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Commentary...

Cyrus No More By Melanie Phillips

The shock and distress in Israel are palpable. President Donald Trump's apparent volte-face on Iran is being felt as an abandonment.

Israelis are used to the indifference or hostility of American presidents. They managed to survive the malevolent manipulation of the Obama administration and the intimidation and threats of the Bidenites.

But in Trump, here was a president who brought about something no-one had thought would happen — the United States and Israel fighting side by side to defeat one of the greatest evils in the world.

On that terrible day of October 7 2023, when Israel was subjected to a barbaric invasion that exposed its weakness against a seven-front attempt by Iran to exterminate it with hundreds of thousands of missiles pointing straight at it, who would have thought that within a couple of years Iran and Hezbollah would be on their knees with their senior ranks taken out, their missile stocks radically depleted, Iran's air defenses obliterated and its nuclear weapons programme, which had been on the cusp of coming to murderous fruition, set back by years.

It was Trump, to his enduring credit, who made that possible. Accordingly, he was hailed as a new Cyrus, the 6th century BCE Persian king who freed the Jews from captivity and helped rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.

Yet this week, the same Trump seemed to be pulling defeat from the jaws of victory. By signing an agreement with the very Iranian regime that he should have been continuing to destroy, he has instead thrown Tehran a lifeline; reduced America to a paper tiger; accordingly put a spring in the step of Russia, China and North Korea, as well as emboldening Islamists seeking to destroy the west — and having undermined Israel's security, aggressively turned on Israel for presuming to defend itself.

The US not only excluded Israel from discussions leading up to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) but also, while currently keeping its terms secret from the world, has refused even to show them to the Jewish state.

That's Israel, America's close ally and indispensable "unsinkable aircraft carrier;" Israel, which Iran is making every effort to wipe off the face of the earth; Israel, whose soldiers have been dying not just to save their own country but in defence of an America that refuses to put its own troops in danger but is all too happy for Israelis to die in defence of itself and the free world.

Contrary to much misreporting, the MOU is not a deal that ends the war. It's rather a framework for negotiations during a 60-day ceasefire. In a blizzard of claims and counter-claims, we don't know what its terms are. But what's undeniable is that Trump has chosen this moment, when the Iranian regime was weakening by the day, to take his knee off its windpipe by lifting the US blockade of Iranian ships. Going into the 60-day negotiation, he has thus chosen to make Iran stronger and the US weaker.

Worse, there are suspicions that he will allow money to start flowing into Tehran's coffers. Vice-president JD Vance has repeatedly stated that Iran won't benefit unless it complies with US demands. "The agreement says they are not getting a single dime of American money," Vance insisted on Fox News. But the money in question isn't America's but Iran's own frozen assets.

Israeli TV's Channel 14 reported a claim that the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps that runs Iran had no intention of honoring the agreement. IRGC Commander Ahmad Vahidi was quoted as saying "Let's take all the money right now, and then we'll do whatever we want."

The CIA seems have borne out this bad faith. CIA Director John Ratcliffe reportedly told Trump and other senior officials that

intelligence gained by the US raised serious doubts about Iran's willingness to make the nuclear concessions that America is seeking in any final deal.

While we don't know the terms of the MOU, statements by Trump and Vance are

themselves causing great concern.

The US originally said Iran must not enrich uranium, period. Yet Trump has told The New York Times that Iran would be permitted to enrich uranium at a low level and never for military purposes. But how low? It's possible to get quite easily from some relatively low levels to weapons-grade enrichment in a short space of time.

Trump has said repeatedly that Iran will never get a nuclear weapon, and if it tried it would suffer "unbelievable consequences".

But he has also said "We are talking to them about a 15 to 20-year ban."

Well, which is it? This sounds exactly like the 2015 Obama deal which, with the US declaring then too that Iran would "never get a nuclear weapon," explicitly green-lit an Iranian bomb after just a few years' delay.

At the same time, Trump says Iran has agreed to "never have a nuclear weapon". If so, why then does it need a 15 to 20-year ban? And since the Iranians have always lied through their teeth about this, how could anyone believe a word they ever say?

The naivety being expressed by both Trump and Vance borders on imbecility. Or is it cynical dissimulation? Vance says the big difference from the Obama deal is that Iran will be required to verify its commitment not to build a nuclear weapon. But the Obama deal also required verification. Tehran merely hid what it was doing in sites unknown to the nuclear inspectors or from which they were barred.

At the G7 summit, Trump said the Iranian regime had changed because so many former leaders had been killed. The people in charge now were "very rational" people. He said "They were nice to deal with. They were strong people, smart people. I think actually they're smarter than the first and second group, but they're not radicalised and they're, you know, looking to help their country."

But the Iranians charming the apparently witless US team are obviously telling the Americans what they want to hear — such as, according to Trump, that they now realise their four decades of waging war on the free world had been a mistake. How can any sentient being believe such patent nonsense? Iran is still being run by the IRGC who are no less fanatical than the regime has even been — maybe even more so.

Meanwhile, on Monday night Hezbollah broke its own ceasefire for the umpteenth time by firing numerous rockets toward IDF soldiers in Lebanon. Defeating Hezbollah is absolutely critical for Israel, whose north is at risk of becoming depopulated under the never-ending bombardments from Hezbollah.

But this proxy army is vital for Iran. So it's demanding that the MOU ceasefire must include Lebanon. And although it does not, Trump is now appallingly taking Iran's side by pressuring Israel to stop fighting there to keep his "deal" on track.

His remarks on this at the G7 summit in France were deeply shocking. He said "Israel's fighting Hezbollah for too long, and too many people are being killed. You don't have to knock down an apartment house every time you're looking for somebody because there's a lot of people in those apartment houses and they're not all Hezbollah, that I can tell you."

I'm not happy with the way Israel has handled themselves with Lebanon and with Hezbollah. They should have been able to do the job faster. It just goes on forever. And when that happens, it throws a negative light on the big deal, and that's the deal with Iran...

I suggested to Israel to let Syria take care of Hezbollah, Because to be honest with you, I think they'd do a better job of doing it.

And he said of Syria's president Ahmed al-Sharaa "He's very capable. And he's been very good for me. He's protected everything that I've asked for. If Israel can't do the job without killing everyone else, he'll do the job. Syria will do the job..."

Without the United States, there would be no Israel. Without me, there would be no Israel — because no other president was willing to do what I did. I had a great relationship with Bibi, but now Bibi has to be more responsible with respect to Lebanon.

Thus Trump ignored the fact that, just like Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah situates its machinery of war in and around civilian homes; and he would deliver Lebanon to al Sharaa, who is ISIS in a suit — all the while denigrating Israel's formidable challenge in Lebanon, its skill in dealing with it, and the terrible sacrifice of its soldiers' lives it is being forced to make there.

So Israel now faces an excruciating choice — between abandoning its northern citizens to Hezbollah attacks, and risking a vindictive Trump cutting off the military support necessary to keep itself alive.

Americans may not realise it, but Trump's lethal fantasy that he has transformed the genocidal fanatics of Tehran into people whose highest goal now is to emulate the prosperous burghers of Switzerland, where Friday's MOU signing ceremony is to take place, is putting America itself at grave risk.

As for those Israelis who allowed themselves to put their trust in this most capricious of princes, they forgot the basic lesson of their history — that the Jews are always alone. (Substack Jun 16)

Between “Can” and “Must” By Michael Oren

Last night, in celebration of President Trump's 80th birthday, tens of thousands of spectators gathered on the South Lawn of the White House to watch live UFC fights. The combination of spectacle and violence, many observers agreed, was nothing short of surreal. At the same time, the president announced the imminent signing of “a landmark moment for American diplomacy ending decades of hostility and bringing stability to the volatile Middle East.” For Israelis, much like the spectacle on the lawn, the declaration was shocking, bizarre, and brutal.

Less than four months ago, American forces stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the IDF in the most dramatic display ever of the U.S.-Israel alliance. Our Israeli pilots, soldiers, and commanders worked in the closest possible coordination with their American counterparts in mounting thousands of successful missions. Our leaders, too, appeared to be totally in lockstep in setting the war's ultimate goals of overthrowing Iran's jihadist regime, eliminating its nuclear and ballistic capabilities, and ending its support for terror. Netanyahu's friendship with Trump seemed deep and unbreakable, surpassing that between Yitzhak Rabin and Bill Clinton, perhaps even between Roosevelt and Churchill. The vision of a Middle East freed from the Islamic Republic's grip, united in prosperity and peace, truly appeared within reach.

Then, rapidly, the situation changed. Iran pummeled neighboring oil-producing countries with ballistic missiles and drones and blockaded the strategically crucial Strait of Hormuz. Global oil prices skyrocketed, and a growing majority of Americans, already angered by Trump's failure to avoid entanglement in endless foreign wars, demanded a ceasefire. The ayatollahs, far more adept at enduring pain, knew they had the upper hand and exploited it to the full, pressuring Trump to stop resisting their missile program and terror network, and to enter into extended talks on the nuclear issues—all in exchange for reopening the Strait. The Iranians further conditioned the agreement on an end to Israel's efforts to defend the north against Hezbollah attacks, even to withdraw IDF troops from Southern Lebanon. When Israel responded to Hezbollah drone strikes by bombing Beirut, Trump called Netanyahu “f***ing crazy” and demanded that he halt all operations.

The stage is now set for one of the most potentially explosive confrontations ever between U.S. and Israeli leaders. Few, if any, in Israel believe that Trump's agreement with Iran will end decades of hostility and bring stability to the Middle East. On the contrary, Israelis are justifiably bracing themselves for further upheavals, even war.

The situation will confront Israeli leaders with an excruciating choice: either abandon the north or risk a major clash with Washington. The first option poses a possibly existential threat to the entire state—Hezbollah rockets can easily reach Tel Aviv—while the second could result in a cut-off of vital munitions and even

condemnations in the UN. Moreover, the decision will have to be made when, for the first time in our history, we have no recourse—no ability to complain to Congress, to the Democrats, or our friends in Europe. Israel, today, stands virtually alone.

Asked by The Wall Street Journal last night what I thought Netanyahu can do, I responded by saying that the question is not “can” but “must.” The prime minister's paramount job is to defend the country at virtually any cost, even a backlash from the United States. Like Begin before him in destroying the Iraqi nuclear reactor or Eshkol in initiating the Six-Day War—both in the face of stiff American opposition—Netanyahu must place Israel's security first.

Ronald Reagan, a pro-Israel president, responded to Israel's raid on the reactor by delaying the shipment of F-16s to the IDF and joining with Iraq in condemning Israel in the Security Council. So, too, today, Israel can weather Trump's possible response. But Israel cannot endure the loss of our north and forfeit our fundamental security.

While continuing to strike Hezbollah and navigating our complex relationship with the United States, we must gird ourselves internally to meet the great challenges ahead. We must rigorously bridge our society's rifts between religious and secular, right and left. We must address the Haredi service issue now, vastly expand support for reservists and inhabitants of the North, and preserve our national will to fight. We must invest massively in public diplomacy and diversify our foreign policy portfolio, strengthening our ties with Asia, Africa, and South America. Unified and steeled, we will once again prevail. (Substack Jun 15)

‘Epic Fury’ Ends with a Flop By Michael Makovsky

As we await the release of the actual text of the U.S.-Iran agreement, it is worth stepping back to assess how we got to this point.

It began with the United States and Israel building significant leverage over Iran through coordinated and effective military operations. Then, beginning with the April 8 ceasefire, U.S. President Donald Trump consistently and unilaterally relinquished that leverage. Whatever the agreement is, it is likely far worse for the United States than it needed to be.

In 38 days of war, beginning on Feb. 28, the United States and Israel decapitated Iran's leadership, and pummeled its missile and drone arsenals, defense industry, air defenses and navy. The Iranian regime was on its back and in disarray, and CENTCOM commander Adm. Brad Cooper sought to continue another 10 to 14 days of attacks.

But then, Trump agreed to a ceasefire, and the regime in Tehran was saved.

It marked the beginning of the erosion of American leverage over Iran to get a decent deal. Iran was less likely to make concessions when the bombing stopped than it was during the war. Indeed, its leaders didn't even abide by the ceasefire.

Trump conditioned the ceasefire on the “complete, immediate and safe opening” of the Strait of Hormuz, but Tehran didn't clear mines; often attacked U.S. bases and energy facilities in Arab neighbors; and demanded that it control and get fees for any ships transiting, making the strait far from open. The U.S. military did ensure that some non-Iranian tankers got through, and Trump imposed on April 13 a blockade on Iranian ports, which was onerous but overhyped, and didn't force Tehran to make concessions.

It was bad enough that Trump did not hit Iran hard for these violations. Worse yet, he undermined U.S. credibility and deterrence by not enforcing a specific longstanding U.S. policy to ensure freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, as my colleague John Hannah recently explained.

Former President Jimmy Carter declared in 1980 that no power could control the Persian Gulf, but Trump effectively permitted it. An emboldened Iran—and everyone else—now knows it retains tremendous leverage by dramatically impacting the global economy when it wants by stopping the flow of oil and liquid natural gas through the Strait of Hormuz, without significant consequence.

Trump further undermined U.S. leverage by conceding Iran's effective veto over Lebanon. He publicly expressed his concern that

the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict would stand in the way of a deal with Iran, as Tehran had warned. When Hezbollah fired on Israeli towns, he tried to stop Israel from responding. He then doubled down by restraining Israel's retaliation when Iran fired missiles at Israel. Instead of giving in to Iranian threats, Trump would have enhanced his position with Iran by supporting Israel's self-defense.

The president made things worse by publicly criticizing and belittling Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, saying that he—Trump alone—was calling the shots. This was an inappropriate way to treat his close wartime ally, and it permitted Iran to drive a wedge between the United States and Israel, which fought well and almost equally during the 38 days of combat. Other allies and adversaries undoubtedly noted all this.

Last week, Iran downed a U.S. Army Apache helicopter with a drone. The American helicopter pilots miraculously avoided being killed, and yet, the United States responded very moderately.

Coupled with constant threats over the last couple of months against Iran and then quick backdowns with promises that a deal was around the corner, all these actions and inactions reeked of weakness and tanked American leverage. They suggested to all that Trump was desperate for a deal and fearful of resuming military action, thereby emboldening Iranian demands.

Trump further undermined U.S. leverage by ignoring a key lever: the Iranian people. The trigger for this war was Trump's promise to the Iranian people that "help was the way" after the regime massacred 40,000 Iranian demonstrators in January. Again, at the start of the war, he made regime collapse a key objective and promised the Iranians that the time to seize their fate was nigh.

Yet his public determination to seek a deal legitimized the Tehran regime and signaled that he had abandoned regime collapse, demoralizing the Iranian people. Indeed, they are now less likely to rise up again to overthrow the Islamic Republic, and it is they who will issue the final verdict on this war.

It's not just Iran that has benefited from Trump's display of desperation, weakness and incompetence over the past two months. China has, too. It's a shocking reversal after Trump had bolstered his image for toughness by approving the use of B-2s in the 12-day war, the removal of Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro, and then the start of "Operation Epic Fury."

The last time the United States displayed such incompetence and undermined its credibility so substantially on the world stage was the botched withdrawal from Afghanistan. It led to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and possibly to the events in southern Israel on Oct. 7.

What will be the consequences this time? (JNS Jun 16)

Trump's Chaos and Incoherence have Led to Failure on Iran

By Jonathan S. Tobin

It's a bitter pill to swallow for those who have spent much of the last decade lauding President Donald Trump as the most pro-Israel president since the founding of the modern-day Jewish state. It's equally difficult for those who understood that his rejection of the patent nostrums of the foreign-policy establishment that was entrenched in the U.S. State Department, the media and the academy was essentially correct in almost every instance.

Yet there's no denying that Trump's decision to make a deal with Iran—the rogue state that he had gone to war against on Feb. 28 alongside Israel—represents a staggering defeat for the United States, Israel and himself personally. And those who have commended the president for all the good things he did during his time in the White House should not be reluctant to say so.

The agreement, which Trump touted as "real peace" because it opened up the Strait of Hormuz, is a triumph for Tehran. The Iranians surrendered nothing except that one counter-measure to which they had resorted after it was clear that it was losing badly. What makes it all the more dismaying for Trump's defenders is that one key criticism of his presidency has been vindicated.

The lack of precision and intellectual consistency in the president's policy pronouncements has always been derided by his critics. But as long as Trump stuck to his instinctive distrust of the "expert" class that had guided American foreign policy for generations, that really didn't matter. The approach that guided his

decisions to move the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem; pursue the Abraham Accords, rather than stick to futile efforts to broker peace with the Palestinians; and hit Iran hard to end its bolstering of international terrorism and give up its nuclear ambitions has led to success.

The same was true of other successes he achieved, such as securing the border that former President Joe Biden had left undefended, allowing millions of illegal immigrants to flood the country; toppling Nicolás Maduro, the dictator of Venezuela; or forcing elite American universities to stop tolerating and encouraging campus antisemitism because of their woke DEI policies.

So long as that was true, the president's braggadocio and wild social-media posts filled with hyperbolic threats and boasts were merely a matter of style and manners.

But the failure in Iran can be traced back to the chaos that always lay underneath everything he did. Trump could have stuck to a principled stand on Iran, despite setbacks and problems, until victory. Launching a war with all of its unpredictable outcomes and variables was not the same as issuing executive orders or posting on social media. He lacked the ability to stand his ground because his mindset tends to seek immediate gratification and quick victories. Trump is a strong man, but his unpredictability and belief in his genius in deal-making were not enough to sustain him when things got difficult.

That left him vulnerable to the influence of those—like Steve Witkoff, his special envoy to the Middle East, and adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner—whose approach to Iran resembled that of members of past Democratic administrations.

A man with a coherent set of foreign-policy principles, as opposed to one with an unquenchable desire for short-term triumphs, might have understood that Witkoff, Kushner and Vice President JD Vance—the putative leader of the neo-isolationists within the administration—were leading him toward the same misguided stand on Iran as Obama.

His devoted MAGA fans refused to believe it. They repeatedly chided anyone who expressed fears that he was on track to surrender the gains that the war had achieved, as not understanding his subtle strategy. They said any indication that he might mimic Obama's betrayal of the West on Iran was simply a matter of Trump playing three-dimensional chess while deceiving and trolling his critics. So deep is their faith in him that some will keep on insisting on this long after it's become obvious that they have been deceived.

But their faith in his judgement is misplaced. Rather than endure more months of criticism, high oil prices and sinking popularity ratings in pursuit of the goals on which he had staked so much American blood and treasure, Trump has simply folded on one of the key foreign policy priorities he had adhered to since he entered politics in 2015.

Trump's claims notwithstanding, Iran's nuclear ambitions have not been snuffed out. The pact leaves open the possibility that they can keep their remaining nuclear material. The promises they have made about not seeking nuclear weapons are merely recycled lies with which they had fooled the president's predecessors. They are no more trustworthy than those in President Barack Obama's dangerously weak 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) that Trump had rightly derided as worthless for the past 10 years. Indeed, though Trump's proposed terms for ending Iran's nuclear program are somewhat tougher than Obama's, both rely on Tehran, which is to say, they are equally meaningless.

Why, after so much bellicose rhetoric as well as tangible military success in the war, did Trump ultimately fold, handing both his domestic critics and his Iranian antagonists such a victory?

The United States and Israel had inflicted devastating losses on Iran's military, as well as its missile and nuclear programs, along with much of the country's infrastructure, with which it had threatened the region. But Iran did have the power—via drone and missile fire—to menace shipping in the Persian Gulf, thus impacting the price of oil.

Thanks to the energy independence that Trump's policies had helped achieve, Americans felt the impact of that problem less than most other people around the world. Yet it still led to higher gas prices at the pump in the United States. Given that Trump had not made a compelling case for war to the American people, that fact

increased the conflict's unpopularity, exacerbating the Republican Party's deficit in the polls about the outcome of this fall's midterm elections.

That created enormous pressure—amplified by those inside the administration, led by Vance, who were already opposed to his tough policy on Iran—to end the war without achieving any of its initial goals. Though not explicitly stated, the point of starting the war was to make Iran surrender its nuclear material, as well as its ballistic missiles and its decades-long policy of fomenting terror around the region. Washington had rightly left its intentions about overthrowing the Islamist regime vague, hoping that the pounding Tehran's forces had taken, coupled with the elimination of much of its leadership, would lead to that result or force the slain Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's successors to give in to American demands.

The president could have kept striking Iran until it bowed to his will. Or, once he agreed to a loose ceasefire in April could have kept enforcing a blockade on Iran's ports, which was doing far more damage to its economy than the spike in oil prices was having on the West, until Tehran gave up or the regime imploded.

But he didn't do either of those things. He folded under pressure and abandoned the gains that Washington and Jerusalem had achieved.

Even worse, he accepted Iran's premise that an end to the fighting must also cover Jerusalem's efforts to force the Hezbollah terrorists in Lebanon to stop firing on northern Israel and cede power in Beirut. That also led to Trump's much-publicized abusive comments about Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his erstwhile faithful partner in the war, about his temerity in prioritizing the defense of his people over the president's pursuit of futile diplomacy with Iran.

The damage inflicted on Iran during the first two months of fighting was real and set back its ability to spread mayhem throughout the region. It will take years for it to rebuild its military and reconstitute its nuclear and missile threats.

And there is always the possibility that Trump could reverse course and resume the attacks once it becomes clear that Iran is simply retooling its infrastructure of terror and aggression.

But does anyone in Washington and Jerusalem, and elsewhere in the West—and most importantly, in Tehran—seriously believe he will do that now that he's declared that this accord has resolved all of the world's concerns about Iran? The Iranians know that he has had enough of the fighting; that made them even more intransigent. As they did during the negotiations with Obama and his envoys, they had his measure and acted accordingly.

Trump has now made the same mistake as Obama by relaxing sanctions and even unfreezing billions of Iranian funds held by the United States and its allies. As Lee Smith aptly noted in *Tablet* magazine, the transfer of \$20 billion in frozen assets by the United Arab Emirates, with \$3 billion already delivered to Tehran, perhaps in cash stacked on wooden pallets like those sent by the 44th president to pay off the Islamist terrorists a decade ago, is key to understanding what has just happened.

The money that Trump's surrender will make available to the Iranian government will prop it up, and likely ensure both its longevity and its ability to sustain its Hezbollah and Hamas terrorist allies in Lebanon and Gaza.

The oil may now flow, as the president trumpeted on Truth Social, through the Straits of Hormuz, and gas prices may decline. But the flow of cash to Iran is a guarantee that its regime will go on fomenting terror and war in the future, even after Trump leaves office in January 2029. As Obama did with his signature foreign-policy "achievement," he has left a dangerous problem for his successors to solve that will be far worse and much harder to eliminate than it would have been for him had he not surrendered.

Iran's tyrants can, with justice, say that they survived a fearsome assault by the United States and Israel, and ultimately forced a superpower to give up. Still, it will take time for them to get back to where they were on Oct. 6, 2023, before the confident launching of the cruel war on Israel launched by their "resistant front" with the atrocities of Oct. 7. The losses sustained by the Iranian regime, as well as Hamas and Hezbollah, during the fighting that took place during the last 33 months were not imaginary. All are far weaker than they were then.

But there is also no doubt that Iran's prospects have improved

since the start of the year, when it seemed as if the regime that had murdered tens of thousands of its citizens who protested its tyrannical rule was on its last legs.

By threatening to topple the Islamist terrorists but failing to make good on those threats, Trump did terrible damage to his standing throughout the world, as well as that of the United States. Much like Obama's going back on his talk of taking action against the regime of Bashar Assad in Syria if it crossed a "red line" by using chemical weapons on its people, Trump has shown the Middle East that he, too, can be cowed into backing down. The American and Israeli attacks had shown Iran's military weakness, but Tehran can now, as it did previously, claim to be the "strong horse" of the region that won't reverse course in the face of Western attacks.

The deal with Iran is also a blow to the U.S.-Israel alliance.

The months of close cooperation between the two nations' militaries had demonstrated just how powerful and important the bond between Washington and Jerusalem had become. By ending the war without achieving its goals and chiding the Israelis to stop defending themselves, Trump has sent the world a message that while not completely left on its own, the Jewish state has been put in a precarious position. His hyperbolic and inaccurate statements—"If it were not for me, there would be no Israel right now"—could be excused while he was actually supporting Israel, though now that he is undermining its security in this manner, they leave a bitter taste in the mouths of friends of the Jewish state.

The interests of the two nations aren't identical, though they do mostly overlap. And Israel isn't giving up and will continue to do what it must to defend itself. However, an opportunity to transform the region by defeating Tehran has been lost. And that will make future conflicts—that Trump's deal, like Obama's, will help foment—even more bloody and dangerous for the Jewish state, as well as moderate Arab states that must continue to fear what Iran will do in the years to come.

Domestically, Trump's decision also strengthens the wing of his party that was soft on Iran and uninterested in defending Western interests in the Middle East. And those in the Democratic Party who no longer support Israel and opposed efforts to forestall the Iranian threat that Obama had encouraged have also been handed a victory. They can say that Trump wasted American lives and vast amounts of scarce military assets only to accept the same humiliation that Obama achieved without firing a single shot.

Vance, whose 2028 presidential prospects seemed on the wane in recent months, is a major beneficiary of this decision. His claim on NBC's "Meet the Press" that every conflict, including World War II, ended in negotiation illustrated his lack of understanding of both the war and history. Yet that absurd statement puts him on Trump's side in the current foreign-policy debate, which strengthens his chances of being the president's successor and next leader of the GOP.

Trump may remain a better guardian of American security, as well as a more reliable friend of Israel and the Jewish people than his Democratic predecessors. But sadly, his war on Iran will now be spoken of with the same derision that he had used to describe the failed conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, even though that needn't have happened had Trump been a man of stronger convictions and headed a less chaotic administration.

The fact that stopping Iran's nuclear ambitions and terrorism was as much in America's interests as that of any other country will be forgotten and even downplayed by many of the president's supporters. And the growing antisemitic movement on both the left and the right will pick up, and endlessly repeat the false narrative that it was Israel that led the United States to pursue a conflict that couldn't be won.

We should not lose faith in Israel's ultimate victory over the evil ideology that governs Iran and animates its terrorist allies. It is a more formidable nation than it was before Oct. 7, and will—no matter who leads it in the coming years—do what it must to defend itself. Yet, like the failure to eliminate Hamas in Gaza after Oct. 7, Trump's decision to breathe new life into the Tehran regime will mean that more wars will have to be fought in the coming years to achieve that necessary goal. That's a tragedy that could have been averted had Trump proved to be wiser and more steadfast than he turned out to be. (JNS Jun 15)