

TO: The President of The United States

FROM: Benjamin Manning

SUBJECT: Trust, Security, & Diplomacy: The Future of Iranian & American Relations

The United States has withdrawn from The JCPOA with no clear alternative. We are stuck in purgatory where our relationship with Iran has drastically deteriorated in comparison to the when the JCPOA was signed, yet Iran maintains moderate commitment to the original deal. **How can the United States create an environment in which Iran never uses a nuclear weapon?**

Interests & Stakeholders

National Interests

1. We do not want Iran or any other country to use or even *have* Nuclear weapons.
2. We want to maintain influence, peace, and Democratic values in the Middle East.
3. We want to minimize the proliferation of state-sponsored terrorism.

NOTE: In addition to our interactions with Iran we do not want any of our policies or actions to greatly increase the likelihood that *any* agent works against these 3 goals.

Iran

1. Iran wants to maintain its regime.
2. Iran wants to capitalize on full economic opportunities in the global market place.
3. Iran wants to maintain regional influence and hold international respect as social, economic, and military player on the global stage.

JCPOA Remaining Members

1. Re-establish deterrents for Iran to acquiring a nuclear weapon.
2. Fortify and maintain economic and diplomatic relations with Iran.

Middle Eastern States allied Against Iran

1. Avoid violent conflict with Iran of any kind or bystander conflict from war.
2. Limit Iranian hegemony in the region.

IAEA

1. When it comes to Iran, strictly regulate nuclear capabilities .
2. Maintain credibility as an *impartial and effective* regulating body.

United Nations

1. Maximize peace, security, and economic success in perpetuity.

Analysis

70 Years Without Detonation

- No other nation has ever used a nuclear weapon even though several current nuclear powers maintain fraught, if not antagonistic relations the United States.
- The number of warheads has decreased roughly 75% since its apex 35 years agoⁱ.
- Foreign powers do not use nuclear weapons just because they have them.

We Are The Agent

- No Matter who was in power when the United States joined the JCPOA and left it, our nation did *both* of these actions.
 - We have undermined our own credibility, but the JCPOA still exists – both Iran and other member nations are still in the agreement (at the moment)ⁱⁱ.

Obama's View

- President Obama tried to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. However, we are actually most concerned with the use of a nuclear weapon.
- Currently, Our relationships with 7 of the other 8 nuclear powers are stable, and North Korea has yet to actually use their weapons on another nation.
 - Let us not forget, the Cold War was brutal, but no nuclear weapon detonated.
- However, Obama's choice to focus on nuclear weapons and not terrorism is valid.

Economic Forces

- Although sanctions have not been shown to definitively change behavior, both Iran's and many other international parties are driven by economic growth.
 - Iran wants its economy to flourish, and thusly negotiated the JCPOA.
 - Other countries stayed in because they want peace and economic growth.

Objectives & Criteria for Evaluation

Iranian Relations: What are the current diplomatic relations between Iran and the U.S.?

Arsenal: Does Iran have a nuclear weapon?

Breakout Time: At any time, how far is Iran from developing a nuclear weapon?

Allies: Do our allies critique or support our position and relations with Iran?

Violence: Did we minimize violence in regards to our relations with Iran?

Policy Options

1. Acceptance & Relationship Building – Accept Iran into the international community both as an economic state and as a military power. Instead of actively preventing them from acquiring a weapon, treat them as equals and build a relationship where Iran's nuclear arsenal becomes irrelevant – they won't want to use it.

- **Pro:** Maximally rebuilds trust with Iran by offering the largest proverbial olive branch.
- **Pro:** Potential for maximum longevity – positive relations and peace.
- **Con:** Massive opposition both in congress and internationally from numerous states.
- **Con:** High risk of abuse while acquiescing regional power and accepting theocracy.

2. The JCPOA: Round 2 – Renegotiate/re-enter the JCPOA in something close to its original form. We focus on rebuilding trust with Iran while maintaining weariness, pressing regulation, and working with other members to create an effective global nuclear communityⁱⁱⁱ.

- **Pro:** Non-violent and the original deal is already partially in place.
- **Pro:** Hopefully rebuilds trust and relationship with Iran slowly.
- **Pro:** Minimizes probability of rapid destabilization
- **Con:** Does not prevent Iran from *acquiring* a nuclear weapon externally.

- **Con:** Will likely have high levels of Congressional opposition.

3. Military Force & Regime Change – Invade Iran with the intention of toppling the current regime and removing the nuclear threat.

- **Pro:** Due to our far greater military prowess, high likelihood of removing nuclear threat.
- **Con:** Likely mass casualties on all sides and in surrounding countries
- **Con:** Difficult to get support domestically and almost impossible internationally
- **Con:** No long-term guarantee of success/withdrawal: see invasions of Iraq/Afghanistan

4. High-Pressure Sanctions: The Sequel – Maintain position of applying stringent economic sanctions on Iran while pressuring the global community to follow suit.

- **Pro:** Non-violently pressures Iran.
- **Pro:** Appeals parties opposed to the JCPOA (in congress and abroad).
- **Con:** Little historical evidence that sanctions accomplish effective change.
- **Con:** Worsens already abysmal relationship with Iran.
- **Con:** Doesn't actively prevent from developing nor acquiring a nuclear weapon.

Recommendation

Option 2: Another Attempt at the JCPOA – I recommend that the United States attempt to re-enter the original JCPOA or negotiate a close alternative. This agreement was already accepted by the participating parties demonstrating its feasibility, and they have shown that they are still hopeful it can continue through their maintained participation. This option minimizes potential violence, while starting to rebuild a positive relationship between the United States and Iran.

Future Acceptance – Additionally, I recommend that all policy and action towards Iran maintain the goal of normalizing relations so that there is no threat of nuclear detonation even if Iran acquires said weapon. Hopefully, with effective implementation of the second JCPOA, the first policy option could be more feasible as it has the most potential for long-term peace.

Implementation

1. **Publicly denounce initially leaving the JCPOA and apologize to Iran for said action.**
2. **Preemptively remove economic sanctions in accordance with the original JCPOA as an act of good will before re-entering negotiations.**
3. **Recruit help via 3rd party mediation from European allies and nuclear counterparts^{iv}.**
4. **Re-enter negotiations – with weakened reliability and trust, concede more economic sanctions in order to maintain original JCPOA nuclear regulation. Other possible Bargaining points:**
 1. Offer to withdraw troops in certain Middle Eastern Regions (though not all).
 2. Further disarm American nuclear arsenal and assist Iran in furthering its non-violent nuclear projects.
5. **Attempt to create a legislative framework that makes the 2nd JCPOA binding for future presidents and congresses.**
6. **Focus on long-term relationship as specified in Option 1/Future Acceptance.**

I attest that I did not give or receive unauthorized assistance while working on this paper.

ⁱ “Countries With Nuclear Weapons 2020.” *World Population Review*, World Population Review 2020, 2020, worldpopulationreview.com/countries/countries-with-nuclear-weapons/.

ⁱⁱ Kaye, Dalia Dassa. “Hard to See How Iran Decision Serves US Interests or Regional Stability.” *The Hill*, 2020 Capitol Hill, 10 May 2018, thehill.com/opinion/finance/387085-difficult-to-see-how-iran-decision-serves-us-interests-or-regional-stability.

ⁱⁱⁱ Dove, Edward-Isaac. “Democrats' Grand Plan to Contain Iran? Just Beat Trump.” *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 23 June 2019, www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/06/2020-democratic-candidates-explain-their-iran-strategy/592360/.

^{iv} “The Iran Nuclear Deal at Four: A Requiem?” *Crisis Group*, International Crisis Group, 3 Feb. 2020, www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/iran/210-iran-nuclear-deal-four-requiem.