



The Real Facts on the Iran Nuclear Deal

Opponents of the deal to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran make arguments based on fiction. Key tenants of their rhetoric, like zero-enrichment as a legitimate possibility, or that any autonomous country would allow 100% unrestricted access to its military facilities, are a fantasy.

No one on either side of the debate wants to see Iran with a nuclear weapon. But the merits of the deal come down to a few simple questions: will a world with a final agreement implemented be safer than without? Is the deal better than the status quo? **The answer is yes on both accounts.**

Claim 1: Iran can't be trusted and won't keep its end of the deal.

The Facts:

The deal is not based on trust. It is based on verification. No one can predict the future; it's impossible to know whether or not Iran will keep its end of the deal. But no deal means no verification, and without verification we are in a far worse position to curtail Iran's nuclear program.

It is also important to keep in mind the alternatives, or lack of alternatives, to this diplomatic solution: 1) we bomb Iran, 2) we implement new sanctions on Iran, or 3) we do nothing. U.S. intelligence does not think Iran is currently seeking nuclear weapons. Walking away from the negotiations leaves three terrible options that might *encourage* Iran to race for the bomb.

Our best option for a nuclear weapons free Iran is not to trust, but to verify, that Iran is complying with its side of the deal. Even if Iran cheats, with the deal, we'll know far more about Iran's nuclear activities than we do now. And that will mean that all of the alternatives—including the least desirable, military action—will be more effective.

Claim 2: The deal, if implemented, will expire after 10 or 15 years and allow Iran to build a nuclear weapon at that time.

The Facts:

According to the comprehensive agreement, for at least 15 years, Iran will not enrich uranium up to 3.67 percent (Uranium enriched at 20% or lower is considered low enriched uranium (LEU); Uranium enriched above 90% is weapons grade.) This does not, however, mean that on day one of year 16, Iran will have enough weapons-grade uranium to build a bomb.

And deal or no deal, yes, on year 16, day one Iran *could* begin enriching uranium beyond 3.67 percent. But without this deal, Iran *could* head for a bomb *tomorrow*.

Some aspects of the agreement will last 25 years, including the monitoring of Iran's uranium mines and supply chain. Other aspects, such as the implementation of robust IAEA safeguards, will be in perpetuity.

Ultimately, the deal buys us time. It buys the United States and its allies decades to curtail Iran's regional adventurism and address any attempts to develop a nuclear weapon.

Claim 3: The deal is bad because Iran doesn't have to reveal the specifics of all of its past nuclear activities.

The Facts:

Knowledge of *all* of Iran's past military activities is not necessary to ensure Iran is in compliance with the stipulations of the deal.

U.S. intelligence has determined the extent to which Iran has pursued nuclear weapons in the past, and knows that Iran stopped pursuing research on a potential nuclear weapons program in 2003.

We can't change the past, but we can verify that Iran is complying with the parameters of the deal as their implemented, to ensure those pre-2003 activities are over for good.

Verification of Iran's nuclear activities over the next twenty years is far more important to our national security than what happened 20 years ago.

Claim 4: The Deal is bad because it doesn't allow unfettered access to Iran's military facilities.

The Facts:

Inspections will be critical to the verification process. But no sovereign nation would give IAEA inspectors *unrestricted* access to sensitive sites, including military facilities, arbitrarily. According to Jim Walsh, international security expert at MIT and Council for a Livable World Board Member, "Achieving the objective of timely notice does not require that IAEA have instant or all encompassing knowledge of everything that Iran does. Rather it requires the ability to collect information on potential violations such that the United States and the international community can take actions to end and reverse non-compliance before Iran is able to acquire a nuclear weapon."

Furthermore, under the comprehensive agreement between the P5+1 and Iran, Iran will implement an Additional Protocol, which sets requirements and provides the legal authority for IAEA inspectors to access all nuclear and suspected nuclear facilities in perpetuity.

Claim 5: 24 days is more than enough time for Iran to cover up its illicit nuclear activities.

The Facts: The IAEA will have access to any suspected nuclear facility (or any place inspectors suspect might be conducting illicit nuclear activities) if the majority of a joint commission, comprised of one representative from each p5+1 country plus Iran, votes to grant them access. Unlike the UN Security Council, no one party gets a veto on this commissions. That means Russia, China and Iran can't prevent inspections.

This approval process takes, at most, 24 days to complete. But 24 days is not enough time for Iran to deconstruct any substantial enrichment architecture. According to Gary Samore, Executive Director for

Research at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University, “that wouldn’t be enough time to hide evidence of the uranium enrichment facilities Iran would need to create the fissile material required for a bomb.”

The half-life of nuclear material is thousands of years. If Iran had *ever* had material that could be used to make a nuclear bomb at a given location, inspectors would be able to find traces of it.

The physical structures needed to enrich weapons-grade uranium or plutonium won’t be easy to covertly deconstruct in 24 days. Furthermore, international intelligence apparatuses will surely have their eye on any facility they suspect is conducting illicit nuclear activities.

Claim 6: Sanctions relief for Iran should be tied to Iran’s support for terrorism and human rights abuses.

The Facts:

Tying sanctions to Iran’s alleged illicit activities is outside the scope of the nuclear negotiations. The purpose of the deal is to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. Period. Marrying issues unrelated to Iran’s nuclear program, such as terrorism and human rights, would quash any prospect for success on the nuclear front.

But for now, poison pills have been kept at bay. Congress rejected tying sanctions relief to a requirement that the administration declare that Iran is not supporting terrorism against Americans – an amendment offered by Senator Barrasso (R-Wyo.) to the Iran Nuclear Review Act passed in April. The bill passed without this and other poison pill amendments.

Claim 7: Iran will use sanctions relief to pursue regional hegemony and further support terrorism.

The Facts:

According to Richard Nephew, Program Director of Economic Statecraft, Sanctions and Energy Markets at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University, “the issue of Iranian support for terrorism is not whether they have the financial resources to do it but rather whether they have the political will, opportunity, and foreign policy incentive ... to do so. A nuclear deal will not change this.”

Iran’s nuclear program and potential pursuit of regional hegemony are two separate issues. Iran has a lot of economic recovery and development to do. Iranian President Rouhani has promised to revive the economy by completing formerly halted development projects, and bringing down the rate of inflation—for which the Iranian people have been demanding.

Claim 8: So-called “snapback” sanctions are a major concession to Iran.

The Facts:

In late May 2015 the P5+1 announced a “snapback” mechanism for re-imposing U.N. sanctions on Iran if they fail to comply with the deal. Critics like Jennifer Rubin of the Washington Post mischaracterized it as a concession to the Iranians. In reality, the snapback mechanism was designed by the P5+1 without Iran’s input,

although Iran will have to agree to it. The IAEA will monitor Iran's nuclear facilities and report back to the United Nations Security Council its findings. If a violation is reported, the snapback mechanism kicks in and sanctions are re-imposed. Snapback sanctions are by no means a concession to Iran - Iran only gets relief if it plays by the rules.

If anyone made concessions, it's Russia and China, who are notoriously reluctant to give up their Security Council veto, but will do so for the sake of a final deal.

Sanctions against Iran aren't homogenous; different sanctions will affect Iran's economy in different ways. Easing restrictions on Iran's ability to compete in foreign markets, for instance, *could* greatly impact Iran's economy, but that will take years, if ever, to happen. And thanks to the Iran Nuclear Review Act, Congress will have 60 days to review the details of the agreement before any congressionally enacted sanctions are lifted.

Claim 9: Lifting the UN embargo on conventional arms transfers to Iran will embolden Iran and lead to further instability in the region.

The Facts:

The conventional arms embargo was adopted as a part of UN Security Council resolution in 2010. Because the embargo was included in the sanctions against Iran's nuclear program, the comprehensive agreement permits a phased lifting of the United Nations embargo on conventional arms transfers to Iran. The embargo won't be lifted right away, though; it will continue for at least 5 more years.

Critics claim that the eventual lifting of these sanctions will facilitate Iran's "imperial surge." However, many of Iran's staunchest foes, including Israel and Saudi Arabia, have much more advanced weaponry than Iran. The United States will continue to offer military assistance to these countries to counter Iran.

Furthermore, Saudi Arabia spends more than four times what Iran spends on its military. And Saudi Arabia plus the United Arab Emirates, two of the United States' strongest allies in the region, spend a combined 60% of the Middle East's overall military spending.

Claim 10: Iran gets to have its cake and eat it, too: sanctions relief and keep its nuclear program.

The Facts:

Abolishing Iran's entire nuclear program—including its nuclear energy infrastructure—was never on the table. And arguing for zero enrichment is something of a unicorn argument, and it isn't part of the final agreement. Yes, Iran gets to keep enriching Uranium for power. But the final deal, if implemented, will cut off all paths to a nuclear bomb: uranium, plutonium, and covert action. Without a deal, Iran's path to a bomb is unobstructed.

Sanctions relief for Iran is tied to verification by the IAEA that Iran is complying with the parameters of the deal. Yes, Iran gets sanctions relief. And in return, the world gets a nuclear weapons free Iran.