

Withdrawal Symptoms: Trump and the Iran Nuclear Deal

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Hot on the heels of the Benjamin Netanyahu “nuclear archive” show supposedly revealing Iranian perfidy, US President Donald Trump added succour to the Israeli cause by promising to withdraw from the Iran Nuclear deal, more lengthily known as the [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action](#).

The JCPOA originally comprised various undertakings and actions on the part of the Obama administration: the [rescinding](#) of various executive orders imposing nuclear sanctions on Tehran (Executive Orders 13574, 13590, 13622 and 13645) and specific sections of Executive Order 13628. To this laundry list were added persons and entities deemed Specially Designated Nationals and Foreign Sanction Evaders who were specifically de-listed.

Such measures caused discomfort to Congress, not least because of the JCPOA’s designation as a non-legally binding political agreement. Doing so side-stepped the need for Congressional approval, though a rebuff came in the form of the [Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act](#), requiring the president to submit any nuclear agreement with Tehran to review by the legislators. An oversight mechanism was thereby introduced.

Trump remained true to his vulgar form, [calling the agreement](#) “a horrible, one-sided deal that should have never, ever been made”. Iran deserved special mention as being “the leading sponsor of state terror. It exports dangerous missiles, fuels conflicts across the Middle East, and supports terrorist proxies such as Hezbollah, Hamas, the Taliban, and al Qaeda.”

He also spoke in tones suggesting an alternate, disassociated reality. Iran had been permitted “to continue enriching uranium and, over time, reach the brink of a nuclear breakout.” Nor did the deal prove expansive enough, avoiding “other malign behaviour, including its sinister activities in Syria, Yemen, and other places around the world.”

The good offices of the US Treasury, along with other agencies, have been mobilised by Trump’s National Security Presidential Memorandum, with a promise that sanctions will be re-imposed on those industries exempted in the 2015 deal, specifically aircraft exports, precious metals, the purchase of US banknotes and the oil sector.

As the US Department of Treasury [explained](#),

“As soon as administratively feasible, the Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) expects to revoke, or amend, as appropriate, general and specific licenses issued in connection with the JCPOA.”

Applicable sanctions will come into effect at the end of 90-day and 180-day wind down periods.

At times, the language from the department is colourfully off in its child-like morality.

“The US government will continue to make aggressive use of its authorities to target Iran’s malign behaviour.”

The president’s distinct vernacular is proving catching, and the bureaucrats are succumbing.

The Iran obsession has taken hold in the White House, and the hard talkers have evidently taken up residence beside Trump’s ear. National Security Adviser John Bolton has been stumping the view that European companies doing business with Iran ought to cease within six months or face US sanctions.

The president, explained Bolton [in a press briefing](#), had made “a firm statement of American resolve to prevent not only Iran from getting nuclear weapons, but a ballistic missile delivery capability. It limits its continuing support of terrorism and its causing instability and turmoil in the Middle East.”

Through his briefing, Bolton’s answers betrayed the carceral mentality that characterises his approach to international diplomacy, or whatever passes for it. Never give the other side an inch. Dictate stances and refuse to abide by your own obligations. The “fundamentally flawed” agreement, he asserted, “does not prevent Iran from developing deliverable nuclear weapons. It allows Iran to continue technologies like uranium enrichment, reprocessing of plutonium.” The underlying sentiment here is that Iran should have nothing to do with anything remotely resembling the atom.

Washington’s allies had been attempting to reel Trump back with respective, and evidently ineffectual visits by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron. Macron’s warning to members of the US congress was fitted as part of a broader program of restraint: be aware of withdrawing from collectively hammered out agreements on security.

As with the climate change regime, those states left with the shambles of a clumsy US exit will stay the course. Federica Mogherini of the EU expressed the need to “preserve” the arrangements. A [joint statement](#) from the UK, Germany and France emphasised “our continuing commitment to the JCPOA.” The leaders noted the assessment by the International Atomic Energy Agency that Tehran “continues to abide by the restrictions set out by the JCPOA, in line with its obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The world is a safer place as a result.”

This point of compliance has sailed over the heads of Trump’s circle of ravenous hawks, suggesting that such abidance *is* the problem. The European angle on this has always been accommodating to the verification results of the IAEA. As an official in the German Federal

Foreign Office [noted last year](#),

“We have no indication of Iran violating its JCPOA commitments.”

In Tehran, a proposal involving restoring enrichment capabilities clipped by the JCPOA is doing the rounds.

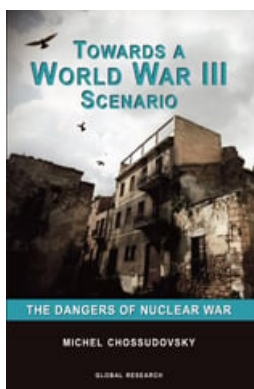
“I have ordered the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran,” [explained](#) Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani, “to be ready for action if needed so that if necessary we can resume our enrichment on an industrial level without any limitations.”

In a note of mild reassurance, Rouhani claimed that the agreement would still remain in place provided its “goals in cooperation with other members of the deal” could be achieved.

Hard line reactionary types the world over will be excited by Trump’s latest take on Iran. The cards for war are being readied. The obscurantist regime in Riyadh cheered with welcome that an arch rival had been railroaded. Likewise that other fear monger, Israel. Their desire has an obscene angle to it: to discourage Iran from non-proliferation, thereby setting up the premise for an attack that would confirm their fears. Doing so will, in these demonic calculations, finally settle long, dog-eared scores.

*

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[“Towards a World War III Scenario: The Dangers of Nuclear War”](#)

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[Michel Chossudovsky](#) is Professor of Economics at the University of Ottawa and Director of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), which hosts the critically acclaimed website www.globalresearch.ca . He is a contributor to the Encyclopedia Britannica. His writings have been translated into more than 20 languages.

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Michel Chossudovsky exposes the insanity of our privatized war machine. Iran is being targeted with nuclear weapons as part of a war agenda built on distortions and lies for the purpose of private profit. The real aims are oil, financial hegemony and global control. The price could be nuclear holocaust. When weapons become the hottest export of the world's only superpower, and diplomats work as salesmen for the defense industry, the whole world is recklessly endangered. If we must have a military, it belongs entirely in the public sector. No one should profit from mass death and destruction.

–Ellen Brown, author of 'Web of Debt' and president of the Public Banking Institute



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