

Could Setbacks in Iran Lead to the Eviction of the Ayatollahs and Their Repressive Regime?

By Conrad Black

It is clear that Iran is rushing toward the most advanced stage of nuclear military capability it can achieve in the seven weeks before the second inauguration of President Trump. There is also a good deal of jockeying in Ukraine and complacent assurances from the retreating Democrats that the incoming president's promises to end that war in one day will soon be disclosed as simply more bravura from a tiresomely familiar source.



Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, right, speaks with Syria's president, Bashar Al-Assad at Tehran, May 30, 2024. Office of the Iranian Supreme Leader via AP, file

Hamas appears to have been abandoned to its well-deserved fate of outright extinction and the complete annihilation of this formidable terrorist apparatus, when the cant and histrionics

and fatuous anti-Semitic charges of genocide subside, will be seen as a heavy defeat for Iran and a great victory for Israel. Now, added to the complexity of these matters is the sudden and generally unexpected collapse of Syria.

No one will lament the fall of the Assad regime, which has been a bloody dictatorship imposed by an ethnic minority since 1971. The West could also be quite consolable at the spectacle of the Russians and Iranians being unceremoniously bundled out of the divided country. Yet some sort of international consensus should be patched together quickly to prevent Syria from becoming an outright terrorist state.

Life is difficult enough in the Middle East with entrenched terrorist groups in Lebanon and Gaza, thanks largely to President George W. Bush's inspired notion of promoting democratic elections in those areas, unmindful of the fact that sometimes anti-democratic forces are the democratically preferred option. Iran is a horrible nuisance as a petroleum-exporting and terrorism-sponsoring state.

Yet an outright sovereign state of terrorists in Syria is something that the neighboring countries should unite to prevent. Israel, Jordan, Turkey, and even Iraq, if it can act with any coherence, should, with the support of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Russia, America, and the European Union, establish some sort of a protectorate in Syria, to protect the Syrians from factional terror and the whole region from the high explosive dangers of a sovereign terrorist regime in its midst.

There should be time to deal with Iran's nuclear ambitions, as President Trump promised to do in his last debate with President Biden, and Prime Minister Netanyahu also promised to do when he last spoke to the Congress in late summer. What are needed are fissile material, a suitable delivery rocket and launcher, and a warhead.

The Iranians have the missiles and they are bringing the fissile material up to the conditions necessary for a nuclear weapon, but the warhead is the most complicated part and there is no evidence that they have developed that or can do so before January 20.

At that point, there is every reason to believe that the new government of America with the explicit or tacit support of most governments in the world, will inform the government of Iran that the deployment of nuclear weapons by Iran is not acceptable and that it will be interdicted, if necessary, militarily. This will be another richly deserved and entirely benign, bone crushing strategic defeat for the horrifying bloodstained pseudo-theocracy in Tehran, on the heels of the expungement of Hamas and its expulsion from Syria.

It seems likely that the returning Trump will soon advise the Russian government, if he has not done so already, that if the Kremlin does not stand back somewhat from its present occupied areas in Ukraine and accept those as an accretion of Russian territory, provided the population in those areas is free to move into Ukraine in its new borders if it wishes, it will be the policy of the American government to arm Ukraine with weapons that will bring the war that Russia initiated home to the Russian people, as the Kremlin has happily inflicted upon the civilian population of Ukraine.

In those circumstances, it is hardly conceivable that President Putin will insist on continuing the war, and President Zelensky would be in no position to reject such terms, especially if the high quantity of military assistance that Ukraine has been receiving from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is quickly converted into economic development assistance.

As part of the agreement to end the war, Russia and all of NATO would guarantee the revised frontiers of Ukraine in terms that would make it clear that these guarantees were reliable

and not the worthless assurances Ukraine was given when it and Belarus and Kazakhstan decommissioned the nuclear weapons that they had inherited from the Soviet Union.

In these circumstances, Ukrainian membership in the North Atlantic Treaty is almost academic but it could be admitted to NATO without much controversy in the context of a simultaneous nonaggression pact between NATO and Russia. All that would be standing in the way of such an agreement would be some understanding concerning Georgia and Moldova.

Belarus is already a Russian satellite, and NATO doesn't much care what happens to the former Muslim republics of the USSR as long as they don't become terrorist states. Armenia and Azerbaijan are not under threat and the West has no interest in their border dispute.

It is not beyond hope that the setbacks envisioned for Iran would induce the eviction of the ayatollahs and their repressive regime by the long-suffering Iranian population. There would be no remaining significant issues between Israel and the Arab powers. All indications are that a sensible and determined stance by the Trump administration could advance the cause of peace in Eastern Europe and in the Middle East quickly and quite painlessly.

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