

July 20, 2015

Time for the Iran agreement to get comments from some of our favorites. [John Podhoretz](#) starts us off.

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[Charles Krauthammer](#) is next.

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[Jennifer Rubin](#) says the prez is an expert at enraging congress.

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*attempting to box in Congress after previously agreeing to give its members time to fully consider the deal. ...*

**Rubin** also wonders how many times Obama will con the Dems on Iran.

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*The president signed the Iranian Nuclear Agreement Review Act and spoke about the importance of Congress fully participating in the approval process. Then along comes negotiator Wendy Sherman in a press conference: "Well, the way that the U.N. Security Council resolution is structured, there is an interim period of 60 to 90 days that I think will accommodate the congressional review. And it would have been a little difficult when all of the members of the P5+1 wanted to go to the United Nations to get an endorsement of this since it is a product of the United Nations process, for us to say, 'Well, excuse me, the world, you should wait for the United States Congress.'" Joke's on you, Democrats.*

*The president and administration officials said dozens of times that they would get anywhere/anytime inspections. Deputy national security adviser Ben Rhodes says now they never sought that. Wendy Sherman calls it a rhetorical flourish. Silly Democrats, you should have known better. ...*

**Peter Wehner** calls it Obama's worst mistake.

*I wanted to add my voice to those who have already written about the deal between Iran and Western powers, led by the United States. It is an agreement that is likely to set in motion a terrible chain of events — reviving the Iranian economy while simultaneously putting Iran well on the road to gaining nuclear weapons and triggering a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. Iran's behavior is likely to be more, not less, aggressive, from threatening other nations to supporting terrorist organizations. Our allies can only conclude that the United States is unsteady and unreliable, having cast its lot with the most destabilizing regime in the world today — one that is an existential threat to Israel, and where chants of "Death to America!" can still be heard at prayer services every week. Historians may well consider this date to be a time when, as Max Boot put it, "American dominance in the Middle East was supplanted by the Iranian Imperium." ...*

**Matthew Continetti** sums it up.

*... The Iran deal is a fabulous artifice, an intricately woven shawl that masks its real intent: the avoidance of military confrontation with Iran and the rise of Persian regional hegemony. "Either the issue of Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon is resolved diplomatically through a negotiation," President Obama said at his press conference Thursday, "or it's resolved through war. Those are the options." He presented his diplomatic resolution as a *fait accompli*, as the best America could ever hope to do. If the deal favors Iran, which it unequivocally does— without so much as closing a nuclear facility this rogue regime gets cash, legitimacy, and an end to U.N. bans on sales of conventional weapons and ballistic missile technology—it is because Obama wanted desperately to pursue the diplomatic option and prove its validity. ...*

... *The Iran deal isn't an accomplishment. It required no sacrifice. Both sides wanted a deal: Iran to receive sanctions relief and assert its national pride, Obama to forestall having to take action, to prove diplomacy can work, to entertain the possibility of true détente with a longtime adversary. And both sides got what they wanted: Iran its money, weapons, missiles, and nuclear infrastructure intact, Obama a "legacy" item that allows him to smear Republicans and Israelis as warmongers. Obama says he's aware of the nature of the Iranian regime, but he chooses to ignore that nature if it wins him plaudits from the international left and breathing room before an Iranian bomb. The deal is a finely wrought escape pod for Obama and Kerry: get out of town in 2017 on your high horse, your sanctimony and idealism unblemished.*

*Willfully optimistic about Iranian intentions, knowingly blind to Iranian malfeasance, to Iran's murder of our soldiers, its imprisonment of our citizens, the deal is a rather stunning example of the lengths to which our elites will go in order to preserve the fiction of common interests, of the "international community," of the power of engagement to liberalize autocracies. Media and cultural institutions will reward Obama and Kerry and Rouhani and Zarif for upholding the shibboleths that rule the world: give peace a chance, jaw jaw is better than war war, we're all in this together, put yourself in the mullah's shoes, Kennedy and Reagan negotiated with a superpower so why can't we parody their example by kowtowing to a two-bit fundamentalist regime [on the verge of bankruptcy](#) whose [shrinking population](#) is addled by [drugs](#) and [venereal disease](#). Meanwhile Iranian centrifuges will spin, Iran's proxies are sowing chaos, its missile program is active, its adversarial posture toward Israel and America and the West is unbroken, [and, as Jim Webb put it](#), "After a period of 10 years they are going to be able to say that they can move forward with a nuclear weapons policy with our acceptance."*

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## Contentions

### [Obama's Iran Deal Filibuster](#)

by John Podhoretz

The president gave a press conference today in which he spent, by my calculation, almost 45 minutes talking about the Iran deal. He knows it inside and out and he and his people have clearly spent days if not weeks pre-sculpting arguments against its weaknesses. He droned on, wouldn't allow many questions, and was very boring and repetitive, but in an essential sense, he was effective in laying out the case — not for the deal itself exactly but against those who are against it. It boils down to this (these are my words, not his): "We wanted to keep Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. We've done it. And if you say otherwise, you either don't know what you're talking about or you want war."

The key to understanding the president's argument is his conviction that the Iranians will hold to its terms, and that the methods it lays out to ensure it holds to the terms are sufficient to make them do so even if they want to cheat. The key to understanding the opposition to the deal is that those of us who are dismayed by it do not believe the Iranians will hold to its terms; do not believe its enforcement mechanisms will prevent them from doing whatever they feel they must.

There is literally no way to resolve this difference. That's why the president can and will argue that, hey, it's at least worth a try; someone else can bomb them later, and that someone will have more international support if he or she does. Nor does it speak to the fear that Iranian cheating may lead to an expansion of secret facilities which would make any military option far more difficult.

That, of course, is what happened between the first arguments that the Iranian program should be hit with air strikes back in 2006 and 2009, when we discovered that the regime had built an extensive underground facility in Fordo.

Nor does it address the undeniable reality that there will now be a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. That point — the most dangerous of all — is all but moot now.

## **Washington Post** **Worse than we could have imagined**

by Charles Krauthammer

When you write a column, as did I two weeks ago, headlined "[The worst agreement in U.S. diplomatic history](#)," you don't expect to revisit the issue. We had hit bottom. Or so I thought. Then on Tuesday the final terms of the [Iranian nuclear deal](#) were published. I was wrong.

Who would have imagined we would be giving up the conventional arms and ballistic missile embargoes on Iran? In *nuclear* negotiations?

When asked Wednesday at his news conference why there is nothing in the deal about the [American hostages being held by Iran](#), President Obama explained that this is a separate issue, not part of nuclear talks.

Are conventional weapons not a separate issue? After all, conventional, by definition, means non-nuclear. Why are we giving up the embargoes?

Because Iran, joined by Russia — our "reset" partner — sprung the demand at the last minute, calculating that Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry were so desperate for a deal that they would cave. They did. And have convinced themselves that they scored a victory by delaying the lifting by five to eight years. (Ostensibly. The language is murky. The interval could be considerably shorter.)

Obama claimed in his news conference that it really doesn't matter, because we can always intercept Iranian arms shipments to, say, Hezbollah.

But wait. Obama has insisted throughout that we are pursuing this Iranian diplomacy to *avoid* the use of force, yet now blithely discards a previous diplomatic achievement — the arms embargo — by suggesting, no matter, we can just shoot our way to interdiction.

Moreover, the most serious issue is not Iranian exports but Iranian imports — of sophisticated Russian and Chinese weapons. These are untouchable. We are not going to attack Russian and Chinese transports.

The net effect of this capitulation will be not only to endanger our Middle East allies now under threat from Iran and its proxies, but also to endanger our own naval forces in the Persian Gulf. Imagine how Iran's acquisition of the most advanced anti-ship missiles would threaten our control over the gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, waterways we have kept open for international commerce for a half-century.

The other major shock in the [final deal](#) is what happened to our insistence on “anytime, anywhere” inspections. Under the final agreement, Iran has the right to deny international inspectors access to any undeclared nuclear site. The denial is then adjudicated by a committee — on which Iran sits. It then goes through several other bodies, on all of which Iran sits. Even if the inspectors' request prevails, the approval process can take 24 days.

And what do you think will be left to be found, left unscrubbed, after 24 days? The whole process is farcical.

The action now shifts to Congress. The debate is being hailed as momentous. It is not. It's irrelevant.

Congress won't get to vote on the deal until September. But Obama is taking the agreement to the U.N. Security Council for approval *within days*. Approval there will cancel all previous U.N. resolutions outlawing and sanctioning Iran's nuclear activities.

Meaning: Whatever Congress ultimately does, it won't matter because the legal underpinning for the entire international sanctions regime against Iran will have been dismantled at the Security Council. Ten years of painstakingly constructed international sanctions will vanish overnight, irretrievably.

Even if Congress rejects the agreement, do you think the Europeans, the Chinese or the Russians will reinstate sanctions? The result: The United States is left isolated while the rest of the world does thriving business with Iran.

Should Congress then give up? No. Congress needs to act in order to rob this deal of, at least, its domestic legitimacy. Rejection will make little difference on the ground. But it will make it easier for a successor president to legitimately reconsider an executive agreement (Obama dare not call it a treaty — it would be instantly rejected by the Senate) that garnered such pathetically little backing in either house of Congress.

It's a future hope, but amid dire circumstances. By then, Iran will be flush with cash, legitimized as a normal international actor in good standing, recognized (as Obama once said) as “a very successful regional power.” Stopping Iran from going nuclear at that point will be infinitely more difficult and risky.

Which is Obama's triumph. He has locked in his folly. He has laid down his legacy, and we will have to live with the consequences for decades.

## Right Turn

### [The president is expert at enraging Congress](#)

by Jennifer Rubin

The Obama administration made clear Wednesday that after years of negotiations with Iran it would not wait for the 60-day consideration period it agreed to give Congress to vote up or down and instead would [go first to the United Nations Security Council](#).

“This certainly violates the spirit, if not the letter of the Nuclear Agreement Review Act,” says sanctions guru Mark Dubowitz of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. The president, Dubowitz says, “should explain to the American people” why the UN gets first crack at the deal.

The Nuclear Agreement Review Act plainly states that “during the period for review provided in paragraph (1), the President may not waive, suspend, reduce, provide relief from, or otherwise limit the application of statutory sanctions with respect to Iran under any provision of law or refrain from applying any such sanctions.” But that is *precisely* what the president is doing when he goes to the U.N., gets the international community to lift sanctions and then tells Congress it must approve the deal or put the United States at odds with the international community. He is attempting to box in Congress after previously agreeing to give its members time to fully consider the deal.

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) and ranking member Benjamin L. Cardin (D-Md.) [sent a tersely worded letter to the president stating](#):

The Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act, a bill which 98 Senators and 400 Representatives supported and you signed, established a 60-day period for Congress to consider the nuclear agreement. We are deeply concerned that your administration plans to enable the United Nations Security Council to vote on the agreement before the United States Congress can do the same.

Doing so would be contrary to your statement that “it’s important for the American people and Congress to get a full opportunity to review this deal ... our national security policies are stronger and more effective when they are subject to the scrutiny and transparency that democracy demands.”

The letter shows great restraint. In essence the president is flipping the bird to the American people’s elected representatives. And it suggests little faith in the terms of the deal they negotiated (which is already facing a barrage of criticism) for the administration to run to the U.N. first.

Sen. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) released a statement as well: “The White House’s plan to preempt Congress’s 60-day review of the Iran deal by first seeking approval from the U.N. Security Council, whose members include at least six non-democracies, would be a breathtaking assault on American sovereignty and Congressional prerogative. I am shocked that Secretary of State Kerry actually admitted, on the record, that he wants to create a situation where congressional disapproval of the Iran deal would make the United States in violation of the international community.”

[House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy \(R-Calif.\)](#) appeared irate. In his written statement he denounced the end run around Congress:

I am deeply troubled by reports that President Obama intends to run the Iran deal through the United Nations Security Council before Congress has had a chance to weigh in — much less receive and evaluate — this agreement. Any effort by this Administration to have the UN approve this deal before Congress can review it violates the spirit of the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015, which the President signed into law. This Administration has yet to formally submit this agreement to Congress, which sets in motion the 60-day review period, meaning the Security Council resolution could formally approve the nuclear accord before America's representatives in Congress have even received the full text of the deal. Such actions contradict the President's own statements at a press conference yesterday that "it's important for the American people and Congress to get a full opportunity to review this deal."

It is inconceivable — yet sadly not surprising — that this administration would try to rush this agreement through the U.N. before it has even given Congress all the details. Given the repercussions this deal could have on U.S. foreign and national security policy for years to come, President Obama and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power should scrap any plans to push this deal through the United Nations. Congress must have the opportunity, on behalf of the American people, to review the details and ramifications of this deal first.

The president and his team in their arrogant disregard of a co-equal branch are showing their own party just how they've been treating Republicans — with disrespect and duplicity. That should inform how all members assess the credibility of the administration as it tries to peddle this deal.

## Right Turn

### [How many times has the White House conned Democrats on Iran?](#)

by Jennifer Rubin

The Democrats in Congress need to recover their self-esteem. They've been played for fools and directly misled time and again by the White House.

The president signed the Iranian Nuclear Agreement Review Act and spoke about the importance of Congress fully participating in the approval process. Then along comes negotiator Wendy Sherman in a press conference: "Well, the way that the U.N. Security Council resolution is structured, there is an interim period of 60 to 90 days that I think will accommodate the congressional review. And it would have been a little difficult when all of the members of the P5+1 wanted to go to the United Nations to get an endorsement of this since it is a product of the United Nations process, for us to say, 'Well, excuse me, the world, you should wait for the United States Congress.'" Joke's on you, Democrats.

The president and administration officials said dozens of times that they would get anywhere/anytime inspections. Deputy national security adviser [Ben Rhodes](#) says now they never sought that. Wendy Sherman calls it a [rhetorical flourish](#). Silly Democrats, you should have known better.

The president and his advisers insisted they could not include items like Iran's human rights record, support for terrorism and regional conduct. But wait. The deal will take a [suspected](#)

[terrorist](#), the commander of the Quds force, off a sanctions list and Iran gets relief from embargoes on conventional arms and missile. Gotcha again, Democrats!

How many times has Secretary of State John F. Kerry said there was no sunset in the deal? But there it is in black and white in the text. Oh, and it is down to eight years, not 10 or 20. Conned those gullible Democrats one more time.

And so it goes. It would be one thing for the administration to manipulate and deceive sworn enemies of the United States (Iran, in case you forgot), but what is the excuse for directly misrepresenting what was going on to Congress? It's almost like the "enemy" in the minds of the president and his top advisers is anyone who might object to his deal — Israel, our Sunni allies, lawmakers, domestic critics. If Obama officials seethe with resentment against Israel's prime minister is it because he constantly reminds the world what is actually in the deal, what the president gave up and why the concessions are so damaging.

No wonder the president impugns the motives of lawmakers who raise numerous and specific objections to his handiwork. No wonder he blows his stack when the press points out that our people remain imprisoned. It's, you know, humiliating to acknowledge our innocents are held captive and their suspected terrorist gets a frequent-flyer card and access to foreign bank accounts.

Lawmakers should not be put on the defensive when the administration turns up the indignation. It is the *administration's representatives* who have a lot to answer for. They did not level with Congress about the scope of the deal. They did not let on that anywhere/anytime inspections were in their minds an impossibility. Kerry, Sherman and others will come to Congress cooing about what Iranian diplomats assured them and how sincere they all are. Frankly, they should know when they have been scammed — they did the same to Congress.

## Contentions

### Obama's Worst Mistake

by Peter Wehner

I wanted to add my voice to those who have [already written about the deal](#) between Iran and Western powers, led by the United States. It is an agreement that is likely to set in motion a terrible chain of events — reviving the Iranian economy while simultaneously putting Iran well on the road to gaining nuclear weapons and triggering a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. Iran's behavior is likely to be more, not less, aggressive, from threatening other nations to supporting terrorist organizations. Our allies can only conclude that the United States is unsteady and unreliable, having cast its lot with the most destabilizing regime in the world today — one that is an existential threat to Israel, and where chants of "[Death to America!](#)" can still be heard at prayer services every week. Historians may well consider this date to be a time when, as Max Boot put it, "American dominance in the Middle East was supplanted by the Iranian Imperium."

President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry are betting that this agreement will tame the Iranian regime and turn it into a positive force in the Middle East and the world. This will turn out to be an incredibly ill-advised judgment — and as the details of the agreement spill out over the coming days, the magnitude of the capitulation by the president will be more and more evident.



He was taken to the cleaners. I imagine even the Iranians were surprised by how much Mr. Obama buckled.

Of all the missteps and unwise decisions and harmful acts by the Obama administration — the Affordable Care Act and the lies used to sell it, economic policies that have failed to create growth and led to dramatic increases in poverty and dramatic reductions in the labor force participation rate, the repeated acts of lawlessness, the use of the IRS to harass conservative groups, increasing polarization and divisions within America, the withdrawal from Iraq, the debacles in Syria, Libya and Yemen, the feebleness toward Russia, the failure to confront the rise of ISIS, the betrayal of our allies — the Iranian nuclear deal may well turn out to be worst of all.

It is a strategic disaster, a failure of leadership, of monumental significance.

## Free Beacon

### Heads in the Sand

*Obama and Kerry play let's pretend*

by Matthew Continetti



The last week has provided a sad but worthwhile opportunity to assess the global elite, the heads of state and government, the bankers and journalists and celebrities, as they worked overtime to preserve a veneer of progress and stability. From Athens to Beijing, D.C. to Vienna, the desire has been to avoid tough decisions, to prolong deliberation, to pretend as though dangerous emerging trends do not exist. To take action, to provoke, to choose, to commit, to fight, to admit reality would be far too disruptive, would cost too much, and would endanger the social positions our best and brightest have worked so mightily to attain. Better for them to wait things out.

The Iranian and U.S. governments, [write David Sanger and Michael Gordon of the \*New York Times\*](#), see their nuclear deal differently: “Mr. Kerry described an Iranian capability that had been neutralized; the Iranians a capability that had been preserved.” But the difference of opinion is superficial. Both Secretary Kerry and the Iranians are right. If the Iranians hew to the agreement (a big and damning if) then the best case is that the nuclear infrastructure they have spent decades building will be frozen—“neutralized”—for about 10 years. After which they can resume the activities that so concerned everyone worried at the prospect of an Islamic theocracy obtaining nuclear weapons. Because their fundamental nuclear capabilities indeed have been “preserved.”

The Iran deal is a fabulous artifice, an intricately woven shawl that masks its real intent: the avoidance of military confrontation with Iran and the rise of Persian regional hegemony. “Either the issue of Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon is resolved diplomatically through a negotiation,” President Obama said at his press conference Thursday, “or it’s resolved through war. Those are the options.” He presented his diplomatic resolution as a *fait accompli*, as the best America could ever hope to do. If the deal favors Iran, which it unequivocally does— without so much as closing a nuclear facility this rogue regime gets cash, legitimacy, and an end to U.N. bans on sales of conventional weapons and ballistic missile technology—it is because Obama wanted desperately to pursue the diplomatic option and prove its validity.

John Kerry, the *Times* notes, told his fellow diplomats that his experience in Vietnam made him committed “to using diplomacy to avoid the horrors of war.” And so he has avoided war, at least for now, and at least as far as the Obama administration is concerned. The wars sown by Iran in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, however, will continue indefinitely, and probably will be expanded as the ayatollah and his Revolutionary Guards enjoy their windfall. Kerry and Obama both understand that their patchwork agreement is only temporary, that Iran could cheat, that the possibility exists of waking up one day in the near future to an underground nuclear test at an undisclosed Iranian facility, that in the out years of the agreement Iran, armed and antagonistic, may rush to nuclear breakout. Obama can’t say his deal ends the threat of a nuclear Iran because it obviously does not; [what he does say](#) is that if Iran complies (there’s that if again) then at the end of a decade we’ll be “much more knowledgeable about what their capabilities are, much more knowledgeable about what their program is, and still in a position to take whatever actions we would take today.”

The Iran deal, then, is good enough for the president because it delays until after the end of his term any reckoning with what he himself describes as an anti-Semitic revisionist troublemaking power. A similar deal with North Korea delayed the Stalinist regime’s first nuke test for over a decade, at which point the negotiators of the 1994 “Agreed Framework” were busy lobbying or in a governor’s mansion or advising Democratic presidential candidates. Who can doubt that 12 or 15 years from now, when Iran detonates its first nuke, Obama will appear on the evening *Oculus Rift* newscast, reminding us that this never would have happened had he and not Chelsea Clinton been in office?

The Iran deal isn’t an accomplishment. It required no sacrifice. Both sides wanted a deal: Iran to receive sanctions relief and assert its national pride, Obama to forestall having to take action, to prove diplomacy can work, to entertain the possibility of true *détente* with a longtime adversary. And both sides got what they wanted: Iran its money, weapons, missiles, and nuclear infrastructure intact, Obama a “legacy” item that allows him to smear Republicans and Israelis as warmongers. Obama says he’s aware of the nature of the Iranian regime, but he chooses to ignore that nature if it wins him plaudits from the international left and breathing room before an Iranian bomb. The deal is a finely wrought escape pod for Obama and Kerry: get out of town in 2017 on your high horse, your sanctimony and idealism unblemished.

Willfully optimistic about Iranian intentions, knowingly blind to Iranian malfeasance, to Iran's murder of our soldiers, its imprisonment of our citizens, the deal is a rather stunning example of the lengths to which our elites will go in order to preserve the fiction of common interests, of the "international community," of the power of engagement to liberalize autocracies. Media and cultural institutions will reward Obama and Kerry and Rouhani and Zarif for upholding the shibboleths that rule the world: give peace a chance, jaw jaw is better than war war, we're all in this together, put yourself in the mullah's shoes, Kennedy and Reagan negotiated with a superpower so why can't we parody their example by kowtowing to a two-bit fundamentalist regime [on the verge of bankruptcy](#) whose [shrinking population](#) is addled by [drugs](#) and [venereal disease](#). Meanwhile Iranian centrifuges will spin, Iran's proxies are sowing chaos, its missile program is active, its adversarial posture toward Israel and America and the West is unbroken, [and, as Jim Webb put it](#), "After a period of 10 years they are going to be able to say that they can move forward with a nuclear weapons policy with our acceptance."

What we have in the Iran deal is another instance of the ruling caste distorting reality to suit its ideological preferences. It is also the most dangerous instance. So much elite discourse resembles the game let's pretend that it's become difficult to restate what is true and what is false. Let's act as if Iran negotiates in good faith, as if Greece can remain in the Euro, as if the Chinese have their economic situation under control, as if immigration policy had nothing to do with the murder of Kate Steinle, as if the Islamic State can be destroyed without major American involvement, as if you can promote racial antagonism and animosity toward police without an increase in crime and disorder, as if Hillary Clinton excites the Democratic Party, as if the Confederate flag was responsible for an act of racial terrorism in Charleston, as if we shouldn't apply moral standards to Planned Parenthood's traffic in fetal tissue, as if Caitlyn Jenner, peace be upon her, is more courageous than Lauren Hill or Noah Galloway. And let's do all of this without considering the trade offs and missed opportunities, the externalities and sunk costs, of maintaining a culture grounded in wish fulfillment and infantilization.

There is, after all, only so much self-delusion a society can take before it loses its mind.

We are rapidly approaching that limit.





**VOTER REGISTRATION GETTING UNDERWAY**



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