

Are the Europeans stalling, trying to bait Trump in keeping the nuclear deal alive?

Both Russia and China, which have strong ties with Iran and veto power in the U.N. Security Council, are unlikely to support any additional pressure on Iran.

BY **SEAN SAVAGE**



U.S. President Donald Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron at the White House on April 24, 2018. Credit: White House Photo by Shealah Craighead.

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(April 25, 2018 / JNS) Aside from North Korea, no other foreign-policy challenge right now looms larger for U.S. President Donald Trump than the Islamic Republic of Iran.



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Trump hosted French President Emmanuel Macron this week at the White House for his first State Dinner as president and high on the agenda for the two leaders was the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. In a joint press conference on Tuesday, Trump made it clear once again that he is not a fan of the agreement forged by his predecessor, President Barack Obama, calling the deal “insane” and “terrible” while warning Iran against restarting its nuclear program if America pulls out.



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“If they restart their nuclear program, they will have bigger problems than they have ever had before,” Trump said, without elaborating further.

For months, U.S. and European officials have been meeting to discuss ways to fix the nuclear deal. In January, Trump vowed to end U.S. involvement in it by mid-May, when he must decide to renew sanctions waivers on Iran if that country does not address key issues like the ballistic-missile program, ending the sunset clauses in the deal, inspection of military sites and Iran’s aggression in the Middle East, including its sponsorship of Shi’a Muslim militias and the Hezbollah terror organization.

During their press conference, Trump believes that he and the Macron were making good progress.

“We could have at least an agreement among ourselves very quickly. I think we’re fairly close to understanding each other,” he said.

Macron, who came to Washington in part to help persuade Trump to stay in the nuclear deal, acknowledged that while there is a “disagreement” between himself and Trump over the 2015 accord, there may be room for a new deal to run along the existing one.

“I think we are overcoming it by deciding to work towards a deal—an overall deal that will enable us to deal with the nuclear issue, but also treat it together with another three issues which were not being dealt with so far,” said Macron.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani quickly hit back on the two Western world leaders, saying that they had no “right” to renegotiate the deal.

“Together with a leader of a European country [the Americans] say: ‘We want to decide on an agreement reached by seven parties,’ ” Rouhani said in a televised speech on Wednesday. “For what? With what right?”

Russian presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov also said that Moscow is in favor of keeping the deal because he believes “no alternative exists.”

An effort to buy more time?

Emmanuel Navon, a French-born Israeli international-relations expert with the Jerusalem Institute for Strategic Studies, told JNS that it is highly

unlikely there can be any changes to the Iranian nuclear deal, and that what Macron stated was “not credible.”

“Any change to the JCPOA would have to be agreed upon by all permanent members of the Security Council, including Russia and China, which is not going to happen,” said Navon. “What Macron said on Tuesday that he wants to reach a new deal is just not credible, and the Iranians have even told him to forget about it.”

Navon added that “the only way they will be able to push the Iranians to negotiate a new agreement that would involve ballistic missiles and their support for Shi’ite militias in the Middle East is under the threat of very tough sanctions, but you won’t have new sanctions from the U.N. Security Council.”

Both Russia and China, which have strong ties with Iran and veto power in the U.N. Security Council, are unlikely to support any additional pressure on Iran, he argued.

“If you talk about new sanctions between U.S. and [the] E.U., their effect would be offset by lack of sanctions by Russia and China,” explained Navon. “Russia has been so confrontational with the West, that they might even react [to more Western sanctions] by more trade and investment in Iran.”

As such, Navon believes that Macron’s true mission was to buy more time and convince Trump to remain in the deal.

“It was only to convince Trump not to nix the deal, assuming Trump is even listening to him in the first place,” he said.

Macron’s visit to Washington will be followed up by a scheduled visit by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and possibly British Prime Minister Theresa May to continue lobbying the American president to remain in the nuclear accord.

“It is very likely Merkel and May will give Trump the same line,” said Navon. “But Trump does what he wants. He might be polite during the meetings, but he will make the ultimate decision.”

Navon added that “I wouldn’t count on Macron, Merkel and May being able to fully convince Trump, but I think Macron’s strongest point so far has been ‘what is the Plan B?’ Does the U.S. have a plan B regarding the JCPOA? Besides military action against Iran, I can’t think of a Plan B; the deal is not going to be renegotiated.”

“American side trying to curb Iranian behavior”

Richard Goldberg, a former senior foreign-policy adviser to former Illinois Sen. Mark Kirk—who led sanctions against Iran—and now serves as a senior adviser to the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, told

JNS that a true fix to the Iranian nuclear deal would take a lot more than what is currently being negotiated.

“The direction of the talks seems to be more or less preserving the status quo of the nuclear deal,” he said.

According to Goldberg, the Europeans are essentially setting up a trap for our negotiators to fall into.

“This negotiation on a fix is not coming two places with the same goal,” he explained. “The Europeans want certainty for their companies to invest and trade with Iran. They want to know what box they [Iran] can operate in, so they can sign long-term contracts and do business in Iran without worrying about U.S. sanctions coming back any day.

“The American side presumably is actually trying to curb Iranian behavior. We don’t do any business with Iran; we don’t care about business with Iran,” he said.

Goldberg continued that “unfortunately, what the Europeans are walking our negotiators into is a place where it looks like we have addressed all the problems of the deal, but Iran does not have to change a single way of behaving today, tomorrow or in a year based on what the fix concludes.”

“All the really tough sanctions, all the banks that finance the ballistic-missile program, all of the major assets that finance the program, all of the sectors of the economy that back the program . . . All the sanctions against them are suspended under the nuclear agreement,” he said. “Since 2015, the U.S. and Europe have not hit a single one of those entities for non-nuclear reasons.

“If there is a deal that the president agrees to that does not in very forceful ways prohibit Iran with the full force of U.S. sanctions from testing missiles that can wipe Israel off of the map, that’s a major failure of negotiations,” stressed Goldberg.

He added that the Europeans are only truly concerned with sanctioning Iran for future long-range missiles that could hit Western Europe—not ones that can currently target Israel, the Persian Gulf States or U.S. bases in the Middle East.

As such, the Europeans may claim that they are willing to impose sanctions on Iran for missiles that can reach Israel, but he noted that the “truth is, they are not willing to impose any sanctions that are meaningful for those missiles.”

They reserve those sanctions, he put forth, “for futuristic missiles that don’t even exist yet. And given an implicit green light to the regime that we are going to politically punish you, we are going to make it look like we are punishing you, but we are not really going to.”

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Leonard S Feinman · Miami Beach Senior High School

Are the Europeans stalling? YES, in a word. They still want Globalization and have invested too much in it. Brexit will be a good start, if Europe will let them go. But this is the vision of some very wealthy and controlling people. Ordinary people don't matter, as we are merely statistics. And, the wealthy are not going to share their wealth. They never do. But they will try to put down others who might also be wealthy but not on their same page. To them, the end always justifies the means.

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'No,' Mr. Schindler, there is no 'occupation'

Educator Sam Schindler's notions about Israel and the Palestinians seem to have been frozen in his adolescence. He's so angry about having been "deprived" by his own teachers that he hasn't noticed how much the Middle East has changed.



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(April 25, 2018 / JNS) A Pennsylvania high school teacher, who says he was deprived as a teenager, is now taking it out on his students—by lying to them about Israel.

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Sam Schindler, co-founder and history teacher at the Stone Independent School, a private school in Lancaster, Pa., explains in *The Forward* this week how the "truth" about Israel was hidden from him. His teachers only taught him about the positive side Israel, he complains. "What was kept from me then were images of the occupation, of pulverized houses, of bloody civilians and of terrified children. ... The occupation or lives of Palestinians never appeared."

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So now, Schindler is getting his revenge. He's been teaching his students at Stone Independent all about "the occupation and oppression."

And—big surprise—at the end of last semester's course, Schindler is proud to laud their findings. He notes that "the class collectively reached a universal conclusion about Israel and Palestine: The oppression of Palestinians is not sustainable, nor is it justifiable."

Dear Stone students, I'm sorry to tell you that Mr. Schindler has been lying to you. Israel's occupation of the Palestinians ended 23 years ago.

Here's what Mr. Schindler didn't tell you. When Yitzhak Rabin was elected prime minister of Israel in 1992, he faced a dilemma. On the one hand, he recognized that allowing the creation of a Palestinian state in Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank"), and in the Gaza Strip, would pose a grave threat to Israel's existence. Israel would be just nine miles wide in its middle, living next to a state run by terrorists and fascist dictators.



Yitzhak Rabin, Bill Clinton, and Yasser Arafat at the signing of the Oslo Accords on Sept. 13, 1993. Credit: Vince Musi/The White House.

But on the other hand, Rabin didn't want Israel to continue ruling over the Palestinian Arabs who reside in those territories. So he and his aides devised the Oslo Accords, which ended Israel's occupation of the Palestinians and gave them something close to statehood, but without

endangering Israel.

In 1995, Prime Minister Rabin withdrew Israel's forces from the cities in Judea-Samaria where 98 percent of the Palestinians reside. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon later withdrew from all of Gaza. The Israeli occupation of the Palestinians came to an end. The only "occupation" of the Palestinians currently in force is the 23-year occupation by the Palestinian Authority, led by Mahmoud Abbas, and the occupation of Gaza by Hamas, which is now entering its 11th year.

If any of you ever has the opportunity to visit the "occupied" Palestinians, you'll be surprised to discover that the Israeli "occupiers" whom Mr. Schindler taught you about are nowhere to be found. There's

no Israeli military governor. The Israeli military administration that once ruled the Palestinian-inhabited areas was dismantled long ago.

The Palestinians' schools are run by Palestinian principals and teachers. The courts have Palestinian judges. The streets are policed by the Palestinian police and security forces. When elections are held, the candidates and the voters are all Palestinians. Pretty much the only thing that the P.A. can't do is import tanks, planes, Iranian "volunteers" or North Korean missiles.

The only time Israeli troops enter Palestinian-inhabited areas is when they are chasing down a terrorist. Going into some Palestinian town for an hour or two to catch a bomb-thrower or a sniper hardly constitutes an "occupation" of the Palestinians.

Yes, Israel has checkpoints set up along its border with the P.A., and it's a shame if that inconveniences some Palestinian travelers. Just like it's a shame that every one of us is inconvenienced every time we have to go through a security checkpoint at an American airport. But checkpoints are set up in Israel and in U.S. airports for the same good reason: to keep terrorists from blowing us up. That's not an "occupation." That's called self-defense.

The current situation in the territories is not a perfect solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. But we live in an imperfect world. The current arrangements in the territories allow nearly all of the Palestinians to live under their own government. They live in an entity that is close to statehood in every respect except for the few aspects that would most endanger Israel's existence.

Sam Schindler's notions about Israel and the Palestinians seem to have been frozen in his adolescence. He's so angry about having been "deprived" by his own teachers that he hasn't noticed how much the Middle East has changed in the meantime. It's a whole new world for Israel and the Palestinians, Mr. Schindler. It's time you started telling your students the truth about it.

Stephen M. Flatow, a vice president of the Religious Zionists of America, is an attorney in New Jersey. He is the father of Alisa Flatow, who was murdered in an Iranian-sponsored Palestinian terrorist attack in 1995.

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John Simhi

Hey man , you are not intelligent enough to understand the situation and this issue fully and completely.....go get a life !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

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