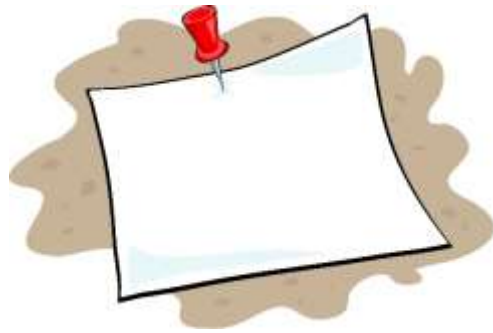


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IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL: NOT A TREATY, MORE LIKE A BLANK PIECE OF PAPER

By Steve Bakke  July 16, 2019



In May 2018, President Trump voided the Iran nuclear “agreement.” Here are two important questions to ask when evaluating the agreement: Did Trump’s actions alone open the gates for Iran to have nuclear weapons? Or, was the agreement merely a delay of the inevitable development of atomic weapons by Iran?

Subsequent to Trump’s decision, events lined up like this: The agreement was replaced with economic sanctions; Iran attacked oil tankers; Iran shot down a surveillance drone outside of Iran’s airspace; Trump wisely decided against retaliatory strikes; He authorized 1,000 more troops for the middle-east; Iran began violating uranium enrichment limits; New and stronger sanctions were imposed; now Iran wants to “talk,” but only if U.S. “bullying” stops.

The agreement’s supporters believe it’s the best alternative for denying Iran nuclear weapons. But recall some realities:

- President Obama never required Iran to sign the “agreement.” That alone probably made it unenforceable.
- President Obama signed the agreement, but faced bipartisan opposition in the Senate so a vote wasn’t taken. Without Senate confirmation, it didn’t qualify as a treaty. It was essentially just a blank piece of paper.
- Leading Democrat Senators Schumer and Menendez were originally skeptical about Obama’s assurances because, as Menendez stated, it wasn’t based on “preventing nuclear proliferation, but on managing or containing it.”

While Obama proclaimed assurances that the agreement was “built on verification,” such was not the case:

- The U.S. was not allowed to be involved directly in compliance monitoring.
- Because of lengthy dispute resolution procedures, “anytime monitoring” didn’t really exist. There was adequate time, 24 days, for Iran to “cover their tracks.”
- Violations could be neutralized by a single signatory. Russia and China individually could void penalties.
- Iran could continue development of missile technology, the nuclear warhead delivery mechanism.

- Iran could designate certain military sites as “off-limit” for inspections.
- “Side-deals” were struck. For example, in some cases Iran independently provided photographs and gathered samples for delivery to the IAEA, the official “inspector.”

Did Trump open the gates to Iran’s nuclear ambitions? Absolutely not. The gates were always wide open. All the agreement influenced was when Iran became a nuclear power. Trump did the right thing, but we still have to see if his decision makes a big difference by making progress in leading to eliminating Iran as a nuclear threat.

Iran received huge amounts of cash by manipulating Obama into strange machinations such as sending a portion of the cash piled on pallets. The total transfers of cash, including large amounts which were funds frozen over many years from penalties and sanctions, was to be up to \$150 billion. Even then, this was being viewed as providing funds to finance Iran’s movement from being a “partner” of oppressive regimes to a “patron” of those regimes.

The goals of the agreement were aspirational, with too much emphasis on just getting a deal. In contrast, President Trump decided it was better to deal with the ultimate reality now, rather than later when Iran’s military capabilities would be much greater. Was his decision better than the alternative of waiting a few years for Iran to begin the process of higher enrichment? In any case, given the agreement’s nature, Iran could easily nibble around the edges of non-compliance, while actually advancing their progress toward full nuclear weapon capabilities.

Let’s be patient. A new agreement can be reached. Skillful diplomats can create an atmosphere of face-saving for whomever needs it. The original agreement didn’t guarantee Iran wouldn’t gain nuclear power, so it’s fair to speculate the deal would actually have raised the likelihood of an arms race among other regional nations. And that area is the worst possible location for such a thing.

Having confidence in the original deal required one to believe that Iran had rational leadership, and such isn’t the case. If we think Iran nuclear weapons are inevitable, it’s easy to support Trump casting aside of the agreement, but at the same time we should be patient. We have far superior defensive power now and the economic pressure will lead to a new negotiation.

We are asking Iran for little more than to behave like other more civilized nations in the region. What’s wrong with that?