



# Here's A Primer On Biden's Off The Rails Iran Nuclear Deal

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Nuclear talks with Iran are at an impasse. Just when a deal seemed imminent, Tehran resurrected a demand that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) cease an investigation into potentially illegal uranium enrichment at three undeclared locations.

As well, Iran fired up advanced IR-6 centrifuges at an underground nuclear facility at Natanz, which will enhance the regime's ability to produce weapons-grade uranium. Deputy U.S. Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, one of the architects of the failed 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) deal, said the two sides were at a "stalemate." The Biden administration seems unlikely to make further concessions to the Mullahs with growing bipartisan opposition to the deal and midterm elections on the horizon.

This unexpected reprieve gives the administration a chance to reconsider an agreement that will not be any more successful than the 2015 nuclear deal, and which may even be worse.

## This Isn't About Arms Control

The U.S. and its European allies may be talking about arms control at Vienna, but for Iran the issue is money. Tehran wants Western sanctions lifted and Iranian assets unfrozen, which could result in perhaps \$100 billion a year flowing to the regime.

In exchange, Iran promises to freeze its nuclear enrichment program, though it can keep uranium it has already enriched. The 2015 JCPOA deal used the same "trading money for a promise" framework, and resulted in a windfall for Iran that helped fund destabilizing activities and terrorism in Syria, Lebanon, Gaza and Yemen. There is no reason to believe this time will be any different.

## The Deal Will Not Stop Iran's Nuclear Program

The White House claims that the new deal will have robust monitoring and verification to make sure Iran keeps its promise not to pursue nuclear capability. But the same claims were made about the JCPOA; and reports from government agencies, the UN, and documents from Iran's own nuclear archive demonstrated that Iran was either concealing vital information about its nuclear program or outright cheating.

There is no reason to believe that monitoring and verification will be any more effective this time around. Plus, Iran's nuclear program is now far more robust than it used to be.

Furthermore, if the new deal has a "termination day," like the original JCPOA did, Iran will be free to develop whatever weapons it wants after the agreement sunsets. We would know more about details like this had congressional Democrats not blocked a Republican attempt to have the draft language published.

## The New Deal Is Not Comprehensive

Iran insisted from the beginning that negotiations would only focus on nuclear weapons development, and the White House conceded.

This leaves undiscussed Tehran's ballistic missile program, its ongoing support for terrorist and guerilla groups and its miserable human rights record. The narrow focus on the nuclear issue leaves these other challenges unresolved. And as noted, Iran will have a fresh cash infusion to help underwrite its malign activities.

## The Iran Deal Is Unpopular In The Region

A new nuclear deal is not popular among our major Middle East allies. Israel, of course, views it as a threat. Saudi Arabia, which President Joe Biden has already alienated, also opposes the deal, seeing it as a cynical approach by the U.S. to pursue lower oil prices.

Some Arab states are so concerned about the agreement, and unsure of the U.S. commitment to regional security, that they are mending fences with Tehran just in case. On the other hand, China and Russia strongly back the agreement, which should be a warning to the White House, lest it think these countries have American interests at heart.

## **The Iran Deal Is Bad Politics**

It is hard to understand the Biden administration's pursuit of this agreement when it is so obviously damaging politically. A majority of Americans don't trust the president to negotiate an effective deal, and about as many support conducting cyberattacks on Iran's nuclear infrastructure as support a new agreement.

There is insufficient support in the Senate for a formal treaty, and even Congressional Democrats are divided on the matter. Concluding an unpopular nuclear agreement under these conditions will simply hand Republicans a 2024 election issue, whether Biden is running or not.