



מרכז עזרי לחקר איראן והמפרץ הפרסי  
מركز عزري برای مطالعات ایران وخليج پارس  
The Ezri Center for Iran & Persian Gulf Studies

# *The Persian Gulf Observer*

*Perspectives on Iran and the Persian Gulf*



**Iran Demonstrates the Trouble with International  
Agreements**

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The Ezri Center for Iran & Persian Gulf Studies at the University of Haifa is happy to launch *The Persian Gulf Observer: Perspectives on Iran and the Persian Gulf*. *The Persian Gulf Observer* will be published periodically, expressing the views and analysis of the Ezri center's researchers on various issues concerning the Persian Gulf region and the countries which lay by its shores. Attached please find the 24<sup>rd</sup> issue written by Dr. Glen Segell on "Iran Demonstrates the Trouble with International Agreements"

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להלן הגיליון ה- 24 ובו מאמר מאת ד"ר גלן סגל בנושא Iran Demonstrates the Trouble with International Agreements

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## **Iran Demonstrates the Trouble with International Agreements**

**By: Dr. Glen Segell**

Any international agreement depends upon all signatories to it abiding by the agreement. History has shown that many states in many instances have negotiated an agreement only to find that the other side interprets its meaning differently. In some instances there is genuine confusion while in others there is a deliberate attempt to gain an advantage through subterfuge.<sup>ii</sup>

Few if any agreements outside of democracies last longer than the life of the leader who signed it; while between democracies this is often not much better since the conditions might have changed, or sometimes the relative strength of the signatories has changed.

This is exactly what has transpired between American President Trump and Iran as the former wishes to cancel the 2015 Iranian Nuclear Treaty.<sup>iii</sup> Back in 2015 when the agreement was signed it was known that if the Iranians wanted to build a nuclear weapon, they would do so with or without an agreement. However then the risk involved in going to war was too high (militarily, financially, and politically) so it was decided to sign the deal.

It was known in 2015 at the time of signing the agreement that Iran could take the benefits of the sanctions being lifted and then build the weapon anyway. Now in 2017 it is clear that they have continued their missile program.<sup>iv</sup> The potential threats from Iran are real today as they were then.

Whatever the reason that Trump sees justification to withdraw from the agreement or the Iranians see the need to develop missiles; there are those in the EU, Russia and China who see differently. The agreement was multi-lateral where the EU, China, and Russia regard the signed contract as the beginning of the negotiating process and not the end because of energy needs with Iran being the supplier.<sup>v</sup>

This shows that the outcome of international agreements rests less on the facts and more on how important the issues are to each side and how deep their pockets are.

International agreements such as the 2015 Iran Nuclear deal rest on the justification that America would have leverage over Iran but this might have been an illusion from the onset. The inherent weakness of such an international agreement can be debated further on the same line. There is no certainty indeed more of an illusion that terminating the agreement would punish Iran sufficiently to force the Iranians to abandon their course. Another uncertainty or illusion is whether the Iranians would build a nuclear bomb if the agreement were to be suspended as is the uncertainty that if the agreement were to continue that it would stop Iran from building a nuclear bomb.

In weighing these debates on international agreements there is certainly those in the White House and in the Pentagon that are arguing that the Iranians are violating the agreement, but that retaining the agreement is still the best strategy. And there is certainly those that are also arguing that suspending the agreement would force the Iranians to end their weapons program.

None of the signatories to the agreement have the ability to turn to a court to request a judge to determine if they are upholding their part of the deal and to enforce the others to uphold theirs. There is no such international court or judge.<sup>vi</sup> History has shown that states usually must resort to war when such agreements reached by diplomatic negotiation fail. So either Iran having a bomb is unacceptable or it isn't.

If Trump is to continue on the same course of evaluating Iran as a threat then he faces the stark choice of accepting Iran as a nuclear power, or waging a war. So the question now as it was in 2015 is not to whether to have an international agreement but whether to have a war. America is likely to win in battle but war is a risky business with many costs and potential unforeseen outcomes, local regional and international.

President Trump must now make a decision on how he will proceed. If war isn't the chosen option after the international agreement has been terminated and its termination has failed to leverage Iran, then Iran is the victor as a nuclear power.