

Trump Is at a Moment That Awaits Leadership

By Conrad Black

On any information available to the public, negotiations with Iran are completely useless: They never even reach agreement on uncontentious matters, and no agreement with Iran, no matter how tentative and modest in scope, will be honored by Iran.

The president has endlessly stated that the United States will achieve its objectives, which originally included permanent denial of Iranian nuclear weapons and continued aid to terrorist organizations, either by agreement or militarily. He has also frequently stated that the United States could clear the Strait of Hormuz, either militarily without assistance from another power or by negotiation. Yet nothing ever happens, and the Strait is effectively closed.



President Trump speaking about the Iran war on April 1, 2026.
Alex Brandon-pool/Getty Images

The president has lost momentum and even benign foreign commentators, including some of the more knowledgeable observers who appear on Israeli television, have remarked that President Trump appears tired and less purposeful than earlier

in this war.

It is worth remembering that the United States and Israel did terrible damage to Iran's war-making capacity, and even its ability to repress and terrorize its own population, at minimal losses to themselves: that includes eight American combat deaths and an accidental American airplane crash that killed another five service members.

The war, while it lasted, was the most one-sided between advanced combatant countries in history. The ceasefire was agreed as an alternative to what was known as "bridge and power plant day," on which, as Mr. Trump remarked, Persian civilization would come to an end, a customary recourse to hyperbole that brought a cautionary reproof from Pope Leo XIV.

The Iranians have been able to get away with the fraud that they have drawn the war and that they control traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, which is a position of equal influence to the American blockade of Iran that is costing that country hundreds of millions of dollars a day.

Inexplicably, Mr. Trump has allowed the truncated and damaged thug-theocracy of Iran to sell the world the lie that it fought the United States to a standstill, which, if it were true, would be the worst military defeat in the history of the United States.

The loss of the president's momentum politically was indicated in the collapse of the commendable fund to compensate the victims of the January 6, 2021, prosecutorial vendetta, and in the defection of the outgoing congressman, Thomas Massie, and three other nominal Republican congressmen on the continuation of the Iran War, which is now more a ceasefire with daily violations.

The American public now sees more of its president, peddling wrist-watches on television, and other exploitations of his name and of family members pursuing controversial commercial

arrangements with Middle Eastern countries, than it does of the president bringing this crisis which he wisely initiated, to a satisfactory end.

Instead of these repeated victory claims that are premature, and tasteless commercial sideshows, it is time for this president to do what his more successful predecessors did and he has so far avoided: address the nation clearly and decisively, and without hint of partisanship, seeking support for a course of action to resolve the crisis.

President Franklin Roosevelt, the first commander in chief of the electronic communication era, did this several times highly successfully: "We must be the great arsenal of democracy." President Truman did it over the atomic bomb, the communist threats to West Berlin, and Greece, and the North Korean invasion of the South. President Eisenhower did it over the desegregation of schools; President Kennedy over the Cuban missile crisis, President Lyndon Johnson over civil rights: "We are all victims of racial injustice, and we will all overcome."

When President Nixon addressed the "silent majority" of law-abiding and patriotic Americans, and introduced his Vietnamization Plan, he concluded: "North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States; no power on earth can do that, except the United States," he was immediately supported by a congressional majority in houses led by his opponents and his job approval rating jumped approximately 20 points.

Except for President Reagan, who was an almost hypnotic public speaker, subsequent presidents have not been as adept at rallying public opinion. The Bushes and President Biden have not been particularly eloquent (though President George W. Bush spoke well after 9/11), and Presidents Clinton and Obama, though fluent, have little talent for the lapidary phrase or sense of a great occasion.

Mr. Trump is effective at haranguing huge live audiences and heaping scorn hilariously on his opponents. He has not been overly successful in his only two attempts at straight addresses into the camera from behind the Resolution desk in the Oval Office, an evocative location festooned with likenesses of the nation's greatest leaders.

Now is the time: The relevant historical facts, the plan of action, the avoidance of any partisanship or hyperbole, and the conscientious, well-reasoned request of the nation's elected leader for the support of his countryman in the national interest.

This administration is now drifting and threatening to compromise its remarkable record of achievement. Now is the time for leadership.

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