

**Consistently Wrong:**  
Four Years of Failed Foreign Policy  
Predictions from Biden & Obama Advisors



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# Introduction

Over the past four years, the Trump administration has enacted a series of policies in the foreign policy arena that contrast sharply with those of the Obama administration. At the same time, the rise in popularity of Twitter and cable news has given an array of former officials, scholars, and campaign surrogates an easy new way to comment on these events as they happen, creating a track record that we can now judge.

This commentary has often been, as one would expect, harshly critical of the policy choices of the Trump administration. Yet some of these critiques also included predictions about the consequences of Trump administration initiatives, with former officials and experts using their gravitas, experience, and large followings to lend weight to their criticism. With four years of material to work with, the Democratic Alliance Initiative undertook a study to examine the predictive record of people closely affiliated with the foreign policy thinking and policymaking of the Obama administration and the Biden campaign.

To do this, we selected six issues on which there is significant contrast between the two presidencies, and we drew up a list of several dozen Obama administration veterans, Biden campaign officials and advisors, and prominent pundits and scholars whose predictions about the six issues would shed light on the accuracy of their assessment-making. Our hope was to determine whether the predictions these figures made about Trump administration foreign policy decisions were vindicated by events, whether their predictions failed to materialize, and in the latter case, what these failures suggest about the flaws in their foreign policy thinking.

The six issues we selected are:

- 1. Withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal (May 8, 2018):** President Trump announced the United States would cease participation in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and would re-impose all U.S. sanctions suspended under the agreement. The JCPOA was a political agreement between the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, China, Iran and the European Union.
- 2. Reimposing sanctions on Iran after withdrawing from the JCPOA (November 5, 2018):** Pursuant to the President's May 2018 announcement, U.S. secondary sanctions that had been suspended under the Iran nuclear deal were reimposed without support from Europe, Russia or China.
- 3. Killing IRGC head Qassem Soleimani (January 3, 2020):** President Trump ordered a U.S. military drone strike killing the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force (IRGC-QF). Soleimani was subject to sanctions by the United Nations for his role in orchestrating acts of terrorism. The IRGC-QF was first designated by the United States as a terrorist entity in 2007.
- 4. Recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital (December 6, 2017) and moving the US embassy there (May 14, 2018):** While Congress passed the Jerusalem Embassy Act in 1995 recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and directing the U.S. Embassy be relocated there, successive U.S. presidents issued 180-day national security waivers allowed by the legislation to delay any move of the U.S. embassy from

Tel Aviv. President Trump announced he would no longer issue this 180-day waiver, declared U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and moved the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem as required by the law.

**5. Recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights (March 25, 2019):**

President Trump issued a proclamation declaring that the United States recognized Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights – territory along the Syrian border that Israel acquired during the 1967 Six Day War. Israel had formally extended its law and sovereignty to the territory in 1981 but official U.S. policy refrained from recognizing Israeli sovereignty until 2019.

**6. Releasing a State Department legal memorandum declaring Israeli settlements not in violation of international law (November 18, 2019) and the Trump peace plan:**

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo reversed a State Department legal opinion from 1978 that deemed Israeli settlements "inconsistent with international law." The decision mirrored a 1981 assessment by former President Ronald Reagan that settlements are not "inherently illegal." Pompeo stated that "there will never be a judicial resolution to the conflict, and arguments about who is right and wrong as a matter of international law will not bring peace."

In evaluating the statements made by the selected figures, we were careful to avoid judging analysis or commentary, which in hindsight may appear obviously wrong, but which are matters of opinion and open to interpretation. Instead, we focused on statements that contained specific predictions in order to isolate the analysis from political or policy bias.

For example, one of the most frequently repeated claims we found regarding an array of Trump administration foreign policy moves is some version of "Trump has no strategy." This is an emotionally satisfying talking point, it may be true, or in some cases it may have been discredited by ensuing events that revealed shrewd strategic thinking – but it is not a prediction, so we did not include it in our analysis.

We looked especially for statements in which experts who served at the highest levels of government and had access to intelligence reports, regularly heard the private and candid views of foreign officials, or who have occupied positions at prestigious think tanks, universities, in campaigns, and at consulting firms, made clear statements about how they believed events would unfold after a Trump administration decision.

We felt this was an especially important track record to study for two main reasons: One, a significant number of the people we reviewed are prominent, career foreign policy figures who will remain influential during a potential Biden administration either in government service or as outside supporters. And two, in recent years, especially in the media and on the political left, major foreign policy decisions have been justified by citing the consensus of "experts."

This tactic seems to be employed in an effort to place favored policies beyond debate and to delegitimize critics. To the extent that invoking "experts" as a rhetorical trump card has become a prominent feature of foreign policy debates, we thought it important and useful to study whether the "experts" have a track record that justifies that descriptor.

## Withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal

**Joe Cirincione**, President of the Ploughshares Fund and key supporter of the Iran nuclear deal

<https://twitter.com/Cirincione/status/993958629043818499>

"There are absolutely no upsides to this, only downsides. We are truly on a path toward war in the Middle East."

<https://twitter.com/Cirincione/status/993986627302252545>

Leaving the deal "most importantly, put us a path to a new war in the Middle East."

<https://twitter.com/Cirincione/status/1001894765548441600>

"Trump's #Iran strategy appears to lead to war"

<https://twitter.com/SenSanders/status/996177409203474432>

"American policy in the Middle East is in freefall...we're losing friends, losing influence, losing allies. This is gonna get -- this could get very dangerous."

**Matt Duss**, foreign policy advisor to Sen. Bernie Sanders

<https://twitter.com/mattduss/status/996086310933811200>

"By ending the Iran deal, Trump has put America on the path to war"

**Phil Gordon**, Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations; Special Assistant to President Obama and White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf Region (2013-2015)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/30/opinion/iran-protests-trump.html>

"If Mr. Trump blows up the deal and reimposes sanctions, he will not be doing the opposition a favor but instead giving Iranians a reason to rally to — rather than work against — the government they might otherwise despise."

**Colin Kahl**, national security advisor to Vice President Biden (2014-2017)

<https://twitter.com/ColinKahl/status/993919682590601221>

"as the risk of war goes up, I fear it will be our men & women in uniform who will ultimately pay the price."

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/04/europe-iran-deal/558800/>

"As a result [of leaving the nuclear deal], Washington, not Tehran, would find itself increasingly isolated."

<https://twitter.com/ColinKahl/status/940277365476872192>

"both moves [leaving nuclear deal and recognizing Jerusalem] probably help Iran."

<https://twitter.com/ColinKahl/status/994336647645880320>

"War drums already sounding."

<https://twitter.com/ColinKahl/status/994263930032742400>

"Europe, China, Russia, & others will try to sustain the Iran Deal. So Trump's decision will produce a very leaky sanctions regime—just enough to prompt Iran to break out of nuclear constraints over time, but not nearly enough to force a better deal. War will be all that's left."

**Trita Parsi**, co-founder, Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, founder and former president, National Iranian American Council

<https://twitter.com/tparsi/status/995797148469006343>

"One of the surest signs that killing the #IranDeal was designed to beget war and that we're getting war, is that its key architect, Dubowitz, is trying to distance himself from it. He wanted war. He's getting war."

<https://twitter.com/tparsi/status/998552950611021824>

"Collaboration with Trump will speed up the march to war. Resistance to Trump will give peace a chance."

<https://twitter.com/tparsi/status/993917083040837632>

"Make no mistake: The way Trump just started his speech right now made it abundantly clear: He's paving the way for a major war with Iran."

**Samantha Power**, US Ambassador to the United Nations (2013-2017)

<https://twitter.com/SamanthaJPower/status/993883349520351232>

"Trump has demolished America's credibility & paved the way for Iran to re-start its nuclear program. Trump has done the unthinkable: isolated the US & rallied the world around Iran. The costs of using military force have only increased."

**Ben Rhodes**, speechwriter and Deputy National Security Advisor to President Obama (2009-2017)

<https://twitter.com/brhodes/status/993893087641526274>

Withdrawing from JCPOA "is devastating to U.S. credibility globally. After this, why would anyone trust an international agreement that the U.S. negotiates?"

**Wendy Sherman**, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs (2011-2015) and key negotiator of the Iran nuclear deal

<https://twitter.com/mitchellreports/status/1214238522590289920>

"Pres. Obama understood what Pres. Trump has yet to understand: You can negotiate a deal to make sure Iran doesn't obtain a nuclear weapon or you can create a situation where there's an unrestrained nuclear program in Iran & some form of war."

# Reimposing sanctions on Iran after withdrawing from the JCPOA

**Ilan Goldenberg**, Director of the Middle East Security Program at the Center for a New American Security, former Chief of Staff to the Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations (2013-2014)

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/05/09/heres-what-to-expect-now-that-trump-has-withdrawn-from-the-iran-nuclear-deal/>

“The end result will be a weak sanctions regime...without active participation and cooperation by the rest of the world, the United States will face a monumental enforcement and implementation burden with scant support. ... The bottom line is that without political support, the U.S. sanctions regime will be a fraction of what it was in 2012.”

**Colin Kahl**

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/trump-thinks-his-north-korea-strategy-will-work-on-iran-hes-wrong-on-both/2018/05/04/9a430328-4e28-11e8-84a0-458a1aa9ac0a\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/trump-thinks-his-north-korea-strategy-will-work-on-iran-hes-wrong-on-both/2018/05/04/9a430328-4e28-11e8-84a0-458a1aa9ac0a_story.html)

“In the absence of clear Iranian violations of the nuclear accord, whatever economic pressure the United States can bring against Iran will be far less than it was before the deal. The European Union is likely to block companies from complying with U.S. sanctions, provide financial incentives for continued business with Iran, and threaten trade retaliation against Washington if the administration penalizes European companies.”

**Julie Smith**, former Deputy National Security Advisor to Vice President Joe Biden from 2012 to 2013 and Jon Wolfsthal, former Senior Director at the National Security Council for Arms Control and Nonproliferation from 2014-2017

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/05/21/pompeos-iran-nuclear-plan-is-a-pip-dream-trump/>

“So the entire so-called strategy is a wish list built on a pipe dream — the idea that the Trump administration is going to get the rest of the world to sign on to a sanctions regime as tough or tougher than the one that existed from 2009 to 2012. The same administration that can’t do simple things like vet nominees, fill government positions, enact executive orders, or avoid alienating the United States’ oldest and closest allies is now going to recreate the most penetrating and effective sanctions system in human history?”

**Adam Szubin**, former Acting Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence (2015-2017)

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-debate-over-the-iran-deal-is-utterly-perplexing/2017/09/21/0996985e-9e3c-11e7-8ea1-ed975285475e\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-debate-over-the-iran-deal-is-utterly-perplexing/2017/09/21/0996985e-9e3c-11e7-8ea1-ed975285475e_story.html)

“We will not be able to coerce Europe, Russia, and China into shunning Iran’s economy over policy interests that they do not share.”

# Killing IRGC head Qassem Soleimani

## Joe Cirincione

<https://twitter.com/Cirincione/status/1214245200803123200>

"[Pompeo's] policy completely failed and has now dragged us into a catastrophic new war. We were warned."

<https://twitter.com/Cirincione/status/1213992152981811201>

"We are in a spiraling national security crisis. And everything Donald Trump is doing is making it worse. Every. Single. Thing."

## Matt Duss

<https://twitter.com/mattduss/status/1213471599841677312>

"the US just greenlit every authoritarian regime in the world to assassinate any foreign official it deems a threat."

## Ilan Goldenberg

<https://twitter.com/ilangoldenberg/status/1213282430330773504>

"We're getting into a war because someone decided to put a bad idea they didn't think the President would pursue as a throw away line on a PowerPoint slide."

## Richard Haass, President of the Council on Foreign Relations

<https://twitter.com/RichardHaass/status/1213572228312424448>

"I wonder: Did this NSC process make clear to @realDonaldTrump that...eco sanctions would trigger military responses? That killing Suleimani would lead to an open-ended conflict forcing the US to return its strategic focus to MidEast?"

<https://twitter.com/RichardHaass/status/1213870249394802690>

"we will not be safer as a result of killing Suleimani. Adding to the danger will be the likely resurgence of ISIS in Iraq and the increase in Iran-backed attacks around the region."

## Martin Indyk, Distinguished Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, US Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations (2013-2014), former US ambassador to Israel

[https://twitter.com/Martin\\_Indyk/status/1213844624223219714](https://twitter.com/Martin_Indyk/status/1213844624223219714)

First two logical consequences of Trump's spasm assassination of Suleimani: 1. Iraqi parliament votes to expel US troops from Iraq 2. Iranians unite in hostility towards the United States.

## Colin Kahl

<https://twitter.com/ColinKahl/status/1212943610473259009>

"Trump has started a war with Iran in Iraq"



## **Sen. Tim Kaine**

<https://twitter.com/timkaine/status/1213091113134780422>

"Trump's decision to tear up a diplomatic deal that was working and resume escalating aggressions with Iran has brought us to the brink of another war in the Middle East."

<https://twitter.com/timkaine/status/1213931900860915716>

"By carrying out airstrikes in Iraq over the objections of Iraqi government, Trump has risked squandering all our efforts against ISIS there. Likely winners? Iran and ISIS. Congress needs to have the backbone to counteract Trump's foolish missteps."

## **Daniel Kurtzer**, Professor of Middle East Studies at Princeton University and former US ambassador to Israel and Egypt

<https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-how-the-soleimani-strike-is-backfiring-20200107-y7hbfw5ffjcfxeaf6cut3xdsq-story.html>

"The drone strike against Soleimani seems to have unified Iranians, at least for now."

## **Rob Malley**, President & CEO, International Crisis Group; Senior Advisor to President Obama for the Counter-ISIL Campaign and White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf Region (2014-2017)

[https://twitter.com/Rob\\_Malley/status/1213076987809538048](https://twitter.com/Rob_Malley/status/1213076987809538048)

"Told the @nytimes: 'Whether President Trump intended it or not, it is, for all practical purposes, a declaration of war.'"

[https://twitter.com/Rob\\_Malley/status/1213148455813754882](https://twitter.com/Rob_Malley/status/1213148455813754882)

"A president who claimed he doesn't wish to drag the country into another war has brought that war one step closer. A U.S. administration that argues it killed the Iranian general to avert further attacks just made those attacks more likely"

## **Aaron David Miller**, Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, longtime State Department advisor on Middle East affairs

<https://twitter.com/aarondmiller2/status/1215110835594518530>

"Iranian revenge for Soleimani has just begun."

<https://twitter.com/aarondmiller2/status/1212906391679242243>

"Say goodbye to shadow war and hello to an escalation of over[t] terror and assassination."

<https://twitter.com/aarondmiller2/status/1212905321670356995>

"If reports of Suleimani and Muhandis double tap are confirmed, say goodbye to the eminently controllable US-Iran shadow war and hello to a more deadly war of terror and assassination."

**Andrew Miller, Former NSC Director for Egypt and Israel Military Issues (2014-2017)**

<https://twitter.com/AndrwPMiller/status/1215282902612824064>

"Trump's Iran policy has made it impossible to advance US interests in region; all we can do is mitigate losses."

<https://twitter.com/AndrwPMiller/status/1212895705926373376>

"Hard to believe Trump actually wants a war with Iran, but recent steps are bringing us perilously closer to that possibility. If this strike was by the US, it could be straw that breaks camel's back."

<https://twitter.com/AndrwPMiller/status/1215282899890601989>

"Iran's missile barrage is unlikely to be totality of its response: Iran will intensify efforts to push US out of Middle East and future asymmetric strikes against Americans are probable."

**Andrea Mitchell, Chief Foreign Affairs & Senior Washington Correspondent, NBC News**

<http://www.msnbc.com/transcripts/the-last-word/2020-01-02>

"In my experience of having covered every other engagement that the U.S. has had with Iran since the taking of our embassy back in 1979, and having witnessed what happened when the shah fell in all of these years, Lawrence, you've seen this from your experience as a journalist and previously at the Senate – there are going to be reprisals around the world."

**Sen. Chris Murphy**

<https://twitter.com/ChrisMurphyCT/status/1212913952436445185>

"did America just assassinate, without any congressional authorization, the second most powerful person in Iran, knowingly setting off a potential massive regional war?"

<https://twitter.com/camanpour/status/1214250686717812742>

Killing Soleimani "will lead to a series of reprisals, more military escalation between the United States and Iran that ultimately will get more Americans killed."

<https://twitter.com/ChrisMurphyCT/status/1213665580189966336>

"Trump is stumbling into a war of choice. A war entirely of his making. A war that will get thousands of Americans killed."

<https://twitter.com/mitchellreports/status/1214966208900083712>

"In almost every single way Iran is stronger than they were when President Trump came into office and we are weaker in the region."

**Trita Parsi**

<https://twitter.com/tparsi/status/1213072592086749184>

"Exhibit A that the assassination of Soleimani made America LESS - NOT MORE - safe (by bringing the US and Iran into war): State Department urges all Americans to "depart Iraq immediately."

<https://twitter.com/tparsi/status/1212913136807956480>

"With Suleimani killed by the US, it is extremely difficult to see how this will not escalate into full scale war. Very hard seeing Iran not retaliating, whether directly or indirectly, whether now or later. This is going to be inflame the region..."

### **Cal Perry, MSNBC correspondent and former CNN Middle East correspondent**

<http://www.msnbc.com/transcripts/the-last-word/2020-01-02>

"So, you know, however you want to put it, the doomsday clock has ticked another step towards midnight. And it certainly looks as though the U.S. is headed towards a wider conflict now in the Middle East."

### **Samantha Power**

<https://twitter.com/SamanthaJPower/status/1212946291900194819>

"[Trump] has purged Iran specialists. He has abolished NSC processes to review contingencies. He is seen as a liar around the world. This is likely to get very ugly very quickly."

### **Ned Price, Spokesman for the National Security Council, 2014-2016**

<https://twitter.com/nedprice/status/1212907069885562880>

"No one should be under any illusion that the Trump admin is prepared to handle the backlash that will follow if this [US killed Soleimani] is true. This is a network that has the region wired and cells in the West."

<https://twitter.com/nedprice/status/1212910203873714177>

"That backlash MIGHT have been mitigated if the admin had done this quietly... Instead, we're apparently going to crow about it."

### **Bruce Reidel, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institute**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/03/world/middleeast/trump-iran-suleimani.html>

"Bruce Riedel, the former C.I.A. officer who spent his life studying the Middle East, and is now at the Brookings Institution, said, 'The administration is taking America into another war in the Middle East, bigger than ever.'"

### **Ben Rhodes**

<https://twitter.com/brhodes/status/1212916078751424512>

"Trump may have just started a war with no congressional debate. I really hope the worst case scenario doesn't happen but everything about this situation suggests serious escalation to come."

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/01/trump-has-produced-extraordinarily-dangerous-moment/604456/>

"In the months and years to come, we should expect renewed attacks against U.S. interests—and Americans—from Iran and its proxies."

## **Susan Rice, National Security Adviser to President Obama, 2013-2017**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/04/opinion/trump-suleimani-iran.html>

"locks our two countries in a dangerous escalatory cycle that will likely lead to wider warfare...we must understand that the Iranian regime cannot survive internal dissent or sustain its powerful position in the region if it backs down from this provocation. For Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a strong response is essential. ...When Iran does respond, its response will likely be multifaceted and occur at unpredictable times and in multiple places.... It's hard to envision how this ends short of war."

## **Sen. Bernie Sanders**

<https://twitter.com/BernieSanders/status/1212959357425651713>

"Trump promised to end endless wars, but this action puts us on the path to another one."

## **Wendy Sherman**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vS2ZHi2ILqc>

MSNBC appearance on January 3rd, 2020: "There will be terrible, terrible reprisals. They will likely happen in the Middle East but they could happen, really, anywhere in the world. ...So I think tonight, the immediate concern for all of us...is the reprisals, where and how are they going to happen, they will be asymmetrical, it doesn't matter where our troops are, they can be targets, Qassem Soleimani had deputies, they know how to do what he did even though he was this unbelievably unique counter-military strategist, but we are at a very, very escalatory moment here which can lead us into a wider war."

<https://twitter.com/wendyrsherman/status/1212908654523043840>

"An incredibly dangerous escalatory cycle that may lead inexorably to war, want it or not."

## **Tommy Vietor, Former Special Assistant to President Obama and National Security Council Spokesman**

<https://twitter.com/TVietor08/status/1215691639483535360>

"Multiple strikes on top IRGC officials is starting a war."

<https://twitter.com/TVietor08/status/1215030339518615552>

"Soleimani posed an imminent threat. Iraq had WMD. Lies and cooked intelligence to provide a pretext for war."

<https://twitter.com/TVietor08/status/1213252113574158337>

"The strike on Soleimani was an assassination. Killing one of the most powerful figures in a country is an act of war. Words and actions have meaning. Allowing Trump and his hacks to act like this is debatable is allowing yourself to be gaslit."

<https://twitter.com/TVietor08/status/1212929464784408577>

"It is absurd to think that killing Soleimani will PREVENT attacks on US personnel abroad. His assassination will almost undoubtedly increase the number of attacks / targets. Absolutely insane."

**Sen. Elizabeth Warren**

<https://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/meet-press-january-5-2020-n1110181>

"Look, we are not safer because Donald Trump had Soleimani killed. We are much closer to the edge of war."

# Recognizing Jerusalem and moving the US embassy there

**John Brennan**, former CIA Director (2013-2017)

<https://twitter.com/JohnBrennan/status/996176577061892097>

"By moving Embassy to Jerusalem, Trump played politics, destroyed US peacemaker role."

**Nicholas Burns**, foreign policy advisor to the Biden presidential campaign; professor of international relations, Harvard Kennedy School; executive director of the Aspen Security Forum.

<https://twitter.com/RNicholasBurns/status/938472391113658375>

"Trump's Jerusalem decision will weaken US credibility, inflame passions in Moslem World and put our own American diplomats at risk."

<https://twitter.com/RNicholasBurns/status/938375679174995969>

"On @Morning\_Joe, I said Trump's decision on Jerusalem will weaken US influence in Moslem World; could well lead to violence against American embassies. A major mistake by Trump."

<https://twitter.com/RNicholasBurns/status/938115365900611584>

If Pres. Trump moves our embassy to Jerusalem, it will be a historic mistake. All of his predecessors understood what it would cost the U.S. in influence/ credibility with the Palestinians+Arab World.

**James Cunningham**, U.S. ambassador to Israel 2008-2011

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/what-could-happen-if-trump-moves-the-u-s-embassy-to-jerusalem/>

"It wouldn't really produce very much substantive or concrete gain for Israel and it would complicate our relationship with the Arab world, but more importantly, it would also complicate Israel's relationship with the Arab world."

**Jackson Diehl**, Deputy Editorial Page Editor, Washington Post

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/will-someone-save-trump-from-this-disastrous-decision/2017/12/10/ba2b07d8-db70-11e7-b859-fb0995360725\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/will-someone-save-trump-from-this-disastrous-decision/2017/12/10/ba2b07d8-db70-11e7-b859-fb0995360725_story.html)

"Iran stands to be the biggest beneficiary of Trump's recklessness. The Jerusalem recognition will make it harder for the United States to counter Iranian aggression across the region through an alliance including the Persian Gulf states, Jordan and, tacitly, Israel, because that alliance is now split by the Jerusalem question."

**Khaled Elgindy**, former fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/fallout-trumps-jerusalem-decision-dangerous-experts-warn/story?id=51615581>

"Elgindy added the 'overwhelming view' among foreign policy experts 'is that this is a very dangerous move on many levels,' saying it plays into the hands of extremists in the region. '[It] feeds the narrative that United States and Israel are waging a war against Islam,' he said."

**Phil Gordon**

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/30/israels-calm-before-the-storm/>

"The juxtaposition of Trump administration officials and dozens of members of the U.S. Congress celebrating the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital while Palestinians in Gaza are being killed by Israeli security forces could prove explosive. It could even trigger disruption on the West Bank, where it would be far more difficult to manage because of its far greater geographic size and population and the presence of hundreds of thousands of Israeli settlers intermingled with Palestinians."

**Richard Haass**

<https://twitter.com/RichardHaass/status/996144866613780481>

"No discernible upside and considerable downside: US played a big card for nothing, weakened its claim to be honest broker, helped to fuel violence"

**Heather Hurlburt**, former executive director of the National Security Network

<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2018/05/gaza-the-embassy-move-and-the-decreasing-chances-of-peace.html>

"The U.S. will now have less influence over what happens on the ground"

**Martin Indyk**

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/president-trumps-options-for-israeli-palestinian-dealmaking/>

Moving the embassy "would likely spark an explosion of anger in the Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim worlds, and generate a rallying cry for Islamic extremists everywhere. American embassies and American citizens in Muslim countries would likely be targeted by violent demonstrators. Confrontations between Palestinians and Israelis would likely erupt in the West Bank, and the Palestinian security forces would likely stand aside, unable or unwilling to continue cooperating with their Israeli counterparts to tamp down the violence. Hamas might resume rocket attacks from Gaza, but because of fear of an Israeli response they would more likely seek to stoke the fires of violent resistance in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Arab and Muslim states would likely demand that Trump rescind the decision."

## **Colin Kahl**

<https://twitter.com/ColinKahl/status/940279521911148550>

"Trump's Jerusalem decision further isolates the US in the Middle East"

## **John Kerry, 2004 Democratic Party nominee for president, Secretary of State, 2013-2017**

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/john-kerry-warns-some-of-trumps-foreign-policy-could-be-explosive/>

"You'd have an explosion, an absolute explosion in the region, not just in the West Bank, and perhaps even in Israel itself, but throughout the region."

## **Daniel Kurtzer**

<https://prospect.org/world/capital-offense/>

"Nor will the United States be immune, in Kurtzer's assessment. 'The Muslim community in Islamabad might just take aim at the American Embassy, or in Jakarta or somewhere else. ... The best case scenario is that the world doesn't fall apart, it just gets ruined in significant ways.'"

## **Rob Malley**

<https://prospect.org/world/capital-offense/>

"Among experts, the most optimistic estimation is that the diplomatic and security impact on Israel and the United States will be merely awful, not apocalyptic."

"If Trump asks for briefing papers, if he meets with policy professionals...he'll hear that moving the embassy will cause a blow-up."

## **Aaron David Miller**

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/what-could-happen-if-trump-moves-the-u-s-embassy-to-jerusalem/>

"'It would be unwise and unnecessary to move the embassy,' said Aaron David Miller, vice president for new initiatives at the Woodrow Wilson Center... 'You're simply going to feed Iranian propaganda, you're going to feed Sunni-jihadi propaganda and most likely, you're going to trigger a fair amount of violence and even terror.'"

## **Andrew Miller**

<https://twitter.com/AndrwPMiller/status/938104579799035904>

"No matter how WH frames the decision (all of J'lem vs just West J'lem or moving whole Embassy vs just the Amb's office), it will almost certainly torpedo any hope of meaningful talks and could unleash violence. Mitigation measures are a fantasy."



## **Trita Parsi**

<https://twitter.com/tparsi/status/938397849083170816> (Jerusalem)

"This will be the end of American influence in the MidEast as we know it: Trump's pyromaniac embassy move to Jerusalem combined w/ enforcing on Palestinians (via Saudis) a 'peace plan' that leaves them with nothing. The final nail in the coffin of Pax Americana in the region"

## **Ned Price**

<https://twitter.com/nedprice/status/938213154668142592>

By recognizing Jerusalem, "Trump appears willing to: Put US personnel at great risk; Risk C-ISIL momentum; Destabilize a regional ally; Strain global alliances"

## **Ben Rhodes**

<https://twitter.com/mitchellreports/status/939190693691580416>

"the Trump admin. has managed to isolate the United States, relinquish it's historic role as broker for peace."

<https://twitter.com/brhodes/status/939257155676491783>

Announcing the intention to move the embassy will "cause an international crisis"

<https://twitter.com/brhodes/status/938386297638539264>

"Trump is risking huge blowback against the US and Americans."

<https://twitter.com/brhodes/status/938385049745018880>

"so reckless the USG has to warn Americans about the consequences"

## **Dennis Ross**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/01/us/politics/trump-embassy-israel-jerusalem.html>

"If you're trying to be creative by saying we're recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, you'd better qualify it," said Dennis B. Ross, a longtime Middle East peace negotiator. "If you don't qualify it, that means you've just accepted the Israeli position on the final status of Jerusalem, which means you've lost the Arabs."

## **Steve Schmidt, co-founder of The Lincoln Project**

<https://twitter.com/steveschmidtses/status/996501402171183105>

"Trump destabilized the Middle East with his decision to move the embassy. His abject ignorance of the history and religions that have shaped this moment have given succor to the agents of terror and chaos."

**Judith Tucker**, president of the Middle East Studies Association

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/fallout-trumps-jerusalem-decision-dangerous-experts-warn/story?id=51615581>

"[T]he move makes the prospect of the U.S. playing an instrumental role as a 'fair broker' in any future Middle East peace agreement 'ring very hollow.' 'I can't even fathom why the U.S. would do this. I just don't understand it as a move. I don't think it makes any sense in terms of foreign policy objectives,' she said."

# Recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights

## Ilan Goldenberg

<https://twitter.com/ilangoldenberg/status/1108799871019040773>

Golan recognition "puts the Arab states even further on the defensive and makes it harder for them to support the US without being called out by Iran"

<https://twitter.com/ilangoldenberg/status/1108798920841400326>

Golan recognition "gives the Russians, Iranians, and Assad political and diplomatic cover to isolate Israel and the US & use it as an excuse to further limit Israeli freedom of action."

## Rob Malley

[https://twitter.com/Rob\\_Malley/status/1110498135011401728](https://twitter.com/Rob_Malley/status/1110498135011401728)

Claims Saudis told him that "However much they wished to help the Trump administration's peace proposal, this, coming after Jerusalem decision, makes it impossible."

## Tamara Cofman Wittes

<https://twitter.com/tcwittes/status/1108801295685685251>

Golan recognition a "needless undermining of US national interests, in Arab-Israeli peacemaking and also well beyond the Middle East. It also signs the death warrant for Jared's long-awaited peace plan."

<https://twitter.com/tcwittes/status/1108801300249149441>

"Recognize that the neg consequences of this decision for Arab government trust in Trump Admin is likely magnified by the near-certainty that they learned about it on Twitter just now, like the rest of us."

<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2019/03/22/trumps-golan-fiasco-226102>

"Iran and Hezbollah, too, get a windfall...they will claim more justification for terrorism and other military operations against Israel -- and it will be harder for the Arab states to back Washington in opposing them."

Golan recognition "may even prompt the Russians, under pressure from Assad, Iran, and Hezbollah, to seize this opportunity to further constrain Israel's freedom of action in Syrian skies."

## State Department memo on Israeli settlements and Trump Peace Plan

**Steven Cook**, Senior Fellow for Middle East Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations

<https://twitter.com/stevenacook/status/1222910906717417474>

"Excellent read: Trump's 'peace plan' will likely push the Palestinians to violence, no matter how self-destructive that may be"

**Ilan Goldenberg**

<https://twitter.com/ilangoldenberg/status/1196502854460170240>

"There is absolutely no reason to do this now (or ever) [releasing the State Department legal memo on settlements] other than satisfying David Friedman's extreme ideological settler agenda." [The memo was a key legal document that preceded the release of the Trump peace plan.]

**Hussein Ibish**, Atlantic Magazine contributor and Senior Resident Scholar at The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington DC

<https://www.cnn.com/2017/02/15/politics/trump-netanyahu-two-state-solution-israel-palestinians/index.html>

"They've got to be able to sell their closeness to Israel to their own domestic politics as, among many other good things, something that's helpful to the Palestinians...The idea that Israel wouldn't have to do much on the Palestinians and have major progress with the Gulf states, that's a misread of the political dynamics."

**Colin Kahl**

<https://twitter.com/ColinKahl/status/1196593557659774976>

"Dangerous, destabilizing"

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/02/13/trumps-outside-in-approach-to-israeli-palestinian-peacemaking-wont-work-right-now-peace-conflict-two-state-solution/>

"the Israeli-Palestinian conflict creates political limitations for Arab leaders, forcing most Arab-Israeli engagement into the shadows and significantly limiting what is possible... Arab populations care deeply about the Palestinian cause. These are authoritarian regimes so they have some flexibility in how responsive they are to their publics. But thus far they have made the calculation that the political risk of taking big public steps with Israel just is not worth the political risk unless they have some cover in the form of progress in relations between Israel and the Palestinians."

**Sen. Bernie Sanders**

<https://twitter.com/SenSanders/status/1196527568704458752>

"Once again, Mr. Trump is isolating the United States and undermining diplomacy by pandering to his extremist base."

**Sen. Elizabeth Warren**

<https://twitter.com/ewarren/status/1196547976207966210>

“Another blatantly ideological attempt by the Trump administration to distract from its failures in the region. Not only do these settlements violate international law—they make peace harder to achieve.”