This page was exported from - Shelburne Free Press
Export date: Fri Oct 30 2:52:06 2026 / +0000 GMT

Iran: Options

by GWYNNE DYER

The Iranians know they have won, but President Trump doesn't get it yet. He's still at the stage of counting up the US and Israeli air-strikes and assuming that those numbers mean a US victory is possible. But five gets you ten that the Iranians are already thinking about nuclear weapons. Not their own, which don't exist. America's.

The current spate of American troop movements will last a little longer, as the 11th and 31st Marine Expeditionary Units and some 82nd Airborne troops (total 11-12,000 people) arrive in the region and the planners wait for Trump to decide which way to jump. He may even wait for the other 10,000 soldiers his people are now talking about to arrive.

The US Navy is not crazy enough to send its big ships into the Persian Gulf, so the troops will have to redistributed into other, smaller forms of sea and air transport. Then they can try to land on Kharg Island or somewhere around the Strait of Hormuz if the order is given.

All this, therefore, could take us down to the end of April. In the United States, with the help of cowed media, Trump can probably persuade a large minority of American voters that some kind of secret peace negotiations with Iran are underway for that long. But not for much longer: the key US political deadline is the mid-term elections in November.

The only deal the Iranians will discuss is their five-point peace proposal: a complete end to the US/Israeli air strikes and the long-distance assassinations; payment of war damages and reparations; recognition of Iran's right to control the Strait of Hormuz; an international guarantee that the US and Israel won't attack them again; and Donald Trump's head on a platter.

OK, I made that last bit up. The president can keep his head. But Iran's other demands are deadly serious, even though there is no chance that Trump would accept them. (The Iranians don't even mention of Iran's nuclear enrichment program in their proposal, nor do they worry about what Israel will do. It will have to go along with whatever Trump chooses to do.)

What this tells us is that Iran's new leaders just don't care what the Americans do. They believe their control of the Strait of Hormuz beats every card in American hands ? and they are probably right.

In fact, one gets the impression that the Iran Revolutionary Guard Corp's list of demands (if that's who wrote it) is meant to mock Trump, not to lead to any kind of negotiation. That's sub-optimal behaviour on their part, of course, but the IGRC has had to absorb many insults and many bombs. They want time to relish their victory.

So, by late April/early May Trump will probably have only three options, all of them horrible from his point of view.

The first choice is a deal with the Iranian regime. They might be ready to talk by then, but the deal would have to be on Iran's terms: control of the Strait and an international guarantee that the US and Israel won't attack Iran again, at the least. This would be deeply humiliating for Trump, because he couldn't put any lipstick on that pig.

Alternatively, he could declare ?victory' and just walk away, but that wouldn't unblock the Strait of Hormuz. America's former allies in the Gulf would have to negotiate that deal themselves from a position of great weakness, and everybody except the less attentive half of MAGA would still know that he had been humiliated.

Or Trump could finally put American boots on the ground, hoping that seizing Kharg Island or a few bits of coastline around Hormuz would make the Iranians come to the table. However, that probably won't work, because US troops couldn't get very far inland (mountains) nor could they reopen the Strait (too few troops).

Nevertheless, this option will appeal to Trump because what he likes best is a single decisive action that makes the problem go away quickly. ?Boots' are exactly that sort of option, in theory, but what if they don't do the job in practice? What's left? Nukes, of course.

Only one teeny-weeny low-yield nuclear weapon, of course, exploded in one of Iran's unpopulated deserts: that should be enough to make the stubborn Iranians come to the table and negotiate their surrender. Trump's people could even claim that Iran was one week away from getting a nuclear weapon again; that has worked lots of times in the past.

My wife warned me not to discuss this possibility in public until some diplomat mentioned it first, because I would be called an alarmist. Well, some senior diplomat finally mentioned it (anonymously) ? and yes, I am alarmed.