

Sir, Your editorial on Trump and Iran allows that the nuclear deal "does nothing to contain Iran's destabilizing behavior in the Middle East. " Indeed, "the country is beginning to reap the benefits of western capital and expertise while continuing to pursue an expansionary agenda" ("Trump should be wary..." 6 Oct 2017).

Yet it was Barack Obama's belief that lifting sanctions pursuant to the nuclear deal would normalize Iran. Clearly, events have shown this assumption to have been naive. The editorial might also have mentioned that Iran is violating the spirit, if not technically the letter of the agreement by pursuing its ballistic missile program. The agreement only "calls upon" Iran to desist but does not require it to do so. This is a significant loophole. It allows Iran to continue its nuclear program but in stages, whereby Iran may now perfect its use of ballistic missiles (perhaps with the help of North Korea), and in 10 years time, when the freeze on uranium enrichment etc expires, it can proceed to the next stage, the assembly of a nuclear warhead to be fit onto the missiles. This two-stage approach would seem to serve Iran's interests, because it is doubtful that Iran has the capacity to pursue both aspects of the program simultaneously, even with western help.

Mr Trump is thus quite right to characterize this deal as an "embarrassment", and may thus be right to question the utility of the US continuing to abide by it.

Albion M Urdank
University of California,
Los Angeles US