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# OPINION

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## COMMENTARY

# Trump and the atomic ayatollah

BY THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The U.S. has begun indirect talks with Iran over its nuclear program, and the question is whether this will be one more run-around to a bad deal. That's the way it has worked for more than two decades, and it will be the goal of the regime again. The question is whether President Trump settles for it.

Iran so far has been the best of his second-term foreign-policy initiatives. He is restoring the "maximum pressure" sanctions campaign from his first term, which will shrink the regime's income.

Mr. Trump has also laid down a tough marker that Iran must dismantle its nuclear program, a la Libya in 2003, if it wants to avoid a military attack. "If they don't make a deal, there will be bombing," the president said recently. "It will be bombing the likes of which they have never seen before."

An ostentatious lineup of B-2 bombers in Diego Garcia spotted by civilian satellites drove home the warning. This is the opposite of the Obama-Biden appeasement strategy that yielded more Iranian nuclear progress and Iran-backed proxy wars across the Middle East.

Steve Witkoff, Mr. Trump's de facto Secretary of State, is his lead negotiator on Iran and suggested a more modest U.S. goal ahead of weekend talks. "I think our position begins with dismantlement of your program. That is our position today," Mr. Witkoff told the *Journal*. "That doesn't mean, by the way, that at the margin we're not going to find other ways to find compromise between the two countries."

He added that "where our red line will be, there can't be weaponization of your nuclear capability."

Iran will insist it is already meeting that "weaponization" standard because it hasn't built a bomb. If that's where talks end up, it won't be much better than Barack Obama's 2015 deal. In that deal, Iran retained its uranium enrichment capacity, refused inspections to key nuclear sites and expanded its ballistic missile program.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's goal will be to get the same deal. That's why foreign-supervised dismantlement and intrusive, on-demand inspections are essential. John Kerry, who negotiated the 2015 deal, argues nearby that a far better deal is possible because Iran's regional position is so much weaker. If even he thinks so, Mr. Trump would be widely criticized if he settled for less.

Israel is also a player here, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu laid out his position after meeting Mr. Trump in Washington. "We agree that Iran will not have nuclear weapons. This can be done in an agreement, but only if this agreement is a Libya-style agreement; that they go in, blow up the facilities, dismantle all the equipment, under American supervision and American execution — that's good."

"A second option, that it won't happen. They'll just drag out the talks, and then the option is military. Everyone understands that. We discussed that at length," he said.

A dismantlement deal is preferable to an attack on Iran that would have uncertain consequences, but the military destruction of most of Iran's program is better than a deal that leaves Iran able to build a bomb after it has had time to rebuild its military strength and proxy network. That's the test for Mr. Witkoff and the president.

*This editorial was originally published in The Wall Street Journal on Sunday, April 13.*



## COMMENTARY

# Peace Corps: The 3rd rail of U.S. global development assistance

BY YOSSEF BEN-MEIR

Whereas there has been broad consensus that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is in need of reform, there is also an even wider and more deeply held belief that the value of Peace Corps — begun in 1961 — is incalculable relative to its incredibly modest cost. American citizens' experiences of living and working with local communities around the world forges innovative, mission-driven individuals in all sectors of society, enhancing the United States and its allies.

At about one percent of the cost of USAID, the Peace Corps not only upscales American people's skills at typically formative junctures of their professional lives, but also earns the partnership of individuals, families and communities in more than 140 friendly countries. President Kennedy's vision for the Peace Corps was to annually place 50,000 American volunteers at project sites, approximately seven times the number of those currently serving.

Increasing the Peace Corps' budget from its current level of approximately \$300 million to a fully funded \$2.5 billion (less than 10 percent of USAID's lat-

est annual budget) could fulfill the 50,000-volunteer potential. At this moment of radical change (the end of federal agencies and departments and their associated layoffs), the impact upon Americans and U.S. international partners of increasing the Peace Corps budget would not only generate jobs for U.S. citizens, primarily youth, but also bridge a spectrum of relationships at minimal cost.

A fair concern about the Peace Corps over its years has been its struggle to recruit people from all economic backgrounds; many people who have not had the opportunity to gain higher education have important practical skills that can be applied toward the betterment of society. Increasing the program from 7,000 to 50,000 volunteers while broadening its access to those who may not have considered this professional avenue in the areas of agriculture, mechanics, teaching, health care and more could offset recent layoffs by creating jobs in the interior of the United States.

Moving to 50,000 Peace Corps volunteers is the low-cost palliative needed to address the untenable situation of a high-cost international development complex removed from direct people-to-people experiences and the resulting insufficient

impact. Also, the Peace Corps benefits the American volunteers as much or even more than the local people and communities with whom they engage all around the world because their capacities are strengthened by doing. Volunteers' responsiveness to locally determined priorities not only achieves the sincere goodwill generated during the two-year Peace Corps service, but also creates a frame of reference for them of what is entailed in economic growth, forming a basis for their future outsized achievements in all helpful walks of life.

Serious cuts to the Peace Corps will likely unleash the ire of the well-organized former volunteers (nearly 250,000) in all of the 50 states, with inter-state networks based on the countries and periods they served. The Peace Corps is therefore a third rail of United States global development assistance with now a wide array of consequences before us. For the cost, there is every good reason to immediately expand it to its original intention at a bargain that is rarely, if ever, found among government programs.

*Dr. Yossef Ben-Meir is a sociologist and former Peace Corps volunteer who served in Morocco from 1993 to 1995.*

## COMMENTARY

# Pope Francis didn't miss his opportunity to do all he could

Pope Francis' complete name was Jorge Mario Bergoglio. He was born in 1936. He served as Pope for 12 years, from March 13, 2013, until his passing on April 21, 2025. He was elected on the second day of the 2013 papal conclave and chose his papal name in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi. During the recent Holy Week all the way through Easter, he was doing what he loved to do, serve God and help others. Even on his last day, he was doing what he could for God and others. What an amazing legacy. He will be remembered for doing all he could, when he could.

There is a story in the Bible about a woman named Mary who anointed Jesus with an expensive fragrance. Her name was Mary, and she had a brother named Lazarus whom Jesus



**Glenn Mollette**

time later Jesus would be arrested, put through a mock trial and crucified. After three days, he would overcome death and leave the tomb. Women would gather to anoint Jesus on that Sunday but would be met by an angel who would announce, "He is not here; he is risen." The women would not have the opportunity to anoint Jesus. He was gone.

Back to Mary, Martha and

brought back to life after being dead for four days.

They had a get-together to celebrate Lazarus' second chance at life, and her sister Martha prepared the meal. A short

Lazarus. If Mary had not anointed Jesus when she did, Jesus would never have been anointed. He actually said, "She has anointed my body for the burial." Jesus knew what was coming. Mary had a special sensitivity about her that caused her to react in a special way. She knew she needed to act immediately and anoint Jesus while he was at the table eating because it might be her only opportunity, and it was.

Mary will be grateful down throughout eternity that she didn't delay doing something very special for Jesus.

We can learn something from Mary. When we have an impression to say a kind word or do a good deed, we should do so. So often, we never know when seeing someone might be the only or the last time we will see them. Expressing a

kind word, an affirmation, a compliment or however you might want to anoint the person would be a good thing to do. So often, we miss our brief opportunities to demonstrate kindness, appreciation and love.

This is appropriate at all levels of life. We are never too big, too great or too important to say thank you or offer kind words to others.

Jesus was all powerful. He was God in the flesh. He could do anything. But what did he do? He laid aside his outer garment, girded himself with a towel and washed the feet of his disciples. Our Lord of all was a servant of all even unto his death on the cross.

We live in a world of ill words, deeds, rudeness and evil. It's all around us. The worst thing we can do is to be-

come like those who act this way. It's not always easy to rise above. If I had been Jesus, I'm sure I would have commanded the ground to open up and for the fires of hell to have consumed the mob that put me on the cross. That's why he was able to do what he did for us. He was without sin but bore our sins on the cross.

If we can, let's do what we can, while we can. Just one life, will not forever last, our opportunities soon will pass.

Pope Francis surely knew his time was close at hand and wanted to use his time doing what he felt God had appointed him to do.

*Find books by Glenn Mollette at Amazon.com. Learn more about his books, columns and music at GlennMollette.com. Email gmollette@aol.com.*