



The Cyrus Cylinder استوانه کوروش or Cyrus Charter منشور کوروش was discovered under the foundation of a Babylonian palace in 1879, making it perhaps the oldest time capsule on record. It commemorates Cyrus' victory over Babylonia in 539 BC and sets out the rights of subjects in his expanding empire. It is often commemorated as the oldest charter of human rights in the world.

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### **Note From the Editor** **Debating Iran Strategy** By Paul Barker

While there is wide diversity of opinion on the best strategies for addressing concerns with Iran, there is at least broad consensus that:

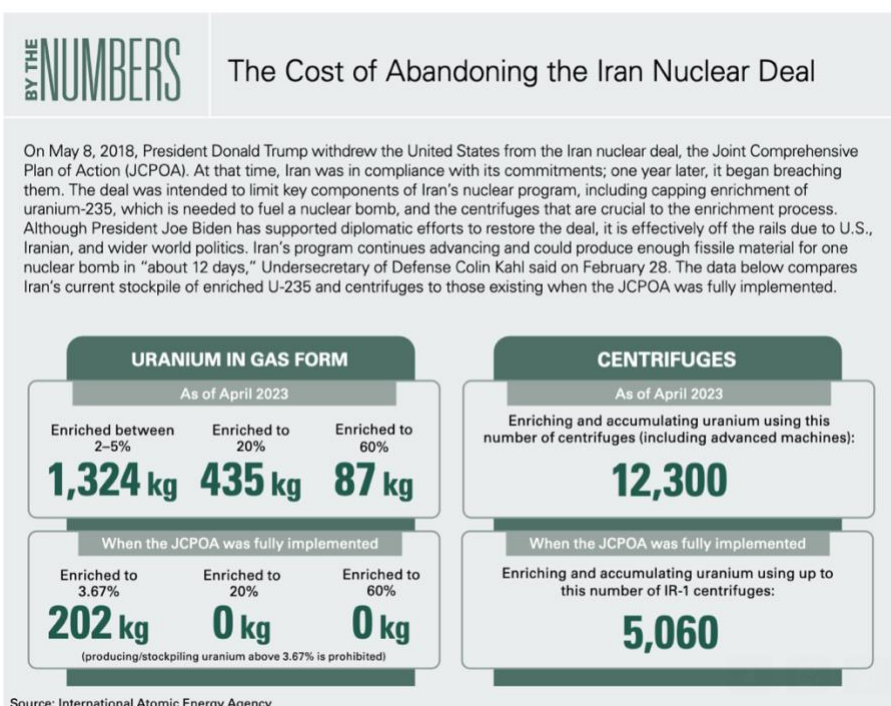
- It would be very bad for Iran to have nuclear weapons;
- Iran's human rights record is appalling;
- Iran's drone sales to Russia for use against Ukraine is reprehensible;
- Iran's military assistance to actors in a half dozen states in the Middle East is destabilizing; and
- A US and/or Israeli military campaign or war against Iran would be disastrous for all parties.

Iran's government is hardly the only bad actor in a dangerous neighborhood, and arguments can be held over which is the worst actor. But roads to peace are negotiated with enemies, not friends, so the debate on US Iran policy must not be whether or not to pursue diplomatic strategies, but how most effectively to do that. To this end Kelsey Davenport wrote [The Iranian Nuclear Crisis: Time for Plan B](#) in December 2022. In the past month two valuable additions to this dialogue have been added by Ali Vaez and

Vali Nasr in [The Path to a New Iran Deal](#) and J- Street in [After “Maximum Pressure”:  
Formulating an Effective US Strategy on Iran.](#)

Unhelpfully, the Republican Study Group is pushing 6 bills designed to block any diplomatic effort to decrease tensions between the US and Iran. The RNC intends to slip these provisions into the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) as it moves through congress this summer. The effect would be to make impossible any negotiations or other steps by the Biden administration to use diplomacy to decrease tensions with Iran and the US.

Hopefully you are already registered as a participant in the upcoming PCIA conference which will be held in Chicago from 25-28 May 2023. During the conference a panel of experts – John Limbert, Assal Rad and Behnam Ben Talabu – will share their thoughts and answer questions from the audience on the theme of understanding Iran today and in that context what would be the most appropriate Iran policy path for the US to follow.



## Diplomatic Options Moving Forward

[After “Maximum Pressure”:  
Formulating an Effective US Strategy on Iran, J-Street,  
2023/5/8](#)

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS (IN BRIEF)

1. Maintain proactive diplomacy on prisoner release.
2. Seek initial nuclear de-escalation through complementary, though not formally agreed, mutual steps.
3. Seek a narrow multilateral non-proliferation agreement following positive outcomes on prisoner releases and initial de-escalatory steps.
4. Make clear to Iran that acting in good faith on nuclear de-escalation in addition to ending its supply of drones and other offensive arms to Russia will help it avoid snapback.
5. Support the human rights and well-being of Iranian civilians with careful sanctions calibration and enhanced opportunities.
6. Maintain military deterrence, but do not escalate.
7. Encourage regionally-led diplomacy on a range of issues.

## [The Path to a New Iran Deal](#), Ali Vaez and Vali Nasr, Foreign Affairs, 2023/5/8

### *A Regional Agreement Could Succeed Where Washington Failed*

A U.S.-Iranian deal may not be feasible, but as Arab monarchies of the Persian Gulf forge better ties with Tehran, what was once impossible—a regional agreement that simultaneously tackles Iran’s meddling in the Arabian Peninsula and its nuclear program—is now entirely conceivable. Unlike the JCPOA, this kind of deal would generate buy-in from countries near Iran, making it far more sustainable. It would give Iran more meaningful and lasting economic relief. It could permanently, not temporarily, contain Iran’s nuclear program, and it might reduce Tehran’s support for troublesome militias in the region. In doing so, such a deal could bring more stability to a part of the world that sorely needs it.

## **Comment on Vaez/Nasr Proposal for Regional Solution**

**By Brad Hanson Khaaf, Shiraz 1973-76**

Many persons for years have argued that the best way forward to security and stability in the Middle East is for the regional states themselves to agree on a regional security framework and implement it step by step with confidence building measures testing the seriousness of the various regional states, with outside powers blessing a regional agreement and tacitly supporting it. Nasr and Vaez’s proposal is a variation on this, adding the important nuclear issue to the mix.

I am not optimistic that now is a propitious time for the regional states to move forward on such a proposal. Reestablishing diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran is a good, positive step that could defuse tense military situations in the future. Open lines of communication are always useful. However, Arab-Iranian and Sunni-Shi’a differences go back centuries and will not so quickly be reconciled.

Furthermore, it is possible that the hardliners controlling Iran’s government really do not want to give up the leverage they think they wield over some Arab states by their malign regional activities. That might change if domestic protests focus more on the costs of Iranian interventions in their broad assault on the ruling regime and the Iranian economy spirals downward. Certainly, Iranian hardliners would like US and EU sanctions to be lifted, but they have been unwilling to show sufficient flexibility on the nuclear issue to achieve this over the last two years of tortuous JCPOA negotiations. Perhaps, they think they are doing just fine at this time with their trade with China and Russia, who care nothing about Iran’s human rights abuses, and view Chinese and Russian evasion of US and EU sanctions as creating gaping holes in the US and EU sanctions with the US and EU reluctant, in the case of China, at least, to do anything to deter their sanctions evasions. Dangling Saudi investment in Iran might tempt them to take a few confidence-building steps vis-a-vis Saudi Arabia and perhaps the UAE, but I seriously doubt that would include on the nuclear issue. It is hard to know what Iranian hardliners really think, but one thing is certain. Their top priority is regime survival. So far it has weathered and survived the most serious demonstrations in a generation. Learning from the fate of Qaddafi abstaining from nuclear weapons, Ukraine’s failed security guarantees from the US, UK, and Russia for giving up its nuclear weapons, and the current case of North Korea, Iranian hardliners may well believe that it is essential to their regime’s survival to retain the nuclear weaponization option. Thus, they may see

very little reward as well as no need for walking back their nuclear program and giving up the nuclear weaponization option.

As Vaez and Nasr note, their Arab interlocutors say such a regional agreement would have to have US support. That might be difficult to get in our highly polarized, politicized domestic political environment, especially as the presidential campaign gets under way. No major Republican leader is likely to support it, especially if Israel opposes it. It is doubtful that the Biden administration would put it high on their political agenda in the midst of a presidential campaign. It is improbable that the Biden Administration would lift major economic sanctions based on a regional agreement with Iran, to which the US is not a direct party, as long as Iran is still supplying Russia with drones and other military support in its war on Ukraine, and while Iran is still committing major human rights abuses.

I do not dismiss Nasr and Vaez's proposal. It is thoughtful and useful reflection on a possible way forward. However, I think it needs more quiet, track two diplomacy to see how far the various regional parties might go towards a regional security agreement and how they might try to get buy in from other regional states including Israel, and the US, the EU, Russia and China. I very much hope this is ongoing but do not know if it is. To succeed major shifts in the in the mindsets of the Iranian hardliners and the leaders of other regional states are necessary.

[Keynote Address by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on U.S. ME Policy, Jake Sullivan, 2023/5/4](#)

[Europe Presses White House to Address Iran's Growing Nuclear Program, Laurence Norman, WSJ, 2023/5/12](#)

U.S. officials say they are still discussing options to resume diplomacy

[Wendy Sherman, U.S. Diplomat Known for 'Hard Conversations in Hard Places,' to Retire, Edward Wong, NYT, 2023/5/12](#)

She began her first diplomatic job 30 years ago, led talks on the Iran nuclear deal and grapples with China and Russia. She is also the first woman to be deputy secretary of state. Her toughest diplomatic assignment was arguably leading U.S. negotiators in talks with Iran over a nuclear deal during the Obama administration.

## **Iranian Political Movements**

[The "Save Iran" virtual dialogue conference, NIAC, 2023/4/21-22](#)

The "[Save Iran](#)" virtual dialogue conference took place on April 21st and 22nd, attracting over 40 political, social, and human rights advocates from both inside and outside Iran. Among them were eight incarcerated participants, who contributed to the virtual gathering through transmitted messages. Given the long track record of activism within Iran of the participants, as well as the costs they have borne as a result of their activities and beliefs, it offered a significant glimpse into how Iran's movement for democracy and human rights is evolving following the outbreak of nationwide protests in September. Critically, much of the discussion was on internal solutions to internal problems.

[Three Arrested in Connection with "Save Iran" Conference, NIAC, 2023/4/27](#)

[Supreme Leader Rejects Referendums](#), USIP, 2023/4/21

[Timeline: Assassinations of Iranian Clerics](#), USIP, 2023/4/27

[Iranian Foreign Policy: Developments Under President Raisi](#), Brooke Lowe, AIC, 2023/4/13

[White House: Iran and Russia in talks on more advanced drones; Pentagon steps up patrols to deter Iran harassment in Strait of Hormuz](#), Laura Rozen, Subtrack, 2023/5/15

## **Five Years Since Trump Pulled US out of JCPOA**

[Five Years of Maximum Pressure Strategy on Iran has Failed, It's Time to De-Escalate](#), Hassan El Tayyab, FCNL 2023/5/8

['Tragic mistake': Top Biden advisor laments Trump withdrawal from Iran nuclear pact](#), Laura Rozen, 2023/6/8

Five years after Trump quit the JCPOA, efforts to revive it have given way to obituaries. But it is not entirely clear yet what the United States sees as the path forward.

[A Requiem for the Iran Deal](#), Barbara Slavin, 2023/5/8

Contacts continue to free US and other hostages and to encourage Iran to increase transparency about its nuclear advances. It is already too late for a military solution and Iran's other challenges also defy simple remedies.

## **Protests**

[In Iran, what women wear has long been both personal and political](#), Anonymous, Stimson Center, 2023//5/15

The continuing crackdown coincides with a record number of executions in Iran, many for unrelated matters such as drug offenses. The high number of executions is meant to be a deterrent, a fear factor, like the recent execution of two people convicted of apostasy

[Who is poisoning Iran's schoolgirls?](#) Anonymous, Stimson Center, 2023/4/27

Is the regime responsible — and does Russia play a role?

[Truckers Join Iran's Expanding Labor Strikes](#), Iran International, 2023/5/4

## **Legislation**

[Republican Study Committee pushes to strengthen Iran sanctions](#), Marc Rod, Jewish Insider, 20243/5/16

The conservative caucus in Congress has rolled out a package of six Iran-related bills

[Inside The House GOP Plan to Stop a Second Iran Nuclear Deal](#), Adam Kredo, The Washington Free Beacon, 2023/4/28

Republican Study Committee package would block the Biden administration from lifting sanctions

[The Iran nuke deal was working: Hakeem Jeffries was right and Donald Trump was wrong to withdraw five years ago today](#), Joel Rubin, NY Daily News, 2023/5/8

**[Ban On Property Sales To Citizens Of China, Iran, And Others Is Cruising Through Texas Legislature, Murtaza Hussein, The Intercept, 2023/5/5](#)**

Whether the bill, which Gov. Greg Abbott has vowed to sign, ends up as law or not, the discrimination is already stinging marginalized communities.

**Sanctions**

**[Tehran Refuses To Comment As Chinese Ports Ban Iranian Shipping, Iran International, 2023/5/13](#)**

**[US Seizes \\$80M Worth Of Heroin Departing From Iran, Iran International, 2023/5/11](#)**

**Economy**

**[Iran's non-oil trade with BRICS nations nears \\$40b, The Cradle 2023/5/8](#)**

The Iranian economy has been surging in recent years despite a 'maximum pressure' sanctions campaign from Washington

**[Is Iran's sovereign wealth fund running out of money? Amwaj, 2023/5/18](#)**

**[How Iran-Russia railway deal could be game-changer for global transit, Amwaj, 2023/5/17](#)**

**Region**

**[What are the Limits of Iran-Saudi détente? Javad Heiran-Nia, Stimson Center, 2023/5/10](#)**

Regional powers lack capacity to become hegemons and so are forming new arrangements as middle powers that seek solutions in areas where the US lacks leverage

**[Israel's new embassy in Turkmenistan sends message to Iran, Rina Bassist, Al-Monitor, 2023/4/20](#)**

After a visit to Azerbaijan, Foreign Minister Eli Cohen traveled to Turkmenistan to inaugurate Israel's permanent embassy in Ashgabat.

**[Timeline: Iran-Ukraine Relations, 2023/4/27](#)**

**[The US silence on Israeli nuclear weapons and the right-wing Israeli government, Victor Gilinsky, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 2023/5/4](#)**

**[Media Guide: Iran-China Relations One Year Later, Andrew Lumsden, American Iranian Council \(AIC\), 2023/5/3](#)**

**[Iran-Qatar Relations, Andrew Lumsden, AIC, 2023/3/16](#)**

**[Russia, Syria, Turkey and Iran hold high-level talks in Moscow, Al Jazira, 2023/5/10](#)**

**[Iran's Strategic Pivot to Russia, Nasser Hadian, USIP, 2023/5/18](#)**

## Media

[Sanaz Toossi's \*English\* Wins 2023 Pulitzer Prize for Drama](#), Logan Culwell-Block, 2023/5/8

The prestigious honor recognizing exceptional American plays staged in the last year also named Aleshea Harris' *On Sugarland* and Lloyd Suh's *The Far Country* as finalists.

[Renowned Iranian Singer Hossein Zaman Dies, Leaving Legacy of Musical Protest and Censorship](#), NIAC Action, 2023/5/18

[Iran is diving into the disinformation wars, Microsoft says](#), Sam Sabin, Axios, 2023/5/2

## Cost of War

[Up to 4.5 Million Dead in 'Post-9/11 War Zones'](#), Will Porter, The Libertarian Institute, 2023/5/16

[Post-9/11 wars have contributed to some 4.5 million deaths](#), Miriam Berger, WAPO, 2023/5/15

## Human Rights

[Iran: Alarming Surge in Executions](#), Human Rights Watch, 2023/5/12

Authorities Execute Over 60 People in Past 2 Weeks

[The journalists imprisoned for reporting the death that shook Iran](#), BBC, 2023/5/4

[Three Protesters from "Isfahan House" Case Executed Despite Grave Concerns with Legal Proceedings](#), NIAC, 2023/5/19

[Iran sends twin messages with execution of dual national, freeing of Europeans](#), Amwaj, 2023/5/16

[U.S. Report on Religious Freedom in Iran](#), State Department, 2023/5/16

### **ADVOCACY MISSION STATEMENT**

*Peace Corps Iran Association advances peace and understanding between Americans and Iranians through education, outreach and advocacy, and upholds the legacy of the Peace Corps in Iran.*

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2. Tolerance and mutual respect form the foundation for peaceful interactions between countries and their citizens.
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4. Negotiation and diplomacy are essential to resolving international issues.
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