

How Iran Committed Suicide

By Victor Davis Hanson

How does the supposedly most fearsome regime in the violent Middle East now find itself on the verge of an utter economic and military collapse?



Iran's half-century-long deadly terrorist reputation peaked with the October 7, 2023, massacre in Israel that it helped fund and coordinate.

Iran's terrorist ambitions of running the Middle East had accelerated after witnessing Joe Biden's cognitive decline and his administration's distancing itself from Israel. Biden's humiliation by a series of Chinese slights and the Russian invasion of Ukraine further eroded American deterrence. European appeasement was another force multiplier of Iranian hubris.

The theocracy apparently assumed that its supposed "ring of fire" terrorist proxies—in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Gaza, and Yemen—could lethally squeeze Israel, now reeling from the greatest single-day loss of Jewish life since the Holocaust.

The theocrats further conjectured that, like most incumbent presidents, Biden would be reelected and continue to revive

the disastrous Obama-era appeasement.

Once Biden had begged Iran to reenter the Iran deal, lifted sanctions, sent cash, and removed terrorist designations from some of its proxies, the Khamenei regime, now flush with new oil revenues, logically stepped up its nuclear enrichment.

Tehran was assured that not even Israel would dare strike its nuclear labyrinth, given its reputedly state-of-the-art Chinese and Russian air defenses—and its own retaliatory armada of thousands of ballistic missiles and drones, augmented by perhaps 200,000 short-range rockets of its Arab terrorist clients.

But Iran sorely miscalculated.

The cognitively challenged Biden reelection candidacy imploded, replaced by the anemic Kamala Harris nomination—and with it, the Democrats lost power.

Worse, the supposedly politically dead and buried Trump pulled off the most amazing political return in modern American history.

Benjamin Netanyahu survived the political implosions following October 7 and now had a supportive American presidency.

A cleverer Iran would have stopped the bombast, downplayed its terrorist connections, and returned to its trademark delay-delay-delay style of negotiations—in hopes that the Europeans, the terrified Gulf monarchies, the anti-Israel Democrats, and the paleo-Right would combine to prevent Trump from doing what seven prior presidents had claimed was essential but had never dared to do.

But instead, Iran kept bragging about its air defenses and its vast missile fleet and egged on its expendable Arab surrogates.

It had no inkling that October 7 had reminded Israel that it

could never trust its Islamic enemies and that its extinction, not mere defeat, was the aim of the Iranian nexus.

In truth, Iran's ferocious reputation was never based on any actual success on the battlefield.

Its forte had always been enlisting Arabs and other Middle Easterners to kill Israelis, Americans, and other Westerners in Europe, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

When Israel preempted this and destroyed the Iranian air defenses during the 12-Day War in 2025, and the Americans pounded its multi-billion-dollar nuclear facility, the world saw for the first time how hollow the theocracy had always been.

Even its patrons, Russia and China, privately despised Iran and considered it only a useful anti-American and anti-Western tool.

But once Russia got mired in Ukraine and lost Syria, it was forced to cut Iran loose.

The Chinese—who have turned a million Muslim Uyghurs into indentured serfs—saw Iran merely as a cut-rate gas station.

As long as it was free to buy sanctioned Iranian oil on the sly, China sold Iran almost every weapons system Tehran wanted.

But again, the Chinese connection was predicated only on Iranian utility—which has now mostly evaporated.

The Gulf sheikdoms loathed and feared Iran but were too close to the monster to dare poke it. And so they appeased and bribed Iran and hoped their money, oil, and the US military would deter the mullahs.

That strategy, too, has imploded, Iran having blasted the Gulf with more missiles (5,000) than it had sent (500) even against

the hated Zionist entity.

Europe for decades appeased Iran to buy its oil, to keep the Strait of Hormuz open, and to protect itself from Iranian-funded terrorists. Now that the US has defanged Iran, Europe is likely to pile on.

Iran has no government. Freelancing apparatchiks from the military, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the government, and the theocracy fear being dubbed soft by their competitors, but all of these fear a popular uprising and an overdue noose strung over the collective neck of the regime even more.

They have no idea what Trump will do. Their signature methods of delaying and bartering won't work with him, especially when time is no longer on Iran's side, and they have no military left.

The bankrupt regime is bleeding over \$400 million a day in revenue. It faces a loss of half a trillion dollars from its half-century-long investment in a vast and now obliterated military-nuclear-industrial complex and arsenal.

In sum, Iran can no longer credibly bluff, threaten, or delay. Not even the American Left and the European appeasers can save it.

Its 47-year façade is in ruins.

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