
Iran after the Agreement

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THE POLITICAL DEBATES OVER THE IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT HAVE TENDED TO FOCUS ON SIDE ISSUES:

what might happen more than 10 years from now, how soon Iran could develop one crude nuclear device, worst-case 24-day challenges to inspection, and largely irrelevant issues like the inspection of Parchim—an Iranian facility that has already been destroyed. Washington now must face both the challenges in actually implementing the Iran nuclear agreement and a much wider range of challenges from Iran.

Arms Control as an Extension of War by Other Means

The first step is going to be actually implementing the most critical phases of the Iran nuclear agreement. Unless Iran rejects the agreement or the U.S. Congress finds some truly inventive way to block it, almost all of the critical physical actions Iran must take have to be completed by what is called Implementation Day. Cutting back on enriched material, cutting centrifuge efforts, ending the ability of the Arak reactor to produce plutonium, radically changing the inspection process, dealing with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) question about past military activities, and creating a new process to control procurement will all have to be completed at some point in 2016, probably between the spring and mid-summer, and in the middle of a U.S. presidential campaign.

Really serious arms control agreements tend to be an extension of war by other means, and the United States will have to press hard to ensure full compliance, ensure that other countries will be ready to reintroduce sanctions if Iran cheats, and persuade Israel and our Arab allies that the agreement is really working. The Obama administration must implement at the same time as it prepares for the next administration. It must deal with Russia and China as well as its allies in the P5+1, and lay what groundwork it can for a more bipartisan approach.

It must also do so at a time when there are few indications that Iran's national security structure is in any way committed to some better relationship. Iran faces a February 2016 election of its own for its legislative assembly and Council of Experts where its conservatives seem to be pressing hard to restrict the number of moderate candidates. It is the Supreme Leader, not the president, who can veto, and who controls the military, the security structure, the intelligence branches, the justice system, and key elements of the media. So far the Supreme Leader has shown no interest in improved relations, has seriously questioned the value of the agreement and its current terms, nor done anything to shift Iran's efforts in other aspects of security.

This may come, but at least in the near term and probably though at least 2017 and the establishment of a new administration in the United States, Washington will have to make the agreement work



in spite of Iranian reservations and willingness to “game” the arms control process and reduction in sanctions and do so at a time many other countries will be rushing to compete in Iran regardless of how the U.S. Congress reacts.

The Other Four Challenges

First, the United States will also have to focus on the other challenges posed by Iran, and all are now growing. Iran has been steadily improving its missile forces, increasing their range-payload, developing solid fuel rocket motors and more lethal conventional warheads, and greatly increasing their accuracy and ability to hit high-value point targets. It is working on cruise missiles and armed drones as well, and highly accurate conventional warheads can turn such missiles into “weapons of mass effectiveness” by striking critical infrastructure and military targets.

This means the United States has even more reason to help Israel develop its tiered system of missile and rocket defenses—Arrow 3, David’s Sling, and

Iron Dome—and help its Gulf allies develop a more effective mix of air defenses and wide-area missile defenses like THAAD (Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense) and Standard.

Second, the U.S. government must work with the Gulf Cooperation Council states to create an effective counter to Iran’s steadily improving mix of asymmetric warfare forces that it can use to threaten shipping and petroleum exports through the Gulf. These involve advances in Iran’s sea, air, and missile forces, and in areas that range from antiship missiles and suicide low-radar-profile speedboats to smart mines. This means deploying a new mix of U.S. ships and air assets, major arms transfer to Arab allies, and new efforts at training and joint exercises.

It also means restoring Arab confidence that the United States will stay in the Gulf and Middle East, will not somehow turn to Iran at their expense, and will give them the arms transfers and training help they need. It means showing them that Washington can and will act decisively to support them, that it has a clear strat-

egy for dealing with Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, and that it really is committed to partnership in every aspect of both military security and counterterrorism—not simply selling arms and serving its own interests.

Third, the United States cannot let the tensions over the Iran nuclear agreement and political tensions between President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu create a situation that affects Israel's security. In 2007, the Bush administration and the Israeli government agreed to a memorandum of understanding that the United States would ensure an Israeli "edge" over the forces of any threat power, and a 10-year, \$30 billion military aid package for the period from FY2009 to FY2018. President Obama stated in 2013 that the United States would continue such aid, but the present series of security agreements still needs to be formally renewed, and Washington must not only focus on the direct threat from Iran, but Iran's arms transfers and other aid to Hezbollah and Hamas.

Fourth, the United States must counter Iran's growing influence in four key countries: Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, as well as the increasing challenge it has posed in terms of contacts with the Shi'ites in the Arab Gulf states. The United States and Iran do have a limited common interest in fighting ISIS and other violent Sunni Islamist movements. It is important to remember, however, that Iran's revolution is a form of religious extremism, and it is seeking to boost Hezbollah in Lebanon, keep the Assad regime in power in Syria, increase its influence in Iraq and its ties to Shi'ite militias and the Iraqi security forces, and has attempted to send a nine-ship convoy to aid the Houthis in Yemen.

Looking beyond Confrontation

There is a fifth challenge of a very different kind. The United States must mix these four security efforts with an approach to relations with Iran and sanctions that make it clear that Iran does have future options. The United States needs to make sure Iran actually receives the benefits of the lifting of nuclear sanctions if it fully complies with the nuclear agreement. The United States needs to work with Iran's Arab neighbors so it is always clear that

Iran can actually improve its security by improving its relations with both the United States and Arab states.

The United States needs to explore ways to increase cultural and other exchanges if this becomes possible, and to reach out to Iranian moderates and the Iranian people. It needs to develop a broader range

of negotiations and incentives for Iran to take a more moderate course in all the other areas that now present security challenges to the United States and its allies.

There may well be no immediate prospects for broader improvements in U.S.-Iranian relations, and Washington must never make such improvements in relations at the expense of its allies. At the same time, the nuclear agreement has shown that Iran does have a more moderate president and many other senior officials. A large portion of the Iranian people clearly do not see the United States as the "great Satan," and a number of Iranian officials and security experts do realize that Iran's real strategic interests lie in regional cooperation and dealing with the growing threat of religious extremism. The United States must never let the fact that the Supreme Leader and other Iranian hardliners demonize the United States lead the United States to demonize Iran. We must do everything we can to encourage Iran to change and evolve. □

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