



# The Nuclear Arms Agreement with Iran: Why Obama's Foreign Policy Agenda is Dangerous for Israel

## OVERVIEW IN BRIEF:

The Middle East is a cauldron in the wake of the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011. The rise of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the aftermath of the now-failing Syrian insurgency against President Bashar al-Assad has presented the world with a Sunni uprising of stunning barbarity. Shia forces in southern Iraq have been quick to respond using Iranian resources.

Complicating matters further are the ambitions of Iraqi and Syrian Kurds with regards to Turkey, a NATO ally that does not want to see the creation of a potentially hostile Kurdistan along its southern border. Meanwhile, as Saudi resources have been fueling ISIL, Iran has been eager to cause problems in the Arabian Peninsula, leveraging Houthi rebels in Yemen against the country's Sunni elite.

Along the periphery of this conflict are nations such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt, all of which are struggling in the wake of the Arab Spring against elements such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah, and Hamas.

In the center of this cauldron? The Jewish State of Israel -- home to over 5 million Israeli Jews and a principal target of both ISIL hostility and a nuclear-armed Islamic Republic of Iran.

## Quick Facts

- The agreement consists of temporary restrictions which, when lifted, **likely guarantee the Islamic Republic a hard path to nuclear weaponization.**
- The **Iranians are actively leveraging the rise of ISIL** to increase their influence via support for a proxy war against the Sunnis.
- Exceptions for military and unofficial sites provide **numerous opportunities for the regime in Tehran to continue with nuclear activity** or hide evidence of past research work.
- **Israel has already signaled that it will not tolerate the presence of a nuclear Iran in the Middle East.**
- **Iran has a consistent and long history of ignoring agreements** designed to constrain the development and proliferation of nuclear weapons.
- Such a proliferation of nuclear weapons -- even if never used -- **increases the likelihood of small scale proxy wars and local insurgencies** that will sap American resources and potentially destabilize the region for decades.

## A HISTORY OF DECEPTION

The Obama administration is attempting to cut a deal with a nation that has shown no intention of keeping its word to the international community. Iranian moderates may exist in academia or among the youth of Teheran, but they do not hold the levers of power, neither among the political class nor among the mullahs that govern the Islamic Republic. It is always tempting to look at a hostile

regime with hope and try to find common areas of interest, an approach described by President Obama himself as being willing to "extend a hand" if repressive nations were to "unclench their fist."<sup>1</sup> This hope is admirable, but it ultimately ignores the goals and repeated previous behavior of the Iranian leadership, particularly with nuclear weapons.

<sup>1</sup> President Barack Obama's Inaugural Address, <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2009/01/21/president-barack-obamas-inaugural-address>>, cited 21 August 2015.

In 1968, the United States along with 190 different countries from around the world signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), an agreement that would promote the expansion of peaceful nuclear energy and strictly limit the expansion of nuclear weapons. The Iranian government operated under the pretense of developing peaceful nuclear energy since its rise to power in 1979, having inherited a soft water nuclear reactor at Bushehr and a halted program at Dahrkovin from the displaced Persian government in the wake of the Islamic Revolution.

Yet by 2006, the Iranian government refused to continue recognizing the NPT, resulting in three successive rounds of increased sanctions from the international community in 2007, 2008, and 2009 respectively.<sup>2</sup> Rejecting the NPT meant rejecting an agreement which is almost universal, as only four UN member states have not signed it.<sup>3</sup> The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has described “a series of contraventions of its safeguards agreement over 22 years,” one which “systematically concealed its development of key techniques which are capable of use for nuclear weapons.”<sup>4</sup>

## DEALING WITH OUR ENEMIES

Israel and America remain primary targets of Iran, a situation which has remained unchanged during the nearly ten years of negotiations between Iran and the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and Germany. Within the past year, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has declared publicly that there is “no cure” for Israel’s existence except for it “to be annihilated.”<sup>5</sup> Khamenei then went on to post a detailed nine-point plan addressing “key questions” about how and why this should be done. Even

more recently, Khamenei re-emphasized that the nuclear deal did not represent a lessening of hatred against America, saying that the battle against it was “an essence of the revolution” and to abandon it would be sacrilegious.<sup>6</sup>

Though American diplomacy has demonstrated historically that it is not impossible to deal with such a regime (e.g. the Soviet Union), extraordinary care must be taken in doing so. Even proponents of the nuclear deal do not contend it represents a change in philosophy for those who run Iran, merely a change in strategy. This includes President Obama.<sup>7</sup> Iran is not seeking to join the community of modern nations, only for sanctions to be lifted so it may maneuver more freely in pursuit of its strategic policy goals.

Given this fact, evaluating a proposed deal means seeing just how constrained the still-hostile regime will be and what benefits will come as a result of working together. For American policy makers, the question is thus twofold. First, is a short-term deal with Iran worth their help in containing the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)? Second, is a 15- or 20-year truce with Iran worth the price of hardening the path towards nuclear weaponization? The answer to each of these questions is a resounding no. Regarding ISIL, the Obama administration is currently trapped by its own rhetoric. It is loathe to impose a military price on Iran for violating long-held American principles of nuclear non-proliferation, a hesitance which is readily noticed by other hostile regimes. With the rise of ISIL, the administration is unduly focused on the immediate problem such a group presents rather than the greater long-term danger posed by the possession of nuclear weapons by the world’s largest sponsor of terrorism.<sup>8</sup> For all its

<sup>2</sup> VOX, “I live here in Iran,” <<http://www.vox.com/2015/8/12/9126417/iran-sanctions-life>>, cited 19 August 2015.

<sup>3</sup> India, Pakistan, Israel, and South Sudan.

<sup>4</sup> World Nuclear Association, “Nuclear Power in Iran,” <http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/Country-Profiles/Countries-G-N/Iran/>, cited 21 August 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Khamenei made this statement on Twitter, in English. [http://www.slate.com/blogs/the\\_slatest/2014/11/09/iran\\_s\\_khamenei\\_israel\\_must\\_be\\_annihilated.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slatest/2014/11/09/iran_s_khamenei_israel_must_be_annihilated.html)

<sup>6</sup> Wall Street Journal, “The U.S. Is Still Iran’s Great Satan,” <<http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-u-s-is-still-irans-great-satan-1437170607>>, cited 21 August 2015.

<sup>7</sup> ABC News Radio, “Obama on Iran Deal: ‘You Don’t Make Deals Like This with Your Friends’,” <<http://abcnewsradioonline.com/politics-news/obama-on-iran-deal-you-dont-make-deals-like-this-with-your-f.html>>, cited 21 August 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Of the three countries labeled by the U.S. State Department as “State Sponsors of Terrorism,” Iran is by far the largest. See <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/list/c14151.htm>.

ambition and savagery, ISIL is but one of many destabilizing forces in the region, and the most dangerous of other such groups – Hamas and Hezbollah – are directly supported by Iran and thus significantly strengthened by the existence of this deal and the financial windfall it will create for Tehran.

## TEMPORARY AT BEST

Towards the second point, the agreement reached by the negotiators are principally concerned with Iran's nuclear program in a definitive or permanent manner. Fifteen years may buy time to resolve issues in eastern Syria and northern Iraq, but does little to resolve the threat of a nuclear-armed Islamic Republic actively sponsoring terrorism and long espousing a philosophy of destruction toward both America and Israel.

The current regime in Iran has been in power for over 46 years. Waiting another 5, 10, or even 15 years to achieve a major strategic objective such as acquiring nuclear weapons is an entirely realistic goal, and numerous restrictions on virtually every aspect of an Iranian nuclear weapons program will be rescinded within 15 years of the agreement, if not sooner.<sup>9</sup> This does not provide the kind of lasting security which is crucial for both America and those countries which rely on it for help in ensuring the safety of their people. A deal with Iran looks excellent to an Obama administration desperately trying to salvage some semblance of stability in the region after a string of foreign policy failures. To our allies there -- Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and most notably Israel -- the deal is indeed a paved road towards an eventual Iranian nuclear weapon. This is a threat none of the major players in the region are willing to allow, nor should American foreign policy permit.

## THE "MILITARY" EXCEPTION

<sup>9</sup> BBC News, "Iran nuclear deal: Key details," <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33521655>>, cited 21 August 2015.

## Time Flies

Iran does not have to be peaceful under this deal, only patient, as numerous key restrictions on its nuclear ambitions and other potentially aggressive behavior are merely temporary:

- **AFTER 5 YEARS:**
  - UN arms embargo lifted
- **AFTER 8 YEARS:**
  - UN ban on import of ballistic missile technology lifted
  - Restrictions on the type and location of nuclear research and development lifted
- **AFTER 10 YEARS:**
  - No more automatic "snap-back" reinstatement of sanctions for violating agreement terms
  - No more limitation on number of centrifuges at Natanz facility for enriching uranium
- **AFTER 15 YEARS:**
  - No more restrictions on the construction of heavy water nuclear reactors
  - 50-fold increase allowed in uranium stockpile
  - Enrichment of uranium will be allowed again at the facility in Fordo

Regarding the finer points of the "Iran Deal" and given the consistently aggressive rhetoric coming from the Islamic Republic, it would be understandable to conclude any deal must include the kind of "anytime, anywhere" inspections required to ensure accountability – the kind embodied by Ronald Reagan's repeated use of the phrase "trust, but verify" when dealing with the Soviet Union.<sup>10</sup> While President Reagan believed in the concept so strongly that his Soviet counterparts publicly joked about it, President Obama has allowed Iran to limit access to an unknown number of sites under this agreement.

The Iranian regime has accomplished this by carving out an exception to the inspection program. International inspectors will have access to known nuclear sites such as those in Fordow and Natanz,

<sup>10</sup> Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, "Remarks on Signing the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty," <<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1987/120887c.htm>>, cited 21 August 2015.

but any other location, including all locations which are military in nature, can be excluded from inspections by the Iranian government.<sup>11</sup>

Understandably, these exclusions render the agreement almost unenforceable. Inspectors can request access to these sites, but they can only do so through an impossible procedure involving evaluating Iranian requests for alternate methods of verification, referral to an arbitration board consisting of representatives from the P5+1 countries,<sup>12</sup> Iran, and European Union diplomatic office, and finally a decision on whether inspections will be allowed.<sup>13</sup> The entire process can take 24 days, more than enough time to hide evidence, and the agreement is silent on what happens if the eight board members deadlock on whether inspections should be allowed at all.

This exception to the inspection requirements comes despite previous concerns expressed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) about military involvement in Iran's nuclear program. In a 2012 report, the agency specifically stated that it was "increasingly concerned about the possible existence in Iran of undisclosed nuclear related activities involving military related organizations, including activities related to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile."<sup>14</sup> The same report also stated that there were "indications that some activities relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device... may still be ongoing." Given these conclusions, the Obama administration's proposed agreement means that perhaps the most secretive and unknown aspect of Iran's nuclear program is specifically exempted from the full inspection and monitoring program.

<sup>11</sup> CBS News, "Obama says inspectors get access to 'any' site in Iran. Is it true?," <<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/obama-inspectors-access-any-site-iran-true/>> cited 21 August 2015.

<sup>12</sup> The five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and Germany.

<sup>13</sup> Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, dated July 14, 2015, accessed at <<https://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.documentcloud.org/documents/2165399/full-text-of-the-iran-nuclear-deal.pdf>> on 21 August 2015.

<sup>14</sup> IAEA, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran," <<https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gov2011-65.pdf>>, cited 21 August 2015.

## Playing Hide and Seek with Inspectors

- Access to any "military site" **can be blocked** by the government in Tehran.
- Inspectors can request access, but the Iranian government says "**no inspection of any kind** of such facilities would be accepted."
- The IAEA itself is "increasingly concerned about the possible existence in Iran of **undisclosed nuclear related activities** involving military related organizations."

## CONCLUSION: THE ALTERNATIVE IS NOT WAR, BUT A BETTER DEAL

Much has been said about the alternative to a deal being war, but the true alternative is a better deal -- one that is enforceable and with serious consequences -- if the Islamic Republic is unfaithful to the agreement. The crippling sanctions bringing Iran to the bargaining table must remain in place. Such a course of action would bolster the confidence of our allies in the region. Iran must recognize further its commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Moreover, a clear policy stance indicating that the United States and NATO are both unwilling to tolerate a mass race for nuclear arms in the region will show Western unwillingness to fight a series of proxy wars under the threat of an Iranian nuclear umbrella. Such a line will be a critical first step in restoring confidence in America's resolve in the region while offering a free hand in dealing with ISIL, permitting avenues for a UN-brokered peace in Syria while assuring our Turkish allies of America's commitment to preserving stability in the region and denying Iranians the leverage they have used to force the issue this far.

Any nation whose leaders demand "Death to Israel" is a nation that should be believed, not bargained with. Iran should not be awarded a hard path to nuclear weaponization in two decades. The United States should insist on a strong agreement, one which restores confidence in the NPT and comprehensively and decisively ends Iran's ability to project nuclear force in the region.