

# Strengthening the Iran Nuclear Agreement

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The nuclear agreement between the United States and its negotiating partners (P5+1), and Iran, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), has reached [Adoption Day](#), after surviving a 60-day congressional review period and a parliamentary review in Iran. The focus has now shifted towards implementing the agreement, as each party works to meet their respective commitments.

Congress still has a role to play, and can strengthen the agreement's effectiveness by providing the resources and oversight necessary to ensure its successful implementation. But Congress can also negatively affect implementation by withholding funding or introducing legislation that could undermine the agreement. Below are some policy recommendations for ways to strengthen the agreement, along with detrimental policies that should be avoided.

## **Additional Funding for Monitoring and Verification:**

*Constructive:* The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the international nuclear watchdog tasked with monitoring and verifying the JCPOA, will require additional funding to monitor and effectively safeguard Iran's nuclear program. According to Director General Yukiya Amano, the [IAEA will require roughly \\$10.5 million a year](#) to carry out the verification and monitoring of Iran's nuclear-related commitments. These funds will ensure that the IAEA has the inspectors, equipment, and facilities necessary to achieve continuous monitoring of Iran's nuclear facilities and its uranium and centrifuge supply chains.

*Destructive:* Unfortunately, some members of Congress are treating this essential funding as a political football. [Senator Lindsay Graham \(R-N.C.\)](#), chairman of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee responsible for this funding, has threatened to block any transfer of funds to implement the agreement. \$10.5 million a year is a small price to pay to avoid a nuclear-armed Iran. Congress should ignore this political stunt and strengthen the verification regime by providing the IAEA with the funding it requires to effectively verify that Iran is living up to its obligations under the JCPOA.

## **Tough Enforcement of Sanctions if Iran Cheats:**

*Constructive:* In addition to monitoring the agreement and ensuring all parties are in full compliance, the international community should be prepared to enforce sanctions if Iran cheats. The United States, the European Union, and the United Nations will waive sanctions related to Iran's nuclear program once the IAEA verifies that Iran has completed its initial obligations. This sanctions relief is contingent on Iran's continued compliance with the agreement.

While the snapback sanction procedure for the United Nations offers the P5+1 considerable leverage for dealing with a potential Iranian violation, the United States should coordinate with its allies to build consensus around the need to hold Iran accountable if it cheats, strengthening both deterrence against an Iranian violation and the effectiveness of responses if lifted sanctions must be snapped back. Establishing these commitments now will provide the United States with leverage if countries are hesitant to re-impose sanctions that will hurt their own economies.

*Destructive:* The United States has the authority to impose sanctions on Iran in response to violations of the agreement, or Iran's sponsorship of terrorism and human rights violations. The United States does not, however, have the right to re-impose nuclear-related sanctions under the guise of addressing Iran's other behavior. This would violate the JCPOA, undermine implementation of the agreement, and isolate the United States from its negotiating partners.

### **Accountability and Transparency:**

*Constructive:* Congress should closely review the implementation of the JCPOA to ensure transparency and accountability. As part of the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act, Congress will receive assessments from the executive branch on how the agreement is being implemented. These reports will track the effectiveness of verification and potential breaches in compliance by parties to the agreement. Congress should establish a congressional commission to review these reports and provide oversight throughout the implementation of the agreement.

*Destructive:* Efforts by Congress to reinterpret the requirements of the JCPOA are not productive and could undermine the implementation of the agreement, isolating the United States. Although the JCPOA is designed specifically to address Iran's nuclear-related behavior, Congress has drafted legislation to place new restrictions on sanctions relief until Iran complies with additional obligations unrelated to their nuclear program. While American hostages held in Iran and Iran's threats to the United States and Israel are serious concerns and require diligent efforts, these issues are outside the scope of this agreement and should continue to be addressed in another context. Conflating this approach after the agreement has been finalized is counterproductive and could result in a failure to curb both Iran's nuclear and other behavior.

### **Strengthen Non-Proliferation Policy**

*Constructive:* The JCPOA establishes tough nonproliferation restrictions on Iran, blocking all paths to a nuclear weapon for at least 15 years. It has also brought nuclear nonproliferation into the international spotlight. The United States should seize this opportunity and enforce other policies to strengthen nonproliferation initiatives, placing further obstructions between Iran or any nation, and a nuclear weapon.

There are several opportunities for the United States to bolster nonproliferation efforts in the Middle East. One such opportunity is to press for ratification and implementation of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which would end nuclear testing and utilize a global network of sensors to detect detonations. Currently, the United States, Israel, Iran and Egypt are among the eight remaining states that must ratify the treaty before it can go into effect. Iran's ratification would reaffirm Tehran's commitment to a purely peaceful nuclear program and enforce an additional obstacle for countries attempting to develop or improve nuclear weapons;

these benefits would come at little cost to the United States, which has not conducted a nuclear test since 1992 and has the technology to maintain its nuclear arsenal without conducting explosive testing.

Another opportunity is to strengthen international efforts to restrict the spread of proliferation materials and technology, such as the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). The MTCR is a voluntary association of countries that have agreed to restrict the transfer of ballistic missile technology to countries that may use the technology to develop delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction. The United States should engage with its partners to strengthen the norms of restricting transfers to Iran and other countries that pose a proliferation risk. The PSI is a coordinated effort by over 100 countries to monitor and interdict the transfer of materials and technologies used in the development of weapons of mass destruction. The United States should bolster this global effort by assisting in the exchange of relevant intelligence information and supporting interdiction efforts and economic punishments for those involved in the transfer of these items.

*Destructive:* Failing to fund the IAEA or U.S. nonproliferation initiatives directly reduces their ability to detect and interdict the transfer of dangerous materials and technology. In addition, the continued opposition by some in Congress towards ratification of the CTBT represents a wasted opportunity to strengthen global nonproliferation at no cost to our national security.

### **Beyond the Agreement:**

In addition to strengthening implementation of the agreement itself, there are several things that the United States should do to increase stability and security in the region.

*Constructive:* As a result of the JCPOA, new diplomatic channels for dialogue are available for the first time in decades between Iran and the United States. Not only can these channels be used to resolve disputes regarding implementation of the agreement, but they can foster new opportunities for engagement with Iran in other areas of common interest.

In addition, the United States should continue to engage with its allies in the region. This includes continued intelligence sharing and strategic collaboration efforts between the United States and Israel. Also, the United States can [work with the Gulf Cooperation Council](#) to exchange information and coordinate responses to Iranian acts of aggression.

*Destructive:* Congress should resist the urge to politically posture in an attempt to undermine implementation of the agreement. Passing a conditional Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) or other provocative legislation will only serve to bolster hardliners in Iran and prolong tit-for-tat hostilities between the United States, its allies and Iran. In addition, transferring [Massive Ordnance Penetrators \(MOPs\) to Israel](#), regardless of the fact that Israel has no capacity or desire for these weapons, is not productive or beneficial to Israel or the security situation in the region.