

Public Statement on U.S. Policy Toward the Iran Nuclear Negotiations

Endorsed by a Bipartisan Group of American Diplomats, Legislators, Policymakers, and Experts

Jun 24, 2015



Over the last three years, members of this bipartisan group have convened regularly under the auspices of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy to discuss the status of the Iran nuclear issue, frequently benefitting from the input of current Administration officials. Last week, at its most recent meeting, the group determined that it could usefully contribute to the public debate on the ongoing negotiations by presenting its consensus view of critical issues. This statement reflects that broad consensus.

The Iran nuclear deal is not done. Negotiations continue. The target deadline is June 30. We know much about the emerging agreement. Most of us would have preferred a stronger agreement.

The agreement will not prevent Iran from having a nuclear weapons capability. It will not require the dismantling of Iran's nuclear enrichment infrastructure. It will however reduce that infrastructure for the next 10 to 15 years. And it will impose a transparency, inspection, and consequences regime with the goal of deterring and dissuading Iran from actually building a nuclear weapon.

The agreement does not purport to be a comprehensive strategy towards Iran. It does not address Iran's support for terrorist organizations (like Hezbollah and Hamas), its interventions in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen (its "regional hegemony"), its ballistic missile arsenal, or its oppression of its own people. The U.S. administration has prioritized negotiations to deal with the nuclear threat, and hopes that an agreement will positively influence Iranian policy in these other areas.

Even granting this policy approach, we fear that the current negotiations, unless concluded along the lines outlined in this paper and buttressed by a resolute regional strategy, may fall short of meeting the administration's own standard of a "good" agreement.

We are united in our view that to maximize its potential for deterring and dissuading Iran from building a nuclear weapon, the emerging nuclear agreement must – in addition to its existing provisions – provide the following:

1. *Monitoring and Verification:* The inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (the "IAEA") charged with monitoring compliance with the agreement must have timely and effective access to any sites in Iran they need to visit in order to verify Iran's compliance with the agreement. This must include military (including IRGC) and other sensitive facilities. Iran must not be able to deny or delay timely access to any site anywhere in the country that the inspectors need to visit in order to carry out their responsibilities.
2. *Possible Military Dimensions:* The IAEA inspectors must be able, in a timely and effective manner, to take samples, to interview scientists and government officials, to inspect sites, and to review and copy documents as required for their investigation of Iran's past and any ongoing nuclear weaponization activities ("Possible Military Dimensions" or "PMD"). This work needs to be accomplished before any significant sanctions relief.
3. *Advanced Centrifuges:* The agreement must establish strict limits on advanced centrifuge R&D, testing, and deployment in the first ten years, and preclude the rapid technical upgrade and expansion of Iran's enrichment capacity after the initial ten-year period. The goal is to push back Iran's deployment of advanced centrifuges as long as possible, and ensure that any such deployment occurs at a measured, incremental pace consonant with a peaceful nuclear program.
4. *Sanctions Relief:* Relief must be based on Iran's performance of its obligations. Suspension or lifting of the most significant sanctions must not occur until the IAEA confirms that Iran has taken the key steps required to come into compliance with the agreement. Non-nuclear sanctions (such as for terrorism) must remain in effect and be vigorously enforced.
5. *Consequences of Violations:* The agreement must include a timely and effective mechanism to re-impose sanctions automatically if Iran is found to be in violation of the agreement, including by denying or delaying IAEA access. In addition, the United States must itself articulate the serious consequences Iran will face in that event.

Most importantly, it is vital for the United States to affirm that it is U.S. policy to prevent Iran from producing sufficient fissile material for a nuclear weapon – or otherwise acquiring or building one – both during the agreement and after it expires. Precisely because Iran will be left as a nuclear threshold state (and has clearly preserved the option of becoming a nuclear weapon state), the United States must go on record now that it is committed to using all means necessary, including military force, to prevent this. The President should declare this to be U.S. policy and Congress should formally endorse it. In addition, Congressional review of any agreement should precede any formal action on the agreement in the United Nations.

Without these features, many of us will find it difficult to support a nuclear agreement with Iran.

We urge the U.S. administration not to treat June 30 as an "inviolable" deadline. Stay at the negotiating table until a "good" agreement that includes these features is reached. Extend the existing Joint Plan of Action while negotiations continue. This will freeze Iran's nuclear activity and international sanctions at current levels. While the United States should extend the Iran Sanctions Act so it does not expire, it should not increase sanctions while negotiations continue. U.S. alternatives to an agreement are unappealing, but Iran's are worse. It has every incentive to reach an agreement and obtain relief from sanctions and international isolation well in advance of its elections next February. If anyone is to walk out of the negotiations, let it be Iran.

Some argue that any nuclear agreement now simply further empowers bad Iranian behavior. And there is a lot to this argument. This is why we believe that the United States must bolster any agreement by doing more in the region to check Iran and support our traditional friends and allies.

This does not mean major U.S. ground combat operations in the Middle East. But it does mean taking initiatives like the following:

1. *In Iraq:* Expand training and arming not only of Iraqi Security Forces but also Kurdish Peshmerga in the north and vetted Sunni forces in the West. Allow U.S. Special Forces to leave their bases and help coordinate air strikes and stiffen Iraqi units. Sideline Iranian-backed militia and separate them from Shiite units ("popular mobilization units") that are not under Iranian control.
2. *In Syria:* Expand and accelerate the U.S. train and equip programs. Work with Turkey to create a safe haven in northern Syria where refugees can obtain humanitarian aid and vetted non-extremist opposition fighters can be trained and equipped. Capitalize on Bashar al-Assad's increasing weakness to split off regime elements and seek to join them with U.S. trained opposition elements. Interdict the transshipment of Iranian weapons into Syria in coordination with the Kurds and Turkey, and consider designating as terrorist

organizations Iranian-backed Shiite militias responsible for egregious atrocities.

3. *In Yemen*: Expand support for Saudi Arabia and the UAE in pressuring the warring parties to the negotiating table while seeking to split the Houthi elements away from Iran.
4. *Regionally*: Interdict Iranian arms bound for extremist groups and continue to counter its efforts to harass commercial shipping and our naval forces. Reaffirm U.S. policy to oppose Iran's efforts to subvert local governments and project its power at the expense of our friends and allies.

Collectively, these steps also strengthen U.S. capability against Daesh (the misnamed "Islamic State"). Acting against both Iranian hegemony and Daesh's caliphate will help reassure friends and allies of America's continued commitment. And it will help address Israel's legitimate concerns that a nuclear agreement will validate Iran's nuclear program, further facilitate its destabilizing behavior, and encourage further proliferation at a time when Israel faces the possible erosion of its "qualitative military edge." We urge the U.S. administration to create a discreet, high-level mechanism with the Israeli government to identify and implement responses to each of these concerns.

Taking the actions we propose while the nuclear negotiations continue will reinforce the message that Iran must comply with any agreement and will not be allowed to pursue a nuclear weapon. This will increase, not decrease, the chance that Iran will comply with the agreement and may ultimately adopt a more constructive role in the region. For the U.S. administration's hopes in this respect have little chance so long as Iran's current policy seems to be succeeding in expanding its influence.

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Robert Blackwill, deputy assistant to the president and deputy national security advisor for strategic planning under President George W. Bush, 2003-2004

General James Cartwright, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2007-2011

Patrick Clawson, Morningstar Senior Fellow, director of research, The Washington Institute

Paula J. Dobriansky, undersecretary of state for global affairs, 2001-2009

Robert Einhorn, special advisor to the Secretary of State for nonproliferation and arms control, 2009-2013

Norman Eisen, U.S. ambassador to the Czech Republic, 2011-2014

Michael Eisenstadt, Kahn Fellow, director of the Military and Security Studies Program, The Washington Institute

Stephen Hadley, national security advisor to President George W. Bush, 2005-2009

Olli Heinonen, deputy director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, 2005-2010

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David Petraeus, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, 2011-2012

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This statement reflects the broad consensus of the group; not every member of the group endorses every judgment or recommendation. Members of the group endorse this statement in their personal capacities; institutional affiliations are for identification purposes only. This statement has not been endorsed by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, its Board of Trustees or its Board of Advisors, and it should not be construed as representing their views.

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