

**THE WEEK THAT WAS: HISTORIC CAPITULATION TO IRAN;
LESSONS FROM THE GREEK CRISIS & OSKAR GRÖNING
CONVICTED**

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Isranet Daily Briefing, July 17, 2015

<https://www.isranet.org/daily-briefing/week-was-historic-capitulation-iran-lessons-greek-crisis-oskar-groning-convicted/>

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[Worse Than We Could Have Imagined](#): Charles Krauthammer, *Washington Post*, July 16, 2015 — When you write a column, as did I two weeks ago, headlined “The worst agreement in U.S. diplomatic history,” you don’t expect to revisit the issue.

[The Four Horsemen of a Looming Apocalypse](#): Victor Davis Hanson, *National Review*, July 14, 2015 — The U.S. and its allies are faced with four major threats, and they are as diverse and yet as akin as the proverbial apocalyptic horsemen.

[What Israel Should Learn From the Greek Crisis](#): Manfred Gerstenfeld, *CIJR*, July 15, 2015— The current Greek financial and social crisis is not only the result of poor management of many successive Greek governments.

[The Right Outcome for an Auschwitz Guard](#): Gene Klein, *Wall Street Journal*, July 15, 2015 — Oskar Gröning, a former SS soldier known as “the bookkeeper of Auschwitz,” was convicted on Wednesday in a German court on 300,000 counts of accessory to murder.

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WORSE THAN WE COULD HAVE IMAGINED

Charles Krauthammer

[*Washington Post*](#), July 16, 2015

When you write a column, as did I two weeks ago, headlined “The worst agreement in U.S. diplomatic history,” you don’t expect to revisit the issue. We had hit bottom. Or so I thought. Then on Tuesday the final terms of the Iranian nuclear deal were published. I was wrong. Who would have imagined we would be giving up the conventional arms and ballistic missile embargoes on Iran? In nuclear negotiations?

When asked Wednesday at his news conference why there is nothing in the deal about the American hostages being held by Iran, President Obama explained that this is a separate issue, not part of nuclear talks. Are conventional weapons not a separate issue? After all, conventional, by definition, means non-nuclear. Why are we giving up the embargoes?

Because Iran, joined by Russia — our “reset” partner — sprung the demand at the last minute, calculating that Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry were so desperate for a deal that they would cave. They did. And have convinced themselves that they scored a victory by delaying the lifting by five to eight years. (Ostensibly. The language is murky. The interval could be considerably shorter.) Obama claimed in his news conference that it really doesn’t matter, because we can always intercept Iranian arms shipments to, say, Hezbollah.

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But wait. Obama has insisted throughout that we are pursuing this Iranian diplomacy to avoid the use of force, yet now blithely discards a previous diplomatic achievement — the arms embargo — by suggesting, no matter, we can just shoot our way to interdiction. Moreover, the most serious issue is not Iranian exports but Iranian imports — of sophisticated Russian and Chinese weapons. These are untouchable. We are not going to attack Russian and Chinese transports.

The net effect of this capitulation will be not only to endanger our Middle East allies now under threat from Iran and its proxies, but also to endanger our own naval forces in the Persian Gulf. Imagine how Iran's acquisition of the most advanced anti-ship missiles would threaten our control over the gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, waterways we have kept open for international commerce for a half-century.

The other major shock in the final deal is what happened to our insistence on "anytime, anywhere" inspections. Under the final agreement, Iran has the right to deny international inspectors access to any undeclared nuclear site. The denial is then adjudicated by a committee — on which Iran sits. It then goes through several other bodies, on all of which Iran sits. Even if the inspectors' request prevails, the approval process can take 24 days. And what do you think will be left to be found, left unscrubbed, after 24 days? The whole process is farcical.

The action now shifts to Congress. The debate is being hailed as momentous. It is not. It's irrelevant. Congress won't get to vote on the deal until September. But Obama is taking the agreement to the U.N. Security Council for approval within days . Approval there will cancel all previous U.N. resolutions outlawing and sanctioning Iran's nuclear activities. Meaning: Whatever Congress ultimately does, it won't matter because the legal underpinning for the entire international sanctions regime against Iran will have been dismantled at the Security Council. Ten years of painstakingly constructed international sanctions will vanish overnight, irretrievably. Even if Congress rejects the agreement, do you think the Europeans, the Chinese or the Russians will reinstate sanctions? The result: The

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United States is left isolated while the rest of the world does thriving business with Iran.

Should Congress then give up? No. Congress needs to act in order to rob this deal of, at least, its domestic legitimacy. Rejection will make little difference on the ground. But it will make it easier for a successor president to legitimately reconsider an executive agreement (Obama dare not call it a treaty — it would be instantly rejected by the Senate) that garnered such pathetically little backing in either house of Congress. It's a future hope, but amid dire circumstances. By then, Iran will be flush with cash, legitimized as a normal international actor in good standing, recognized (as Obama once said) as "a very successful regional power." Stopping Iran from going nuclear at that point will be infinitely more difficult and risky. Which is Obama's triumph. He has locked in his folly. He has laid down his legacy, and we will have to live with the consequences for decades.

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THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF A LOOMING APOCALYPSE

Victor Davis Hanson

[National Review](#), July 14, 2015

The U.S. and its allies are faced with four major threats, and they are as diverse and yet as akin as the proverbial apocalyptic horsemen. Vladimir Putin has a tsarist idea that he can reclaim insidiously the periphery of the old Soviet Union — Georgia, Crimea, Ukraine, the Baltic states — on the principle of protecting Russian-speaking minorities in these breakaway republics. More practically, he feels that any security guarantees extended by the West to these entities are about as valid as an Obama red line or a Greek assurance of financial reform.

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By Western criteria, Putin's Russia is broke. It is shrinking and dysfunctional. But by Putin's own metrics, his people are energized by Russia's new defiance of the West. And if Russia is increasingly autocratic, and bifurcated into a small elite and an impoverished mass, that is nothing new, but simply the way things have always been in Russia, whether tsarist or Communist. Putin seems to assume that, if he can succeed in reestablishing the 19th-century Russian empire and bullying Eastern Europe into becoming once again a neutral buffer between Russia and the West, then he will go down in history as another Peter the Great or Joseph Stalin.

In one of the great diplomatic blunders of our time, the Obama administration thought it could win over a supposedly misunderstood Putin by rhetorically distancing itself from the Bush administration. But blaming Bush for Putin's own agenda, which transcends the Middle East, only empowered Russia. The Obama administration's bombing Libya and, in empty fashion, threatening Syria alienated Putin even more. Obama's false step-over, red, and deadlines confirmed Putin's impressions of the continued weak leadership of Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and John Kerry. He probably believes that he can do to Estonia what he has done to Crimea or Ukraine — and without too many more consequences...

If Putin's Russia is a 19th-century power that does not see economic robustness as necessary for the reacquisition of empire, China feels that it is far more globalized, rich, and integral to the world economy and thus even less likely to be on the receiving end of U.S. sanctions or even censure. China, unlike Putin's Russia, wants to acquire new dependencies, not just reclaim former ones. Picking a fight with the U.S. over the Pacific, or hacking U.S bureaucracies and corporations, is much safer than haggling with India or Russia over contested borders.

China assumes that its growing military capabilities, its new sand-castle bases in the critical sea-lanes of the South China Sea, and its intrusions into the territorial waters and airspace of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines are slowly redrawing the Pacific map. The countries being bullied really have only three

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choices: to reach agreements with China that acknowledge its preeminence, to seek new assurances from the U.S. that they still remain under our nuclear umbrella, or to become nuclear powers themselves...

When China and Russia look at U.S. efforts to negotiate with Iran, or to deal with the Middle East, or to confront radical Islam, they see a confused administration whose one constant is either embarrassment over or ambiguity about America's long post-war role of global preeminence. China, then, believes there is little chance that the United States will line up its Pacific allies, reassure them of our support in extremis, and configure a joint Pacific military front, much less that the U.S. will triangulate with Russia and India to assure a balance of power that would remind China that it is already surrounded by nuclear Russia, India, Pakistan, North Korea, and soon-to-be-nuclear Iran, and that a nuclear Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan could be added to that lineup in the not too distant future.

Iran is the third horseman, and one both similar to, and also altogether different from, China and Russia in a number of ways. Like China and Russia, Iran sees its present ambitions as consistent with a restoration of its glorious past. The Achaemenids are seen as every bit as illustrious as were the tsars or the Chinese dynasts. Iran is also an autocracy that does what it pleases at home. And, finally, Iran is obsessed with energy, as are Russia and China, as both a political weapon and a means to fuel military rearmament. But Iran in the short term, even though the weakest of these three anti-American autocracies, is also the most dangerous.

It will be a nuclear power quite soon, but it has no experience, as China and Russia both do, in the accustomed behavior of nuclear states. And also unlike both, it is a self-proclaimed revolutionary theocracy, with periodic fits of end-of-days rhetoric. Whether these are genuine expressions of a looming twelfth-imam apocalypse or simply feigned bouts of lunacy that are useful strategies in nuclear poker, no one quite can be sure. If China has evolved somewhat in its obsession over Taiwan, Iran has not matured in its fixation on Israel, which, unlike Taiwan, is itself already nuclear.

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Iran also is actively subverting nearby states such as Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen, in the hopes of crafting some sort of Shiite regional hegemony. Petrodollars, the bomb, and terrorists are scary assets, and Iran believes that it will soon complete that triad, and be free at last to recreate its Middle East empire without much interference from the United States.

ISIS, the fourth horseman, is the weakest of our current threats, but ironically the one with the greatest likelihood of conducting a major attack, albeit terrorist and asymmetric, against Europe or the United States or both. In creepy fashion, its barbarity — from immolations and beheadings to crucifixions and drownings — gains it world attention, and appeals to listless, video-game-playing Middle Eastern expatriate youth bored in the West. Its diplomacy is paradoxical as well. ISIS fights against enemies of the West like Bashar Assad's Syria, Hezbollah, and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, and against erstwhile Western allies like the Kurds, Jordan, Egypt, and the Gulf States. Hitting ISIS would empower Syria and Iran; not hitting ISIS weakens our moderate Sunni former friends.

ISIS is not, as Osama bin Laden was, headquartered in caves in the outback of Afghanistan. It already has burrowed into many cities of the old Syrian-Iraqi Middle East and has a fighting chance of taking Baghdad or Damascus or both. After the Obama red line to Syria and the abrupt pullout of all U.S. peacekeepers from Iraq in 2011, ISIS has had little, if any, fear of the U.S. and none at all of our allies — to the extent that we have any allies left in the Middle East. A different administration might have destroyed any and all ISIS vehicles and hardware with round-the-clock bombing, supplied the Kurds with plentiful arms, and sent in U.S. ground forces to organize a regional resistance force...

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WHAT ISRAEL SHOULD LEARN FROM THE GREEK CRISIS

Manfred Gerstenfeld

[CIJR](#), July 15, 2015

The current Greek financial and social crisis is not only the result of poor management of many successive Greek governments. A huge contribution to this calamity has also been made by various decisions of the European Union. Like many major political upheavals around the world, this one as well has important lessons for Israel. The importance of the Greek crisis does not lie in whether or not it has an immediate impact on the Israeli reality, but rather what Israel can learn from it.

In Europe, most of the attention on the Greek crisis is placed on its financial aspects. Questions frequently heard are, “Will Greece have to leave the Euro?”, “What will be the financial impacts on the Euro”, and “How will it affect possible other aspects of the European Union?” The most recent agreement doesn’t change much of Greece’s structural problems. This strong focus on financial issues is one-sided and short sighted. There are political aspects to this crisis which, in the long run, may become far more important. One only has to remember that at the Yalta conference of 1945, Stalin and Churchill discussed their spheres of interest in post-war Europe. Stalin agreed to British demands that while the Balkan countries would be in the Soviet Union’s control, Greece would almost entirely be in that of Great Britain.

Chaos in Greece may have a tremendous political fallout. Increased Russian influence within the country could have a substantial nuisance value for the West. Chinese influence, admittedly less probable, might be even worse. For NATO, Greece is very important, and for many reasons. There is a major NATO naval base in Crete at Souda Bay, for example. Greece has not always been a friendly partner. In the 1980s then Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou stated that his foreign policy goal was his refusal to be a “client state of the West.”

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A foreign observer recently asked me whether it was conceivable that Greek terrorists would carry out attacks against the EU, whether in Brussels or elsewhere. I was initially taken aback by the question, but after giving it some thought, I answered that although highly unlikely, it was not totally inconceivable. The particularly dangerous Marxist-Leninist November 17 terrorist group for instance made 23 victims including Greeks as well as American, British, and Turkish diplomats during its activities from 1975-2002.

I recalled the years when I worked in Greece at the end of the 1990s. I was then a strategic advisor to the president of one of the country's largest corporations which were not under state control. As he frequently had time constraints, I accompanied him from time to time to the airport. We could thus have a quiet conversation in the car, a prestigious model of one of the luxury Italian car makers. I doubted whether there was any similar car in Athens. An armed bodyguard on a motorcycle rode ahead of us. After we reached the airport, I would return to the company's office in the same car. The bodyguard had no intention of accompanying me back to the office-he had been hired to guard the president and nobody else. During those rides, I would often muse that potential terrorists could not know that the person in the highly visible vehicle was not the company's president but just me. It was an uncomfortable feeling, but part of my Greek reality at the time.

There are more practical considerations regarding the current Greek crisis. Israeli exports to the EU will be affected by a further decline in the Euro. There would be significant consequences, as the EU is Israel's largest market abroad. There are also other far reaching considerations which have less to do with Greece's internal problems and more with how the EU deals with such issues. From my frequent visits to Greece, fifteen or more years ago, it was clear to me that there were huge economic problems, including an overgrown and often incompetent bureaucracy. Its ranks were filled with supporters of the two parties which alternated in having political power: the socialist Pasok and the liberal New Democrats. As a foreigner I could not understand the details of the substantial corruption, but I could sense its impact.

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Greece joined the EU in 1981. Over the years, the Brussels Eurocrats must have understood the country's problems in far greater detail than an outsider like myself. They should have known that Greece was not a suitable candidate to join the Eurozone under any circumstances, and yet it happened in 2001. Had Greece kept the drachme as its currency, its structural problems would have gradually come to the surface over the years, but they would not have led to such a major calamity as is currently the case.

Letting Greece join was a sign of EU incompetence and of its irresponsibility. When the Greek crisis broke out, the EU focused mainly on the financial side of the problem, as if it was not accompanied by a social one. If the EU would have correctly analyzed the situation, they would have gradually eased Greece out of the Euro. The Eurozone members who lent money to keep Greece afloat were aware that the chances of being fully paid back were close to nothing. They knowingly fooled their own citizens, however, by claiming that there would be a return on their investment.

The Greek problem will not disappear easily. It is but one of a variety of huge strategic mistakes the EU has made. The creation of the Euro in a non-uniform economic system took away the major safety valve of devaluation from the weaker countries. Such a setup was only fine for countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, who had maintained a de facto fixed exchange rate between their pre-Euro currencies...

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THE RIGHT OUTCOME FOR AN AUSCHWITZ GUARD

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Gene Klein

[*Wall Street Journal*](#), July 15, 2015

Oskar Gröning, a former SS soldier known as “the bookkeeper of Auschwitz,” was convicted on Wednesday in a German court on 300,000 counts of accessory to murder. Mr. Gröning’s wartime duties included seizing money and other valuables from prisoners arriving at the death camp, then keeping track of what had been taken. Now 94, he was sentenced Thursday to four years in prison.

I had a personal stake in this trial. Together with my parents and my two sisters, I arrived in Auschwitz in May 1944. Mr. Gröning worked at the camp from September 1942 to October 1944. We had been on a train from Hungary for three days and three nights, packed 80 human beings to a cattle car. The water had run out within a day. By the time we arrived we were burning with thirst, weak with hunger, and overwhelmed with fear. The doors of the train slid open to reveal SS guards—with ferocious dogs barking at their sides—screaming at us to get out. The women were immediately separated from the men, leaving my father and me hardly time to say a hasty goodbye to my mother and sisters. We had no idea when, or if, we would see them again.

When my father and I reached the SS officers at the front of the arrival ramp, he was sent to the left and I was sent to the right. I had no idea why, or what this meant. I had no idea that I had just been selected for slave labor while my father had been selected for death. He was not an old man, but during the train ride his beard had grown in white. This was apparently signal enough for the guards to discard him as useless. That was the last time I saw my father. The next day I asked a veteran prisoner where they had taken him. He led me outside, pointed at a huge chimney that was spewing smoke into the air. Your father is going up the chimney, he said. I don’t know if Mr. Gröning was on the arrival ramp when I got off the train. I do know he was part of the machinery that inflicted death, deprivation and terror on the 300,000 Hungarian Jews who arrived during the time he was working at the Auschwitz arrival area, or the many more Jews and non-Jews

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~~who were killed at Auschwitz during the time he worked there as an accountant.~~
No single person killed my father. He was killed by a system of genocide in which Mr. Gröning knowingly played his part.

The decision to send Oskar Gröning to prison is a service to humanity. I say this not out of vengeance; I take no pleasure in seeing a 94-year-old man sent to jail. I say it because it is just, it is right, and it is necessary. It is just and right because of the harms he inflicted on so many. These harms are not diminished by time, nor negated by the fact that he was part of a vast, murderous complex. They are not even mitigated by his willingness now to take moral responsibility for his acts, as seen in his public revelations that led to his arrest. Admitting moral responsibility is the least we should expect. The fact that so many in his situation in the past have failed to do so doesn't exonerate him or erase his deeds.

We are defined in large measure by the difficult choices we make. When I was imprisoned in a slave-labor camp at Gross-Rosen in western Poland, my life was saved by a German brave enough to do what was right when it was dangerous, rather than popular. I was a starving 16-year-old carrying steel rails all day long, losing both strength and hope. Because I spoke German, I was selected one morning to carry surveying equipment for a civilian engineer. He took pity on me, and for the two weeks I worked with him, he—at great personal risk—stole food for me daily from the SS kitchen.

People like this courageous engineer remind us that there were alternatives to believing the Nazi propaganda that influenced Mr. Gröning. Acts of resistance and humanity were possible. But Mr. Gröning volunteered for the SS and became an active and enthusiastic member of their ranks. Had more people been like the engineer and fewer like Mr. Gröning, perhaps my sisters and I—they and my mother also survived the war—would not have lost my wonderful father. Perhaps I would again have seen my aunts, cousins and other relatives who died at the hands of the Nazis...

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On Topic

[Iran Got a Far Better Deal Than It Had Any Right to Expect: Elliott Abrams, *National Review*, July 15, 2015](#)—Reading the 150-page agreement with Iran takes less time than one might have anticipated, because it isn't really a 150-page agreement.

[Greece, Deep in Crisis, is Keen on Axis of 'Security' with Israel and Cyprus: Herb Keinon, *Jerusalem Post*, July 7, 2015](#)—With Greece's future shrouded in great uncertainty, Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias spoke in Jerusalem on Monday of developing an axis of security and stability among Israel, Greece, and Cyprus inside what he called a regional "triangle of destabilization."

[The Life of an Auschwitz Guard: Laurence Rees, *Politico*, July 13, 2015](#)—In 1942, when he was twenty-one years old, Oskar Groening was posted to Auschwitz. He almost immediately witnessed a transport arriving at "the ramp"—the platform where the Jews disembarked.

[Two Mass Graves: Ukrainians and Jews: Alexander J. Motyl, *World Affairs*, July 15, 2015](#)—I discovered two mass graves in the forest near my mother's home town in western Ukraine, Peremyshlyany, located 47 kilometers east-southeast of Lviv. The former Przemyślany is also a former *shtetl*.

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