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Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

DATE: 6/11/2021

SL: Stolen Elections and Diplomacy Spoilers: The Latest on the Iran Nuclear Deal

The Takeaway:

- The Iran nuclear deal was a stunning success until Trump unilaterally withdrew. Now, after many long months of negotiation, a return to the deal is (finally) on the horizon.
- Between now and then, though, lies the Iranian elections — elections that Iran's repressive leaders have already stolen for the hardliners. This attack on free and fair elections is just more proof that the “maximum pressure” strategy only served to fail those in Iran working for change .
- As negotiations continue and compliance-for-compliance reentry looks more possible, the bad faith attacks are escalating. It’s up to all of us to fight the misinformation and ensure we see this through. All too much hangs in the balance.

The State of Play of the Iran Nuclear Deal

We may finally be on the verge of a return to the Iran nuclear deal.

Okay — this isn’t the first time we’ve said this. As regular readers will know, the path to a compliance-for-compliance reentry into the Iran nuclear deal has been long, arduous, and full of twists and turns. But now, it’s looking increasingly likely that we are a mere few weeks away from realizing our goal. As we approach the finish line (or, more rightfully, the start of a new race) we take a look at the current state of play: how we got here, where things stand, and what obstacles remain between us and the restoration of one of the most important diplomatic agreements of recent decades.

A Quick Recap

In 2015, President Obama made a bet: where years of militarism and aggression toward Iran had failed, diplomacy would succeed. He was right. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action — also known as the Iran nuclear deal — was a stunning [success](#): it strictly limited Iran’s nuclear capabilities, undermined hardliners, empowered everyday Iranians, and helped thaw relations as a foundation for future diplomacy (lamentably, because the deal was done at near the end of Obama’s term, the administration (both because of foot-dragging and a lack of time) never delivered the true sanctions relief promised by the deal. Then came Donald Trump, who had vowed to undo the agreement on the campaign trail. Two years into his administration, Trump

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unilaterally withdrew the United States and violated the deal by reimposing sanctions. In place of a successful agreement came “maximum pressure,” which systematically undid this hard-fought progress: strengthening the positions of repressive hardliners, immiserating millions, unfettering Iran’s nuclear capabilities, and nearly bringing our countries to war... twice.

The State of Play

On the campaign trail, Joe Biden promised to clean up Trump’s mess and return to the deal. Though it took a disappointingly long time after he took office, the Biden administration did ultimately come to the table and start discussing plans for reentry. After [finishing](#) their fifth round of negotiations on June 2, the parties will now return to Vienna for round six starting this weekend. Though some of the [more difficult issues](#), such as how to sequence the steps toward reentry, remain, significant enough progress has already been made that the parties seem mutually committed to seeing things through. Analysts expect an understanding to finally be reached, if not in this round, then in the coming weeks.

Elections on the Horizon

Looming in the background is the prospect of a major change in the Iranian political scene. Iran’s presidential elections are slated for June 18, and after Iran’s Guardian Council brazenly [disqualified](#) several of the moderate and reformist candidates, it is all but assured that a right-wing hardliner, likely Ebrahim Raisi, will win the presidency. Fortunately, current President Hassan Rouhani’s term ends in August, and an understanding reached in the interim period is likely to be respected by the following administration. But U.S. critics of the deal are sure to seize on the Guardian Council’s blatantly anti-democratic move, and any potential unrest over the elections, as reason not to move forward. They have it completely backward: this move against democracy was enabled by years of failed “maximum pressure” policies by the United States that empowered Iran’s hardliners and undermined local activists. Diplomacy, not sanctions and militarism, is exactly what’s needed to help give changemakers a seat at the table. (For the latest updates, check out [Iran Unfiltered](#) from our partners at the National Iranian American Council.)

The Threat of Spoilers

As the likelihood of a return to the Iran nuclear deal grows, so too have the bad faith attacks from those hoping to destroy it. Last week, *Politico* [reported](#) that U.S. national security officials were monitoring the movements of an Iranian Naval vessel which appears to be heading to Venezuela. The usual suspects seized this opportunity to cry “threat” in the hopes of stoking an international incident — this despite the fact of Iranian ships traveling legally in international waters is just... [not that scary](#). Similarly, when the International Atomic Energy Agency reported concerns about transparency of access to Iran’s nuclear facilities, detractors claimed that that was reason to end negotiations rather than... you know... *exactly* the opposite. Under the deal, there *was* transparency. Now that we withdrew, there isn’t. Pretty simple. And on top of it all, Ted Cruz is out there [lying](#) about Biden’s sanction policy, and the warmongers at the

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(ironically-named) Foundation for Defense of Democracies effectively [fabricated](#) an entire intelligence report.

Dangers Ahead

In short, we're tantalizingly close to a return to the Iran nuclear deal, and with it the security and hope for a more peaceful future that such diplomatic success breeds. But the regime-change-by-force fanatics and opponents of peace are trying harder than ever to throw sand in the gears. And even once an understanding of a plan for reentry is reached, the fight won't be over; it will take another few months to fully implement, during which time the anti-diplomacy campaign will kick into an even higher gear. Bad faith demands from Congress to initiate lengthy new approval processes, military brinkmanship from an Israeli government hellbent on undermining diplomacy with Iran at all costs — these issues and more threaten to derail a return to the Iran deal during the sensitive implementation phase. It's up to us to ensure they don't succeed.

The Fight for Diplomacy

The Iran deal worked before. It can work again. And there's too much at stake to let this opportunity slip through our fingers. From the lives of the countless everyday people in Iran suffering under brutal U.S. sanctions and repression from their own leaders, to the risk of nuclear proliferation, to any hope of addressing further challenges with Iran through diplomacy rather than war — much hangs in the balance in the coming weeks. That's why we must meet the urgency of this moment, see past the bad faith distractions and detractors, and fight to return to the Iran nuclear deal.

Come Work With Us!

Win Without War is currently hiring for two fellowship positions: a Digital Campaigns and Community Engagement Fellow, and a Policy and Advocacy Fellow. If you or anyone you know is a good fit and wants to help us build a more peaceful, progressive foreign policy, [apply today!](#)

BURIED LEDES

President Biden is driving forward Trump's [nukes expansion](#)...yes, the same Biden who previously said that pouring more money into nuclear buildup "will [do nothing](#) to increase the day-to-day security of the United States or its allies." RIP campaign promises 

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The Pentagon just submitted its [Very Official Master Plan™](#) to justify a new Cold War with China. The TL;DR is that we're spending \$27 billion on MORE missiles and military expansion across Asia, instead of funding our communities' vital needs. Love that for us.

Activism is powerful! For over a decade, environmental advocates and Indigenous communities have been rallying to block the Keystone XL oil pipeline. In January, Biden cancelled the pipeline's permit, and on Wednesday, the [developer abandoned the project](#).

In further climate news: the climate crisis is here. If we're going to address it, we have to stop relying on the [false promises](#) of "Net Zero," [end all financing](#) of fossil fuels, and commit to a new vision that puts [feminism, not militarism, first](#). (That's right, an unprecedented three buried ledes in one).

What is \$4,000 to Jeff Bezos? It's the tax credit he — the billionairiest billionaire — RECEIVED for his children. All the while paying zero in federal income tax. And Bezos is [not alone](#).

What do a cattle rancher, a businesswoman, an Indigenous leader, and an unemployed ecologist have in common? They are the [faces of Colombia's protests](#) — brought together by a determination to fight for change.

It's time to play: [who said it](#), Donald Trump or Kamala Harris? "To folks in this region who are thinking about making that dangerous trek to the United States-Mexico border: Do not come. Do not come." We'll give you a hint: it's the one who [campaigned on](#) migrant justice.

If you give someone a gun and they shoot the guy next door — do you give them more guns? No! If *only* the same logic applied to governments that use U.S. weapons to commit human rights abuses. Biden [must halt](#) the [\\$735 million weapons sale](#) to Israel.

And finally, the Bridge to Terabithia also leads to...[socialism??](#)