you get injured and make the best of it," said Korem, 26, who never considered pulling out of the grueling two-day ride through the high Andes.

Korem was crowned Breakout EWS Rider of the Year in 2017, having snagged top-10 finishes in several races despite being a "privateer," meaning she rode solo with financial support from a few corporate sponsors, handling every detail herself from booking flights to fixing bikes.

All that changed in 2018 when she was appointed the only woman member of GT Factory Racing's Enduro team, joining Wyn Masters (New Zealand), Martin Maes (Belgium), George Brannigan (New Zealand) and Joey Foresta (USA).

They have a manager, mechanic, trainer, chef and physical therapist (handy for those broken ribs) accompanying them on tour, and they get to test the newest GT models.

"I just need to ride as fast as I can and they take care of the rest," says Korem, the only Israeli woman ever named to a factory team.

Though she represents the Connecticut-based GT Bicycles first and foremost, "I have the Israeli flag on my jersey, and on the EWS website they called me 'the Israeli girl.' It was really cool."

Until 2017, Korem rode cross-country. When she came across Enduro, she fell head over heels for its uphill, downhill, turns and drops. The eight annual EWS mountain-biking races are organized by stages, with only the downhill stages timed. Cyclists get a certain amount of time to ascend the peaks, which can add up to 1,500 uphill meters per day.

### **Israel Cycling Academy**

When she's not traveling to competitions, Korem lives with her boyfriend near Kfar Saba in central Israel and works for the Israel Cycling Academy, Israel's first pro cycling team.

Before Israel Cycling Academy (ICA) was founded in December 2014, team founder and chairman Ron Baron and his family hosted Korem at their home in Switzerland for several months while she was training under the tutelage of a Swiss cross-country coach.

Korem even rode with the ICA for a short time but road racing is not her thing, so she took a back-office role and says she takes great pride in the team's accomplishments.

Korem plans to be there in May when the ICA hosts the three-day Big Start event kicking off this year's Giro d'Italia — the first time the major road race will be rolling through Israel (or anywhere else outside of Europe) and the first time Israelis will participate.

When she's home, Korem enjoys showing off Israel's forests and trails to visiting cyclist friends from countries such as Germany and the UK.

"It's hard to find a really long downhill here like they have in Chile," she concedes. "The best downhill is at Manara," an extreme adventure park in the Upper Galilee boasting Israel's longest cable-car ride, 2 kilometers up to the top of Manara Cliff.

Korem also rides in the Misgav region in northern Israel, where she grew up in a small village.

When she was about 11, a new boy named Oz Dudai moved into town and amazed the other kids with his cool bike and daring moves. They begged him to teach them how to do jumps on the ramps he built. "That's when I really started getting into cross-country biking," Korem says.

Dudai, now coach of Team Misgav, coached Korem for the next 10 years. In 2009, she placed fifth in the junior category of the world championships a few months before starting her two-year military service as an Outstanding Athlete, a designation that allowed her to continue training and competing across the world.

"I had some good seasons and some bad seasons. I took a break in 2012 and in the beginning of 2014 I wanted to try a comeback."

Her dream was to qualify for the Olympics. That dream didn't materialize, but two years later she learned about the Enduro series and the rest is history.

"My parents educated me that if I want to do something I will somehow make it happen. Israelis do not give up when it's hard. You just have to be more creative and have a little chutzpah," she says.