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## ***Unboxing The Iran Nuclear Deal***

*“Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate.”*

President Kennedy, quoted by President Obama.

Eight venturesome countries, two years of fierce negotiations, and nearly four decades of bloody conflict and volatile regional adversity have given birth to the 159 page ‘Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action,’ aka the *Iran Nuclear Deal*.

As Shakespeare prophesied with satirical accuracy, “Ancient grudge breaks forth to new mutiny, and civil blood makes civil hands unclean.” This particular ancient grudge persists as a seemingly unsolvable conflict of interest: The Islamic Republic of Iran wants to continue its peaceful nuclear program, and the rest of the world doesn’t trust them to be able to tell the difference between ‘*peaceful*’ and ‘*nuclear threat*.’

The deterrents so far have been extensive sanctions and comprehensive arms embargoes. These have effectively crippled the development of the Iranian economy, stunting multinational investment and engendering further mutiny among the already bitter Iranian people. Proxy military and revolutionary groups like Hezbollah have responded with increased vehemence and urgency.

Contrary to Washington’s dazzlingly clear presentations (complete with theme music and hashtag!) there is nothing simple or predictable about this deal or its context. Should it work however, the Iranian Nuclear Deal could be the most important step in the stabilisation of the Middle East in modern history.

### **What is it?**

*The raw components of the deal are:*

Iran must completely halt its nuclear weapons program by reducing its stockpile of Uranium by 98%, decommissioning nearly two thirds of its centrifuges, dismantling the systems in place to create weapons-grade plutonium and agreeing to strict, thorough and continual nuclear monitoring.

Iran will effectively be unable to make a bomb for at least ten years.

In return the USA - along with the rest of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and European Union - will lift all nuclear-related economic and financial sanctions currently in place and eventually lift both the arms and missile embargoes. This will open up Iran to foreign and multinational investment, new business opportunities and allow between \$50-\$150 Billion in sanction relief into their economy.

Iran will suddenly be a developing economy again, able to pursue prosperity for its people.

This certainly sounds win-win, but if that is the case then why is the deal receiving substantial objections from many corners - and why did Obama need to threaten a veto if it doesn't pass through congress unmolested?

## **Complications, Quandaries and Conceivable Catastrophes**

***First - This deal will redistribute the balance of power in the region.***

Saudi Arabia is the prevailing force in the middle east. It is somewhat responsible for keeping Iran in check, and would lose its 'level-headed big brother' status if the deal goes through. Iran, being reestablished as a local power, could find itself building allies and staging skirmishes in the surrounding conflict regions of Libya, Yemen and Syria. This could seriously aggravate the neighbourhood.

Closer to home, there is a risk that the sudden influx of money from unfrozen Iranian assets could be funnelled into paramilitary and proxy groups like Hezbollah, augmenting the marginalisation of moderates and the overall polarisation of people.

***Second - The economic opportunities will be at best a mixed bag.***

Most of the economic potential in the short term will come from small to medium companies from Asia and Europe. Multinational and larger US companies will need to change internal compliance policies before they can make any moves at all. Even once they are able, US companies might find reluctance when seeking deals with a nation that has been a 'sworn adversary' for 35 years.

Iran is enthusiastically wanting to position itself in an already oversaturated oil market dominated mostly by Saudi Arabia.

***Third - American influence at home and abroad could be weakened.***

Both Israel and Saudi Arabia have expressed surprise and reluctance at these negotiations. The US-Gulf and US-Israel alliances will continue to be essential, as any intelligence gathering or action in the area will need these friendly nations to stay on board.

In the US, congress is looking at some lengthy debates and a possible presidential veto that could weaken relationships on The Hill for years to come. This deal could make or break the remainder of the Obama Presidency and could dominate the next Presidential race.

#### ***Fourth - The Plethora of Unanswered Questions.***

Here's a few:

- What happens after the deal elapses in ten or fifteen years? Is the postponement of nuclear weapons enough?
- Will the Independent Examiners (IAEA) be able to access the sites easily when required?
- Do Iran and the US have the same understanding of the terms and framework of the deal?
- What does the US commitment to human rights look like in light of this deal?

### **Confident Cause to Celebrate**

#### ***First - A clear mandate to not build nuclear weapons.***

A nuclear Iran is a terrifying concept that we cannot consider. The current Iranian stockpile of Uranium would allow them to build eight bombs, and the Nuclear Deal will limit this to less than the amount required for one.

The IAEA will have monitoring access to every single stage of the nuclear process, which should stop any back door deals, black market transactions or slothful oversights from occurring.

According to the Whitehouse, the deal means "every pathway to a nuclear weapon is cut off."

#### ***Second - An economic boom for Iran that allows its people pursue prosperity.***

The Iranian people desperately need infrastructure. They need healthcare, education, rebuilt roads and plumbing - and yes they do need to review defence spending. The ability to do business on the global stage will allow them to grow as a developing economy again.

There is easy potential for the tourist industry almost immediately by investing in hotels, hospitality and renewing their passenger jets and airports. There is a market for pharmaceutical investment, financial systems and banks. Finally, as Iran loves technology, companies like Apple could find a new marketplace there as well.

***Third - It lets the moderates come out of hiding and develop a peaceful future.***

An economically developing nation would allow moderate, progress seeking leaders to come out of the woodwork and steer the public consciousness away from the prevailing and unsettling winds of revolution.

This should unite its people more clearly and treat extreme wings of the military as clear terrorist threats to home and national security - rather than a viable alternative to government.

A place in the global marketplace run by moderate leaders will allow far more dialogue to happen and - one would hope - old grudges to dissipate in the name of capitalistic development.

**Where Does This Leave Us?**

All complication and celebration considered there seems to be very little reason - in the name of peace and prosperity - not to move forward.

President Obama says that we “give nothing up by testing if this can be solved peacefully.” Should Iran default on their agreements, options for sanctions, embargoes and military actions are still available.

The problem will always be trust and confidence, but if we don't get into the water we'll never know if we can swim.