

An Israeli View on Trump’s JCPOA Withdrawal: “Hope Is Not a Strategy”

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The White House is correct in pointing out the weaknesses of the JCPOA, some of which have even been candidly acknowledged by former U.S. officials who worked on the agreement. Yet, the question is not whether the agreement is perfect – but whether the alternatives would better serve the interests of Washington and its allies. Trump has been bashing the agreement for years, and now he has set out to prove he can do better.

When considering the national security implications of withdrawing from the agreement for the U.S. and Israel it is critical to remember that the JCPOA is not an end in and of itself, rather a means to achieve certain long-term goals. It is also important not to lose sight of four strategic goals vis-a-vis Iran: keeping Iran as far from a nuclear weapon as possible, preventing war, halting Iran’s ambitions for regional domination, and ultimately altering the fundamental character of the Iranian regime.

The 2015 deal achieved the first two aims by distancing Iran from the nuclear threshold, leaving it one year’s time from a bomb until 2025, and preventing a war over the nuclear issue. However, in the long-term, the agreement grants legitimacy for Iran to build a full-scale nuclear program that leaves it with a minimal breakout time to a nuclear weapon when it decides to do so. Absent from the agreement were the issues of Iran’s malign activity in the region, nor did it resolve the issue of Iran’s ballistic missile development program. At the same time, it directs considerable resources to the Iranian regime.

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***Maj. Gen. (ret.) Amos Yadlin** was chief of Israeli military intelligence from 2006 to 2010 and is now the director of the **Institute for National Security Studies**. In 1981, as an Israeli Air Force pilot, he participated in Israel’s airstrike on Iraq’s nuclear program.*

*Co-author **Ari Heistein** is the special assistant to the director of the Institute for National Security Studies.*

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