

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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SL: Diplomacy or War

The Takeaway:

- The Iran nuclear deal was a stunning success for diplomacy, for peace, and for denuclearization... until Donald Trump torpedoed it. Four years of failed “maximum pressure policy” later, President Biden has a chance to return to the path of peace.
- The warmongering opposition is well-funded, organized, and powerful — and, lately, they’ve been stepping up their bad faith attacks. We must fight back.
- The last few weeks have seen baby steps toward progress from all parties. But with a closing window of possibility, it’s up to Biden to end the game of chicken and fulfill his promise and swiftly return to the agreement. Before it’s too late.

The Choice Is Diplomacy or War: It’s Time to Rejoin the Iran Deal

BREAKING: Strikes on Syria

Last night, President Biden launched airstrikes in Syria against an allegedly pro-Iranian militia. We cannot escape the realities of how we got here: decades of U.S. war in the Middle East and a continued belief that bombs will somehow bring peace. History has shown how utterly failed that mentality is, at the cost of countless lives and massive destruction. This latest incident is the direct result of Trump’s failed “maximum pressure” policy and yet more evidence of what we argue in this week’s Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief: The only path forward is for President Biden to follow through with his commitment to turn from war towards diplomacy, starting with rejoining the JCPOA and taking further steps to finally and fully end our endless wars.

It’s hardly been a year since the United States and Iran came seconds from all-out war. We may have averted total disaster then, but if we continue down the same path, it’s only a matter of time before the war hawks come home to roost. We must stop falling prey to the bad-faith attacks of the known warmongers, move beyond small steps and symbolic gestures, and act *now* to swiftly reenter the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). It remains a choice between diplomacy and war, and time is running out.

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Maximum Failure

The Iran deal was an unequivocal success. It was a breakthrough in U.S.-Iran relations, it constrained Iran's nuclear program, and it laid the foundation for future diplomacy. It was a success, that is, until Trump. In May 2018, Donald Trump took a working, multilateral agreement and unilaterally withdrew the United States. In place of diplomacy, Trump waged a "maximum pressure" campaign, including deadly broad-based sanctions, illegal assassinations, and multiple near-wars. Not only was Trump's approach deplorable in its own right, but it was also a total failure, serving only to undermine changemakers working for peace and democracy in Iran, heighten racism and repression against Iranians in the United States, rally support for hardline factions, and undermine the chances of a return to diplomacy. As we face the question of how to proceed with Iran, this fundamental fact must inform our every decision: *It is because of Trump's "maximum pressure" policy, that we are where we are today.*

Warmongers Inc.

Four years of conclusive proof that their entire "strategy" is complete nonsense, however, has not deterred the committed warmongers. From the [Foundation for Defense of Democracies](#), to the more subtly insidious Iran deal "skeptics" in the foreign policy establishment, there is an entire well-funded industry devoted to undermining any prospect of diplomacy with Iran, no matter the cost. As of late, these groups have stepped up their attacks, launching smear campaigns against Biden nominees [Robert Malley](#), [Colin Kahl](#), and more, under the backward logic that their record of support for the nuclear deal makes them unfit for office (maybe they hope that we will forget that reentry into the deal is a stated policy goal of the Biden administration and an official [plank](#) of the Democratic party platform?).

Shamelessly bad-faith as these attacks may be, they have regularly been given space in the media, and even credence by policymakers eager to appear "impartial." It should be noted that this "impartiality" is rarely applied to highlighting the voices of impacted communities in Iran, in Syria, or of the diaspora communities who regularly face the results of terrible foreign policy decisions. We need to start viewing the choice to provide platforms to known war hawks not as some alleged 'impartiality' but rather as what it is: giving voice to those that advocate violence with no accountability.

Small, Slow Steps

Despite the continued attacks from the powerful warmongers, this past week has seen promising, if insufficient, steps forward. On Friday, the Biden administration formally [offered](#) to restart nuclear talks, [lift](#) a travel ban on key Iranian officials, and, as a show of good faith, rescinded a Trump-era proposal to try to [reinstate](#) United Nations sanctions. For Iran, which had earlier in the year set Tuesday the 23rd as a deadline for the United States to lift sanctions, this was a sufficient start. Instead of fulfilling their threat to move further from compliance with the agreement by reducing the level of access afforded to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors, the Iranian government came to a temporary, bilateral, technical agreement

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with the IAEA to allow for continued inspections. Altogether, this was a promising show of compliance-for-compliance from all parties. But it's not enough. Biden must stop the game of international chicken. The costs are too great. It's time to move beyond half-steps and messaging about each others' responsibilities to move first. Trump withdrew from the deal. Biden must return to it.

Cold Feet?

At the same time that progress seemed to be in the making, there was also [concerning reporting](#) that some in the Biden administration were getting cold feet. Let's be clear: leaving the Iran deal was a catastrophic mistake, and undoing that error was an early and unequivocal commitment of then-candidate Biden. Now that he is President, the pro-diplomacy majority expects him to fulfill that promise as swiftly as possible, and then build upon the deal towards a long-term approach that fosters peace. There is no possibility of, nor justification for, trying to leverage this moment to extract more concessions prior to reentry, and claims otherwise should be treated at best as naive and more likely as bad-faith efforts by those hoping for the final dismantling of the nuclear deal and an end to any shot at diplomacy. Failing to reenter the agreement now is a figurative death sentence for further U.S.-Iran diplomacy — and a literal death sentence for the countless everyday people who will bear the cost of sanctions, nuclear proliferation, and war.

Act Now, Before It's Too Late

With the Iranian elections approaching in June, Biden's window to act is tight. And with a moneyed and powerful opposition accelerating its attacks, the fight is only going to get harder the longer he waits. Let's remember why we're here in the first place: the Iran deal was working as intended until Donald Trump took office, violated it, and spent four years exacerbating the suffering of people in Iran. There's no time for staring contests or grandstanding, and there is no middle ground. There are two options: diplomacy or war. It's time to choose.

BURIED LEDES

While not exactly buried, we need to take a moment to appreciate this news. **The U.S. is back in the [Paris climate accord](#)!** It's [not enough](#), but it's a necessary step to keep our communities from being buried under water.

Enough double standards: human rights violations by our "allies" are still human rights violations. A group of senators has [introduced a bill to sanction the president of Honduras and cut off funding to the country's security forces over human rights abuses and corruption](#).

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President Biden is [has just released](#) a **U.S. intelligence report into the 2018 murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi**, rightfully implicating Saudi Crown Prince Mohamed Bin Salman in the killing. We'll say it again...enough with impunity! It's time to #SanctionMBS.

A [new report](#) details how projects financed by development banks have [marginalized women around the world](#). Without sufficient consultation with women, projects exacerbated unequal labor practices, made social services less accessible, and tragically, increased gender-based violence.

As we approach the 20th anniversary of 9/11, 40 detainees still remain at Guantánamo. [The UN weighed in](#) this week, urging the U.S. to close the detention center and “end impunity for the human rights and humanitarian law violations” occurring at the prison and throughout the post-9/11 wars.

The United States continues to obstruct global production of vaccines and other Covid-19 medical supplies at the World Trade Organization. **Win Without War joined over 400 organizations [calling on](#) the Biden administration to end Covid monopolies today.**

And decades after launching these wars, [new data shows](#) that they continue to rage on. The [Costs of War](#) project at Brown University found that **the United States conducted counterterrorism operations in 85 countries in the past 3 years alone.**

So, will 2021 be the year we finally #EndEndlessWar? This week, **the Biden administration announced that deadly U.S. counterterrorism operations and drone strikes are [under review](#).** It's a start. Now let's see it through.

Unfettered Pentagon spending does not keep us safe — and it's just plain wasteful. **The Air Force has quietly admitted that its [F-35 fighter jets are a failure](#)** (but a win for the military-industrial complex). And yet Republicans in Congress still included [billions for F-35s](#) in their “COVID relief” bill...

Yet another way in which U.S. militarism harms communities abroad: lax U.S. gun control laws have enabled an [“iron river”](#) of **2.5 million trafficked U.S. guns to flow to Mexico over the past decade.**

And finally, a humbling reminder that humankind is really the less advanced species. **The springhare is the latest animal to join the [fluorescent mammal club](#).**