

# Opinion

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## EDITORIAL

# America's role in the Mideast

America's current conflict with Iran thus far has been, on balance, positive for the U.S.

Iran's top general, Qassem Soleimani, who is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Americans in neighboring Iraq since the U.S. invasion in 2003, is dead.

Iran retaliated by firing 16 missiles at bases in Iraq, depleting its arsenal but failing to hurt anyone (four of the missiles didn't detonate, U.S. military officials said).

Whether the situation remains beneficial for our country depends on myriad factors, not least President Donald Trump.

Critics have chastised the president for threatening to bomb cultural sites in Iran, an ill-considered statement but one which he made clear, with subsequent comments, that he doesn't intend to pursue.

Nor did Trump respond militarily to Iran's missile attack.

This suggests that one of Trump's vows as a candidate — to stop U.S. involvement in what he described as "endless wars" and to extricate U.S. troops from the Middle East — remains a goal.

It should be.

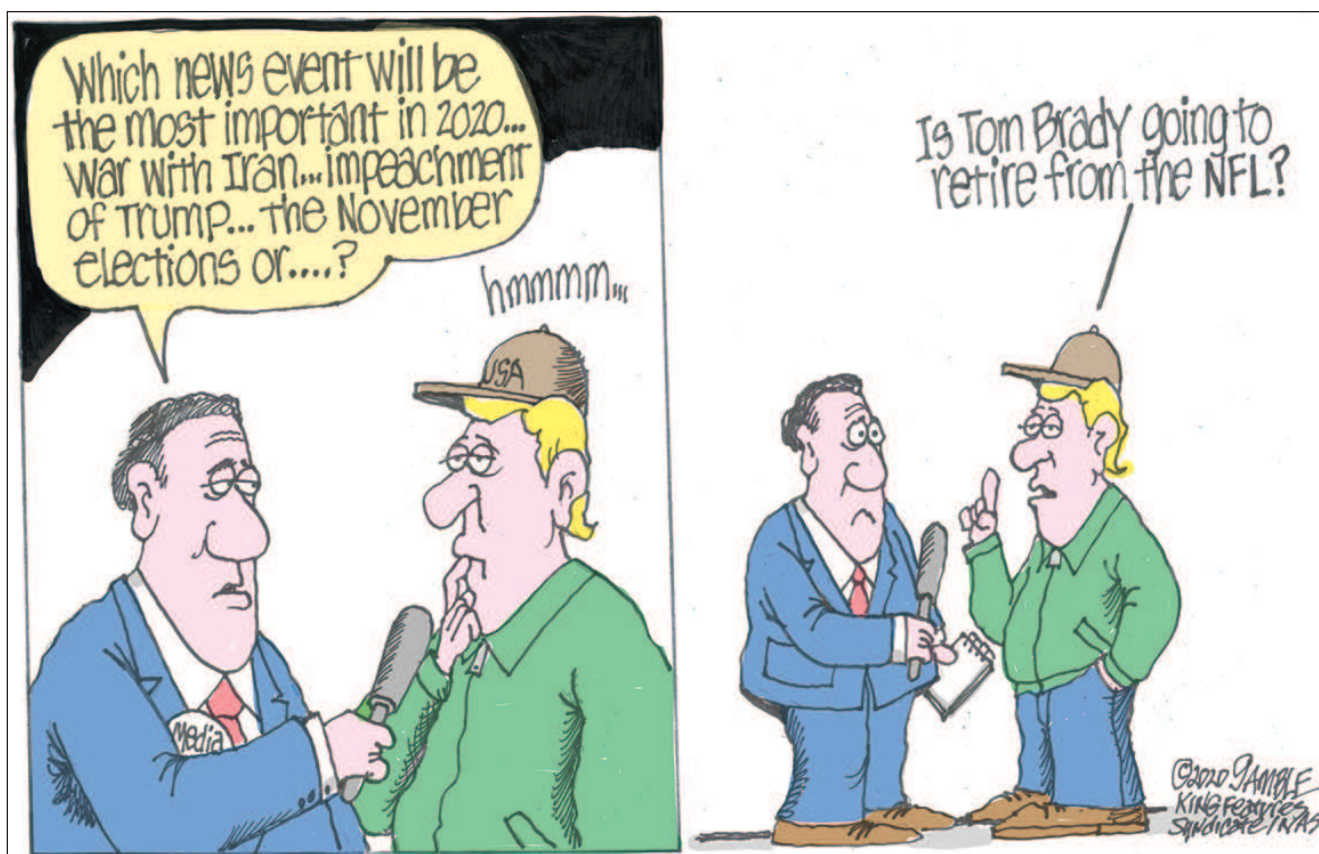
Indeed, the squabble with Iran could turn out to be especially valuable if it's the springboard to the U.S. removing the approximately 5,000 troops in Iraq.

For all the criticism heaped upon Trump for employing a scattershot foreign policy, what matters more for America is not whether the president has an itchy Twitter finger.

His job is to make decisions, and in situations as fraught with trouble as the Middle East, that can mean balancing decisive, violent action, such as ordering the killing of Soleimani, with restraint in the face of potential provocation, as Trump displayed in not responding to the missile bombardment.

Trump's proclivity for bellicose bluster is unfortunate — he would be better served with statements such as this one from a Wednesday speech — "The United States is ready to embrace peace with all who seek it." But the contention, as The Associated Press made in an analysis this week, that "one misplaced tweet or off-handed comment at a political rally could shatter the fragile peace," seems a trifle hysterical in light of the actual decisions the president has made over the past week.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



## Your views

### Teenager inspires nation to show that it's united

There is a 14-year-old young American man who is getting this nation to wake up. His name is Charlie Hecht and he is on a mission to get all Americans nationwide to buy an American flag and fly it with its blessings on their front porch. There is much evil in the world and it is a spiritual war. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood

but against chief rules, against authority in high places, against the rulers of the darkness of the world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12). In other words, we are in the time of all Christians to unite in spirit and get ready to fight Satan's one world government and Satan himself. He will control the four dynasties of the world. What are the four dynasties? Politics, econom-

ics, education and last but not least, religion.

America, listen up, united we stand, divided we fall. Thank you, Charlie Hecht, for standing united. Fly your flag and show the world that this Christian nation stands united, with the one true God of everything.

Good job, young man!

**Gary Robinson**  
Baker City

## OTHER VIEWS

### Editorial from The Chicago Tribune:

After the United States killed Iranian Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, and Iran responded by launching missiles at U.S. military bases in Iraq, what would President Donald Trump do? We were as unsettled as anyone at the prospect of Trump exacerbating dangers by letting his ego and emotions rule.

That didn't happen — at least not immediately. In a televised address Wednesday the president sensibly signaled that the current military confrontation could be over.

Trump sounded tough on Iran over its nuclear ambitions, but he replaced, or at least supplemented, threats of further U.S. military action with something we rarely hear from him: the steadying language of diplomacy. Trump said Iran appeared to be standing down, that he didn't want to order the U.S. back into battle and that he wanted Europe's help, and NATO's participation, in an effort to draw Iran back into negotiations over its nuke and ballistic missile programs. Trump said he wants a deal "that allows Iran to thrive and prosper and take advantage of its enormous untapped potential."

Those would be prudent moves by any U.S. president who has the world's most powerful armed forces at his disposal but is focused on giving an adversary the

opportunity to de-escalate. "We do not want to use it," Trump said of America's military might. "American strength, both military and economic, is the best deterrent."

In fact, the language of Trump's TV address would have sounded familiar; boilerplate even, if uttered by a conventional president. That's not Trump. He routinely insults his political foes and once threatened North Korea with "fire and fury," taunting Kim Jong Un by calling him "Little Rocket Man." Trump's political recklessness got him impeached. We'll hand out no extra credit points to Trump for behaving responsibly at a moment of international crisis — one he created by ordering a drone attack on Soleimani.

Instead, the focus turns to the viability of Trump's strategy for reining in Iran. He took out Soleimani, commander of the Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force, because he was the architect of Iran's asymmetrical mayhem. In response, Iran launched missiles at two Iraqi bases that house American troops, causing no casualties. That was followed by an Iranian announcement that its retaliation had "concluded." U.S. forces had acted quickly to keep their personnel out of harm's way. They also were lucky every missile apparently landed with a thud.

This provides Trump with a window of opportunity to rally U.S. allies to his side

in order to restart the difficult process of negotiating a broader international nuclear deal with Iran. That deal also should address Iran's support for terrorist groups and its ballistic missile program.

Trump would put himself in a much stronger position if he could coax the United Kingdom, Germany and France to join him. They recently signaled an interest, given recent Iranian attacks in the Persian Gulf. They also were put off by the killing of Soleimani. Maybe European leaders heard enough from Trump on Wednesday to further engage. In his speech, the president made a pitch for international cooperation, including seeking NATO involvement. That could help lower tensions in Iraq, where Shiite politicians want to evict America's military.

The long-running standoff with Iran is by no means over. Trump kicked up some new dirt by declaring Iran would never be allowed to have a nuclear weapon on his watch; he doesn't want to tolerate yet another North Korea. Trump also promised to impose additional economic sanctions on Iran. If the mullahs in Tehran feel backed into a corner, they could lash out. If Trump feels emboldened, or sees a potential political advantage at home, he could ratchet up tensions again.

This president is not temperamentally suited for the delicate art of diplomacy. On Wednesday, though, he delivered.

# A galaxy far, far away that was always around

For me it all started what seems a long time ago, in a town quite a ways from Baker City.

Forty-two years and 328 miles, to be rather more precise on what might be the most famous pair of general measurements in the history of American cinema.

On Christmas night I was sitting in a comfortable chair at the Eltrym, wiping the remnants of the popcorn "butter" from my fingers as I watched the end credits for the last of nine episodes in the "Star Wars" film saga, "The Rise of Skywalker."

As I gathered up my napkins and plucked my cup from its holder I was more than slightly surprised at how powerful the nostalgia was that pressed round my midsection, in the manner of an emotional embrace.

I have never been anything but a casual fan of George Lucas' outer space franchise.

I have watched each film, some of them multiple times, and enjoyed them all.

I can tell a TIE-fighter from an X-wing, and I recognize the silhouette



**JAYSON JACOBY**

of the Millennium Falcon.

But I don't own a single piece of "Star Wars" merchandise.

My cellphone ringtone is not John Williams' rousing theme to the series, what surely must be among the more recognizable pieces of music from the past half century.

And I can't speak with authority about the lineage of the Sith.

But despite my decidedly lukewarm affinity for this series of films, I couldn't, as I sat there in the warmth and the dark, deny the sense that I had just completed a historic journey.

That I was so affected has much to do, I think, with my age.

I was born in 1970 and was 6 when the original "Star Wars" came out in May 1977. I was just old enough, four months shy of my seventh birthday, that my parents would let me watch a PG-rated

movie that included a fair amount of violence (albeit of the bloodless variety inflicted by blasters and light sabers) and the indubitably frightening character of Darth Vader.

(Although I suppose my folks couldn't have known anything about Vader at that point, since he had obviously not yet achieved legendary villain status.)

I vividly remember standing in line on the sidewalk beside North Third Avenue in Stayton, the town near Salem where I grew up, as it crept along toward the marquee for the Star Theater.

This is among the clearer memories I have of that period.

A child of 6 is rather an impressionable creature, of course, and ever since that day "Star Wars" has been a part of my life.

Not a significant part, to be sure — as I said, my fandom lies far from the fanatical end of the spectrum.

Yet the ubiquity of the franchise is such that I could no more banish it from my subconscious than I could ignore the reality that I also

grew up during the era of Ronald Reagan and MTV and Michael Jordan, to cite just three of dozens of cultural icons that also populate my childhood and that remain prominent for me all these years later.

I not only grew up with "Star Wars," to briefly indulge in cloying cliché, but this cultural touchstone, unlike so many others from its era, has stayed on — albeit with intervals as long as 16 years (between "The Return of the Jedi" from 1983, the last of the original trilogy though the middle three films in this fictional chronology, and the feverishly anticipated return with "The Phantom Menace" in 1999).

I can't offhand think of any comparable phenomenon in my lifetime that's as pervasive and as persistent as "Star Wars."

I have had the pleasure of watching new "Star Wars" films with my children, the films thus forming a sort of connective tissue to a period that at most other times seems to me impossibly distant and all but impossible to comprehend.

There is something comforting to me about the continuing relevance

of "Star Wars."

At times the modern world can seem as different from 1977 as, say, a cellphone is different from an LP record, to name just one item that was ubiquitous then but is rarely seen today.

The world rolls on and the inevitability of its movement sometimes leaves me a trifle unsteady on my feet. It's as though I were being pulled in opposite directions, that some small part of my essence remains back in the era of disco and Jimmy Carter and stagflation.

Nostalgia can be unsettling, is the thing.

But it can also be gratifying, and reassuring in its reality.

As I sat there in the Eltrym, as I watched Chewbacca lumber and listened to C-3PO's haughty accent and R2-D2's beeps and buzzes, it seemed that not so much had changed after all, and for a few moments I remembered a small boy standing on a sidewalk, a boy who knew nothing of what was to come.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.