



THE THREAT FROM IRAN



DIPLOMATIC DANCE: IRAN'S REJECTION OF U.S. OUTREACH EFFORTS

The international community has spent the last 10 years negotiating with Iran over its nuclear program with nothing to show for the effort. As the United States looks to start negotiations with newly elected Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, it must not forget Tehran's history of using talks to forestall pressure and continue its illicit activities. Iran cannot be allowed to advance its nuclear program while using negotiations as a delaying tactic.

TEHRAN'S TIMELINE OF REJECTION

The United States and our partners around the world have repeatedly tried to resolve the Iranian nuclear challenge through diplomatic engagement. Unfortunately, the Islamic Republic has used numerous rounds of negotiations to buy time to advance its illicit nuclear program.

DIPLOMATIC EFFORT:

In the 1990s, President Clinton tried to open a dialogue with Iranian President Mohammed Khatami. Clinton sent secret letters to Khatami urging talks, lifted some sanctions and designated the M.E.K.—an anti-regime organization—a terrorist group. The administration also publicly apologized for America's role in the 1953 coup against Iran's Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh.

IRAN'S RESPONSE:

Despite being led by a president avowedly interested in a "dialogue of civilizations" with the West, the Iranian government continued its support for terrorism and accelerated its clandestine nuclear program.

1990s

2000

DIPLOMATIC EFFORT:

In 2000, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright sought to meet alone with her Iranian counterpart on the sidelines of a U.N. Afghanistan conference.

IRAN'S RESPONSE:

Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi failed to show up to the scheduled meeting.

DIPLOMATIC EFFORT:

In 2003, Britain, France and Germany (known collectively as the E.U.-3) opened negotiations with Iran on its nuclear program, and offered significant incentives to Tehran to give up its illicit efforts.

IRAN'S RESPONSE:

While Iran initially agreed to "voluntarily suspend all uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities as defined by the IAEA," the regime refused to engage in serious negotiations and ultimately resumed its enrichment activities. Iranian leaders later boasted that they exploited the negotiations by conducting research on sensitive nuclear matters where Tehran had previously lagged.

2003

2004

DIPLOMATIC EFFORT:

In November 2004, the Bush administration concretely supported the E.U.-3 negotiations with Iran by agreeing in principle to drop its objection to Iran's application to the World Trade Organization and by licensing the export to Iran of spare parts for civilian aircraft.

IRAN'S RESPONSE:

Iran used the period of negotiations to further its nuclear program and prepare to resume enrichment.

DIPLOMATIC EFFORT:

In May 2006, the United States announced that it would join multilateral talks with Iran if Tehran suspended enrichment. The five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and Germany – known as the P5+1 – offered the Iranians a major package of economic and security incentives.

IRAN'S RESPONSE:

After taking three months to consider the package, Iran rejected the offer and continued accelerating its nuclear enrichment activities.

2006

2008

DIPLOMATIC EFFORT:

In 2009, the Obama administration proposed a “fuel swap” agreement with Iran. The offer would have permitted Iran to receive uranium enriched to nearly 20 percent to fuel a medical research reactor if it agreed to send part of its existing stockpile of low enriched uranium outside of the country.

IRAN'S RESPONSE:

Iran rejected the offer and began to enrich uranium closer to the 20 percent level.

2009

2012-2013

DIPLOMATIC EFFORT:

In 2008, the P5+1 proposed an expanded version of the incentives package presented to Iran two years earlier, offering assistance for Iranian energy programs and the normalization of trade relations with the Islamic Republic.

IRAN'S RESPONSE:

Talks regarding the package quickly broke down when Tehran refused to make any compromises over its nuclear program.

DIPLOMATIC EFFORT:

In 2012 and 2013, the P5+1 offered Iran significant sanctions relief – including lifting sanctions on precious metal exports to Iran – in exchange for Tehran’s termination of limited specific nuclear-related activity and its commitment to transparency.

IRAN'S RESPONSE:

Iran refused to accept this offer, made no counter proposal, and continued to advance its nuclear program.



“ We are open to discussions both through the P5-plus-1 and through potential bilateral channels ... but there has to be a serious recognition that the sanctions we put in place ... will not be lifted in the absence of significant steps in showing the international community that Iran is not pursuing a nuclear weapon. ”

– President Barack Obama, June 17, 2013

America should couple its willingness to negotiate with increased pressure on Iran.

- The United States should persuade nations still buying Iranian oil to significantly reduce their purchases. Countries that violate U.S. law, including China and Turkey, must face consequences, including sanctioning financial institutions involved in oil purchases.
- Washington should identify and sanction financial institutions and individuals conducting financial transactions with or providing services to the Central Bank of Iran or other sanctioned banks. The EU must stop Iran from conducting transactions in Euros.
- The United States should consider barring companies or individuals from doing business in the United States if they engage in significant commercial trade with Iran.
- Congress and the Obama administration should continue to send a strong message that all options are on the table, and that the United States is prepared to use all of the instruments of its power to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability.
- As President Obama said during his trip to Israel in March, “America will do what we must to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran.”
- The United States must maintain a strong physical presence in the Persian Gulf and the broader Middle East to deter Iran and give credibility to the president’s statements.