

Correcting the Critics of the Iran Nuclear Deal

July 22, 2015

From the standpoint of U.S. security, [the agreement](#) on Iran's nuclear program announced on July 14 is a very good one. Iran consented to a significant rollback of its nuclear capacity and to a level of monitoring far exceeding any other country. The main goal of the U.S. and its partners has been met: Iran's path to a nuclear weapon has been blocked.

Opponents of the deal have responded both by [misrepresenting](#) what the agreement actually entails, and by insisting upon a "better deal." Before talks even concluded, critics attempted to set red lines in a number of areas. Some of these were clearly intended as poison pills, provisions that Iran would never agree to. Beyond that, however, the opposition is distorting what the deal actually accomplishes. Let's examine some of those points.

CRITICS SAY: "This deal is dangerous because it fails to achieve 'anytime, anywhere' inspections... Inspections could require a 24-day approval process, giving Iran time to remove evidence of violations."

THE FACTS: No country would ever agree to "anytime, anywhere" inspections, and opposition groups were well aware of this when they listed this "condition" and got some of their friends in Congress to parrot it for them. Its mere presence makes it abundantly clear that is not about opposing a "bad deal," but rather opposing any deal, under any plausible conditions, no matter how good it is for American, or for that matter, Israeli security.



Iran's declared nuclear facilities will be under 24/7 surveillance by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). When requesting access to an undeclared but suspicious location, standard practice is to gain access with 24 hours' notice, but the IAEA can request access in less than 2 hours in certain circumstances. If access is disputed by Iran, it could take up to 24 days for the question to be resolved by the mechanism laid out in the JCPOA, but it is likely to take significantly less time. 24 days, however is nowhere near enough time to remove evidence of virtually any nuclear experimentation. It takes decades before all traces of such work vanish.

CRITICS SAY: The deal "is unclear to what extent Iran must come clean on its prior nuclear work."

THE FACTS: We know what Iran did in the past. Forcing a politically problematic admission from the Iranian leadership would threaten the deal for little or even no practical gains. We are already aware of the possible military dimensions (PMD) of Iran's prior work, the facilities they used and the supply chain they employed to stock



their nuclear materials. It was not necessary to threaten the ability to reach an agreement over this issue.

CRITICS SAY: The deal would provide “immediate, rather than gradual, sanctions relief...Virtually all economic, financial and energy sanctions would disappear.”

THE FACTS: Sanctions will actually be phased, with some immediate relief for Iran and other sanctions that will be lifted after much longer periods of Iranian compliance. Sanctions that relate to Iran’s support for terrorism, its human rights record, and other weapons programs are completely unaffected by this agreement. Indeed, many opportunities for direct American business will remain covered by the sanctions.



CRITICS SAY: The deal legitimizes Iran’s nuclear program...It begins lifting key restrictions in eight years and “grants Iran virtual instant breakout time after 15 years.”

THE FACTS: Some of the deal’s provisions expire after 10 or 15 years, some 25 and some never expire. Iran has agreed to the Additional Protocol which means it has agreed to a higher level of monitoring than any other country in the world, and that Protocol does not expire. By the time Iran can begin accumulating fissile materials, we will have had 10-15 years of monitoring Iran, including its supply chain. It will take Iran considerable time to then assemble a nuclear weapon if it intends to do so. Without a deal, Iran will reach that breakout capacity in just a few months.



CRITICS SAY: Iran will still have most of its nuclear infrastructure, and won’t have to dismantle any centrifuges or any nuclear facilities.

THE FACTS: Iran will be decommissioning more than 2/3 of all its centrifuges, and only using its more advanced units for research purposes. All centrifuges in use will be placed under 24/7 IAEA monitoring, and the IAEA will monitor the storage of the rest on the same 24/7 basis. Contrary to another opposition talking point, reinstalling the centrifuges is a very cumbersome process, so this limitation cannot be “[easily reversed](#).” Iran will also pour concrete into the core of the Arak reactor, rendering it permanently unusable, and will convert its reactor at Fordow so it can only be used for research purposes. Its remaining facilities, particularly the Natanz reactor, will also be under constant IAEA monitoring.



CRITICS SAY: The deal does not account for Israel’s concerns and was agreed to despite Israel’s objections.

THE FACTS: Israel, and especially Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has been saying for years that a nuclear-armed Iran must be prevented at all costs. This deal pushes Iran farther away from nuclear weapons capability than any other possible outcome by far.

Netanyahu’s tactics in working against the deal have been criticized by [many Israeli security experts](#). And, while [many Israelis agree](#) with Netanyahu that the deal is not good for Israel, Netanyahu’s confrontational behavior (which included leaks to international media that forced the United States to limit the information it shared with its close ally, as well as the infamous speech to Congress arranged behind the President’s back



earlier this year) eliminated many of the opportunities Israel might have had to have a louder voice in the talks. While Israelis certainly have legitimate concerns about this deal, the possibility of a nuclear Iran in the near future has been eliminated while the United States has [intensified its commitment](#) to Israel's security, as well as those of its [other regional allies](#), in the wake of this agreement.

CRITICS SAY: This is a bad deal.

THE FACTS: This is a very good deal that includes Iranian concessions that would have been considered pie-in-the-sky optimism two years ago. Unprecedented monitoring, some of which will be permanent; a massive rollback in Iran's current nuclear capability; a phased easing of nuclear-related sanctions only; a clear system for investigating suspect sites; and a clear mechanism for penalizing Iran for violations make this not only the best possible deal, but a very good one for the West by any standard.



The opposition knows this. That is why the talking points we have just examined range from being partial and misleading to outright falsehoods. The conditions they outlined throughout the process for what would constitute a "good deal" were always unrealistic and unattainable. Indeed, they seemed to be designed to eliminate any possibility of an agreement. That leads to the conclusion that nothing short of regime change would satisfy opponents of this deal.

The current deal may not be the most perfect solution imaginable, but it is a very good one that achieves its key goals for the U.S. That is not only because there are no viable alternatives to it (and there aren't, as the utter lack of any other suggestions by the opposition proves), but because this is a triumph of diplomacy that resulted in a good deal for all concerned.