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KATHRYN B. BROWN

Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER

Managing Editor

JENNINE PERKINSON

Advertising Director

TIM TRAINOR

Opinion Page Editor

OUR VIEW

Two truths and a lie

TOPIC: Iran nuclear deal

By now, you’ve read a lot about the nuclear deal signed with Iran. From the television talking heads, you’ve probably heard that this deal is either going to save the world from nuclear war, or drive it straight to the brink of apocalypse.

But there is room for some restraint from those radical views, and surveying the nuts and bolts of this agreement without the political baggage can be helpful.

Unfortunately, in the never-ending mission to cover all of Pendleton’s around-the-clock statue news, we were unable to send a correspondent to Switzerland to witness the negotiations. But since those negotiations have concluded, we have spent a lot of time digging through reliable news sources. And with an even head on our shoulders, we hope to separate the dirt from the treasure — or separate political hyperbole from the real threats to global security.

Let’s discuss what went down and how this deal affects the world.

TRUTH: The United States and Iran have been enemies for decades.

Back in 2002, President George W. Bush grouped Iran into the “Axis of Evil,” a group of three countries that were supporting terror and spreading panic across the globe.

That might not have been the most diplomatic overture, but there were plenty of reasons why Iran made the notorious list. The two countries have long been on opposite sides of Middle East skirmishes.

The CIA helped depose Iran’s democratically elected head of state in the 1950s. Two decades later, Iranian radicals overthrew the U.S.-backed government and stormed the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979, taking dozens of Americans hostage and humiliating America in the process. In the years since, Iran has supported Hezbollah, Shiite militias across the Middle East and North Africa, and financed and orchestrated acts of terror perpetrated on Americans from the early 1980s to the present day, including 9/11. In return, the United States backed Iraq in the Iran/Iraq War in the 1980s and has led debilitating economic sanctions on the country for decades, isolating it from the rest of the international community.

Through it all, some Iranians and political leaders have been chanting “Death to America and Death to Israel.” But we have been doing the same. On the campaign trail, John McCain led a rousing sing-along of “Bomb Iran,” set to the tune of the Beach Boys’ “Barbara Ann.” Hawks have long supported a military invasion of the country, and our actions in neighboring Iraq — a fellow member of Bush’s Axis of Evil — lends credence to that threat.

TRUTH: The agreement reduces Iran’s current stockpile of nuclear fuel, and attempts to place limits on the country’s future nuclear program.

“Attempts” is the key word above.

If Iran follows the letter of the law, most everyone would agree this was a good deal. But the question remains: Can we trust them to do so?

According to *The Economist*, the letter of the law is this: Iran agrees to reduce enrichment centrifuges from 19,000 to 6,000, and not to use advanced centrifuge models for at least 10 years. Future centrifuge designs must first be submitted to the International Atomic Energy Agency. Iran’s most secret enrichment facility (buried deep with in a mountain and thought to be safe from conventional air strikes) will cease all nuclear work for at least 15 years. A separate, heavy-water reactor will be retired, and its nuclear capabilities removed and destroyed. The country also agreed to reduce its stockpile of uranium and allow the IAEA to inspect any facility deemed “suspicious.”

That all sounds great, right?

Leave it to *The Economist* to add some rain on the parade.

“All these undertakings hinge on the assurance that Iran will abide by them,” wrote the magazine. “Without a uniquely intrusive inspection and verification regime, skeptics would still be right to question their worth given Iran’s past history of lying and cheating over its nuclear program.”

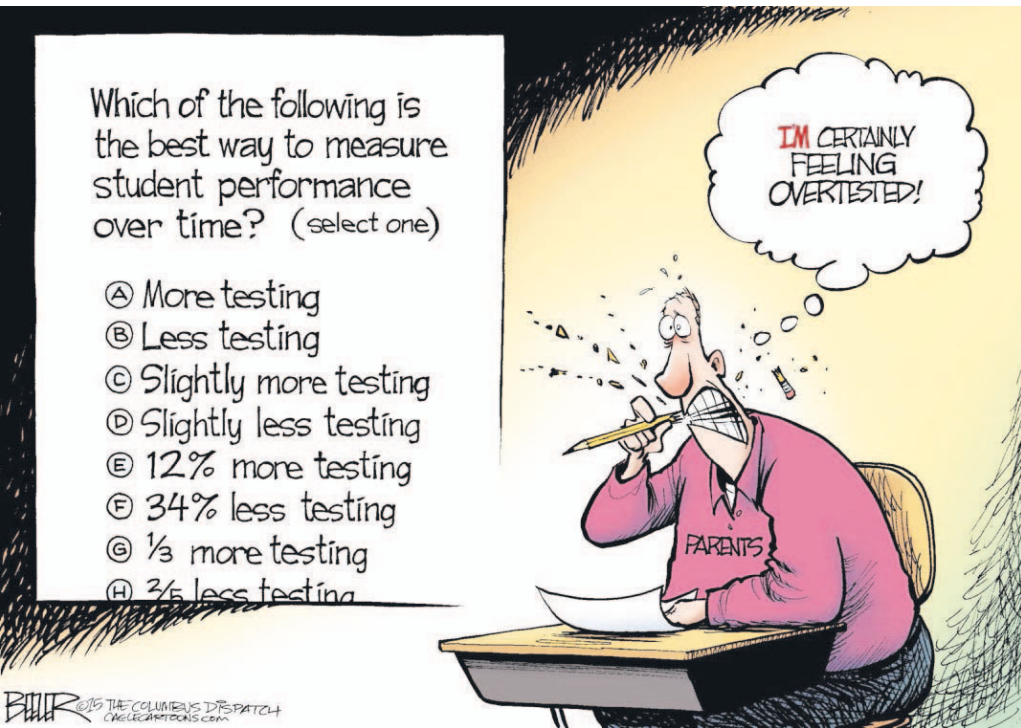
LIE: It’s a deal.

Actually, what was signed March 31 was merely the framework for a future deal.

And although the details above are more specific than many observers thought they would be, there is plenty that still needs to be worked out. And there remains the possibility that political pressures in either the U.S. or Iran could scuttle the deal completely.

That formal deal — at an even higher level of detail — needs to be signed by a self-imposed deadline of July 1. If not, it’s back to the drawing board and the process begins again.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.



OTHER VIEWS

McDonald’s turns ‘progressive’

You could almost feel sorry for McDonald’s. That’s an odd sentiment when you consider that the company’s revenues in 2014 were \$27.4 billion and its stock price makes it worth something like \$92 billion. It’s among the world’s most valuable brands and has three times the U.S. market share of Subway, its nearest competitor.

Enviably. Yet for years its new products, business ventures, even social media attempts have gone wrong: It sold a 90 percent share in Chipotle, now one of its strongest competitors; it introduced products like chicken wings, which went nowhere; it created a Twitter hashtag, #McDStories, that turned into a bashing event. And it has spectacularly failed to attract or even hold on to millennial customers, who’ve fled in droves.

Meanwhile, it’s the most visible target of an alliance of workers fighting for \$15 an hour (most McDonald’s workers make slightly more than the federal minimum wage, \$7.25, but it varies by state), and its food is seen as anything but sustainable, fresh or healthy. A result has been a decline that includes a whopping 15 percent drop in its U.S. operating income in the last quarter of 2014.

The company is losing customers to higher-end burger chains like Shake Shack and Five Guys, to small but intriguing startups that makes locally sourced, slow food appealing, like Dig Inn, to Chick-fil-A (around \$5 billion in sales in 2013) and, of course, to Chipotle, which has sales in the \$4 billion range.

McDonald’s can’t get a break. In the last two months, the company has made several well-publicized big announcements that were widely greeted with yawns or jeers.

The first was a decision to phase out chickens raised using antibiotics meant to treat humans. The second was to unilaterally raise the salaries of those minimum-wage workers the company directly employs by at least a dollar an hour, granting a small amount of paid vacation time to company employees and financial assistance for education to all workers in its system. And the third was to begin referring to itself as a “modern, progressive burger company.”

Is it too little, too late? Recall Polaroid trying to manage digital photography or BlackBerry struggling to recover after being devastated by the iPhone. Once again, an entrenched company has sat back while nimbler, more with-it others ate its lunch. Many of the new fast-food chains are paying workers better, sourcing sustainable ingredients, creating different forms of fast food and even making better burgers. Now McDonald’s is trying to play catch-up.

MARK BITTMAN

Comment

But it’s using half measures, and that’s the problem. It’s not like the competition is going to go away, and the brand may be permanently tarnished. Fixing that isn’t going to be easy, and it’s not even clear whether it’s possible.

What McDonald’s should do is go all in and really transform itself, because the effect of positive change would be immeasurable. Instead it tries to play it both ways, controlling what franchisees buy and sell but insisting that it cannot dictate how they treat employees.

Thus the wage increase touches only around 11 percent of the chain’s workers, and workers immediately decried it as inadequate. (Even Wal-Mart did better.) No one turns down a raise, but this one virtually guarantees that most

Is it too little, too late?
Recall Polaroid trying to manage digital photography or BlackBerry struggling to recover after being devastated by the iPhone.

of the company’s workers will remain eligible for food stamps, thus perpetuating the public subsidy for McDonald’s labor force.

That the nonantibiotic move has taken this long (Chipotle has tried to be antibiotic-free for more than a decade, as has Panera) and is so incomplete — that is, there’s no word about pork or beef, and the move is being phased in — also seems pathetic. (Even more pathetic is the refusal of the Food and Drug Administration to mandate the removal of nonmedicinal antibiotics from animal production, but that’s another story.)

These moves demonstrate that McDonald’s is hardly a “progressive” company but one that is merely trying in a halfhearted way to catch up with changing market norms and to anticipate inevitable regulation.

If McDonald’s were truly progressive, what would it do? It might revamp the menu in favor of sustainably sourced and fresher food (it’s worth noting that in Britain, McDonald’s uses free-range eggs and organic milk), and might increase its workers’ wages (and hours) to something approaching a living wage.

It may be that the biggest beneficiary of McDonald’s recent moves is the food movement, which, smelling blood, continues to apply pressure. (In response to the raise, some demonstrating workers chanted: “Hey McDonald’s, let’s be blunt/This is just a PR stunt.”) And that movement continues to gain credibility as it attends more to the rights of humans than those of animals — not that animals don’t matter, but it’s all relative.

It’s great that McDonald’s blinked. I’d love to see it become a truly progressive company — I’d even help them if I could — but if that’s not in the cards, it would be fine to see a continuing decline in its business. Either would be a satisfactory ending to the McDonald’s story.

Mark Bittman writes (mostly) about food for the New York Times Opinion page.

YOUR VIEWS

Irrigon players, coach deserve praise for hard work

Thanks, *East Oregonian*, for the “Distinguished Knights, Irrigon seniors leave legacy of hard work,” article April 4-5. Anthony and Adrian deserved the honor of Co-Players of the Year. However, they never pursued individual honors or personal accolades. The rest of the story of these amazing young men was left out of the article and if Eastern Oregon wants to capture the formula for the legacy these men established you must begin with their parents.

They set the right example at home. These boys were gentlemen. They didn’t party or do drugs. They treated girls, classmates, opponents, coaches and administrators with respect. They played basketball the way they lived their lives when nobody was watching them. Credit their parents for instilling the integrity these young men expressed on the basketball court, but in and of itself that does not explain their legacy.

The secret of winning programs is to have the best coaches at the pre-high school level. The Hermiston girls basketball program is an excellent case in point.

These Irrigon boys were blessed with exceptional pre-high school coaching beginning with Andrew Tempy and friends. Vern Gumbert continued excellent junior high basketball coaching. Community mentor Bob Byrd continually took players and coaches under his huge wing. Not to be excluded are the wonderful fans in Irrigon that fought to regain their school and with it their community pride.

According to the article, Anthony Landeros was a “raw athlete” when he entered high school and Adrian Romero was a “one trick pony.” These boys played in tournaments in Portland and the Tri-Cities and a summer league in Walla Walla before they entered high school. Gene Heliker volunteered his time and expertise to nurture and teach these boys. The result: These “raw athletes” and “one trick ponies” were beating varsity basketball teams, including a state

tournament Weston-McEwen team, before they entered high school.

Certainly Jake McElligott and Mitch Thompson deserved the Oregon Coach of the Year awards; however, the *EO* article hardly included Mitch Thompson and that is disappointing because no other coach could have accomplished what this young man accomplished in his first year as a head coach. The 2A competition was stronger this year than the previous two years and the expectations were higher for Mitch Thompson than any other coach in 2A boys basketball. The Irrigon community is blessed to have wonderful parents, fans and Mitch Thompson as their coach.

Stuart Dick
Irrigon

U.S. Postal Service works, but needs legislative support

Dear Postal Service satisfaction survey people:

In a way, this survey is an insult to the employees of the offices I most often visit. Where are the questions about how satisfied postal patrons are with the way reactionary anti-government whack-jobs have hacked the budget of the Postal Service to zero over the last 30 years?

Keep the rural offices and sorting centers open. Deliver on Saturday everywhere again.

Quit cutting staff. The post office people themselves are wonderful, are doing a great job. Quit trying to run the Postal Service like a business, and concentrate on efficient, reliable and predictable delivery.

People in rural areas very much appreciate reliable postal service, and some of the “innovations” that have made the post office better over the years include Priority Mail, boxes, packages and cards for sale in the offices. I do not at all mind paying rent for a large box, because I can pick up mail and packages in the evening and on Sundays when the offices are closed.

All in all, USPS is doing an excellent job. I think stamps and all other services are reasonably priced, and the service is good. You just need to quit closing offices and sorting centers, laying off or downsizing staff, and generally allowing the idiots in Congress to strangle essential services like the USPS.

I am a small business owner, and although I use other shipping services, the USPS is absolutely critical for my livelihood and that of many of my customers and family. Please don’t let tea party idiots and their ilk destroy a great institution and the jobs of hundreds of thousands of dedicated and long-suffering people because they are too short-sighted to appreciate the importance of it.

Pat Struthers
Pendleton