



PEACE CORPS
IRAN ASSOCIATION

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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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The Iranian holiday, Yalda, falls on the longest night of the year, the winter solstice, and celebrates the return of light and with it the hope and promise of new beginnings. Happy Yalda to all.

یلدا شما مبارک باد!

Note from the Editor High Stakes in Last Weeks of Trump Presidency by Paul Barker

In his final weeks in office, President Trump is consumed with two things: contesting his electoral loss to Joe Biden and undermining different aspects of Biden's known policy priorities. In pursuit of these two obsessions, will he launch (perhaps in coordination with Bibi Netanyahu) significant military action against Iran? It would divert attention from his electoral woes, COVID missteps, and growing perceptions that he is a 'loser'.

While Trump has railed against the JCPOA (Iran nuclear deal) for 5 years, in recent weeks he has increased 'maximum pressure' on Iran with more sanctions and threats; apparently supported the (Israeli?) murder of an Iranian scientist; and restructured the Defense Department putting sycophants in key positions who in turn refuse to hold transition meetings with the Biden team.

With congress beginning an extended holiday break, the most effective advocacy tool now may be a letter to the editor of your local paper, since Members of Congress read the local press. Then send your letter, even before it is published, to your Senators and Representatives.

A formula for a successful advocacy letter to the editor is:

- 1) Reference an article from the paper.
- 2) Note your credibility to write on the topic, e.g. former PCV in Iran.
- 3) Explain the problem.
- 4) Explain your proposed solution.
- 5) Mention your Senators and Representative by name

Advocacy Action

Brad Hanson: [PCIA Action Alert, 2020/12/13](#)

The letter currently has 136 signatories. The deadline for the letter has been set for COB on Tuesday, 22 December 2020. If your Representative has not yet signed on, please urge them to do so!

Trita Parsi: [House Dems unite to support the Iran nuclear deal, 2020/12/11](#)

NIAC: [Letter Writing Tool in support of Biden return to JCPOA](#)

National Coalition: [Re-Enter the JCPOA to Prevent an Iranian Nuclear Weapon, December 2020](#)

U.S. Early Re-entry to the JCPOA would:

- Reverse Iran's nuclear program and prevent a nuclear weapon—a top national security objective.
- Renew the coalition of U.S., Europe, Russia, and China. These JCPOA states are essential for reducing Iran's nuclear threat and the dangers posed by Iran's proxies and ballistic missiles.
- Show determination to reduce the risk of conflict and restore official communications with Iran.
- Assure allies and friends of U.S. backing on security and political objectives, preference for diplomacy, and committed opposition to Iran's support for terrorist proxies and violence against neighbors

Re-entry to the JCPOA is Doable and Vital to U.S. Security.

- The Iranian government has stated "if all sides return to compliance the Islamic Republic of Iran will also return to its previous commitments
- President-elect Biden has said "if Iran returns to strict compliance with the nuclear deal, the United States would rejoin the agreement as a starting point for follow-on negotiations." There are no U.S. or international legal obstacles to full U.S. re-entry.
- Agreement on the timing and steps of Iran's return to full compliance will be essential to block a nuclear weapon.
- As a full member of the JCPOA and its Commission, the U.S. will have greater influence on the shape of a follow-on agreement.
- The new Administration should restore a U.S. commitment to humanitarian issues and human rights by removing all obstacles to Iran's import of medicines, medical equipment, and food and work to resolve longstanding prisoner issues.
- The incoming Administration will have a small window of opportunity to restore nuclear limits on Iran.

Concerns about Biden's Foreign Policy Team

By Carolyn Yale

The Washington Post recently featured an article by Robert Wright that cast a dubious light on what we may expect of the Biden administration's approach to foreign policy, "[Biden's foreign policy team is full of idealists who keep getting people killed.](#)" Wright takes issue with entrenched beliefs that the US knows best and has a responsibility to maintain world order. These attitudes have driven US hegemony, resulting in failed interventions in other countries and civilian suffering. Although reactions to this article have been mixed, Wright's recommendations for grounding future policy make sense and are in line with Peace Corps values. The recommendations speak to the Biden administration's dealings with Iran.

1. **Strategic humility:** Past experience warns us of the dismal unintended consequences of military intervention, however admirable the intent. Idealism must be realistic.
2. **Cognitive empathy:** Other countries should be treated with respectful understanding. If, for example, the US felt threatened by missiles on Cuba, might there be a reason for

Iran to be nervous about US-backed military next door? We should be sensitive to how the US uses economic and military leverage, and understand how other countries see this. Wright notes that “the claim that America doesn’t muscle small countries into compliance with its will would be greeted by laughter in small countries near and far..”

3. **‘Anti-Manichaeism’**: The US tends to cast international relations in terms of good and evil. (Does this sound familiar with respect to Iran?) The antidote for manichaeism is, Wright suggests, reinforcing cooperative relations and win-win situations.
4. **Respect for International Law**: The US has flouted international law and accords on more than one occasion, as countries such as Iran would be quick to point out. Wright is a strong advocate for greater institutionalization of international relationships and respect for these institutions.

One PCIA member, Jeff Gritzner, sent in a message reminding us that RPCV’s can speak with unique authority about Iran. Jeff’s suggested reading list pertains to US policy vis-a-vis Iran:

- Reese Erlich (with forwards by William O. Beeman and Robert Scheer), [The CIA Insider's Guide to the Iran Crisis: From CIA Coup to the Brink of War](#) (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2020);
- Dan Kovalik, [The Iran Agenda Today: The Real Story Inside Iran and What's Wrong with U.S. Policy](#) (New York: Routledge, 2019),
- Dan Kovalik, [The Plot to Attack Iran: How the CIA and the Deep State Have Conspired to Vilify Iran](#) (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2018).
- Jonathan Cook, [Israel and the Clash of Civilizations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East](#) (London: Pluto Press, 2008),
- David Barsamian (with Noam Chomsky, Ervand Abrahamian and Nahid Mozaffari), [Targeting Iran](#) (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2007).

Peace and Penalties – Terrifying lessons from the emergence of Nazi Germany

By Stephen Gottlieb

A recent email from Tom Huf struck me /as a clear and succinct statement about the problem with American policy toward Iran. Tom, like my wife and myself, was a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer in Iran, and follows developments in Iran closely. Here’s what he wrote:

I've been thinking recently that the whole US premise – even among non-Trumpians – of trying to isolate and punish Iran and dump onto Iran the ills of the region is the best way to make the situation worse. Have we not learned the lessons of the Treaty of Versailles? Isolation, blame mongering, and punitive financial payment regimes did not work out so well after punishing Germany in 1919. Pretending that containing and even diminishing Iran will yield good results is absurd. Unreality, unbalanced dealing, and ignoring 80 million people injects instability and can only end badly.

Let me unpack Tom's comments. The First World War ended with the Treaty of Versailles in which the victors imposed reparations payments on Germany, bankrupting it. One might be tempted to cheer but Germany was so weakened that unemployment there exceeded our own in the Great Depression of 1929 through the 1930s. The damage to ordinary Germans, left many prey to what they imagined as the promise of Hitler, re-establishing the honor of Germany and their place in it. Many have pinned Hitler's emergence on both the injury to Germany's workers and Germany's honor.

So Tom's basic point is that punishment can go too far – in the case of Germany spawning the downfall of its democratic Weimar Constitution, Hitler's rise to power, and his war for world conquest which cost somewhere in the neighborhood of sixty million lives. Tom's argument, which I join, is that just penalizing or making a pariah out of Iran is a very dangerous as well as unproductive strategy.

Iran does have the ability to cause trouble all over the world especially by covert or fifth-column activities. But most of the terrorist damage to us – ISIS, al-Qaeda etc. – have been from Sunni organizations, largely funded and supported by Iran's opponents in Middle Eastern politics. Isolating and diminishing Iran would increase the threat from the violent offshoots of militant Wahhabi Islam by making Iran less of a player. Similarly, when the Bush Administrations took Iraq down, our actions not only damaged Iraq but created a power vacuum in the Middle East, and removed a threat to Iran – who'd fought a very nasty war with Iraq that left more than a half million dead and double that number of casualties. W. didn't say he was fighting to give Iran more leverage, but he did. Defeating or further diminishing Iran would do that for Iran's Sunni neighbors who've supported ISIS and al-Qaeda. We wouldn't call that our objective, but it's an obvious result.

I don't agree with Tom's further suggestion that something like the Marshall plan, with aid from the U.S., would fly or even make sense of the current Middle East, but there are certainly ways to shape our relations with the countries of that part of the world in more constructive ways. In that respect, Tom is right on.

Penalties can be overdone. We've overdone it by over-criminalizing drugs, with unwarranted and destructive mass incarceration of African-Americans, and by channeling money for prisons that would have been more productively used for education. Tom hit the nail on the head – by over-using penalties in foreign relations, we've probably shot ourselves, not in the foot, but in more vital organs.

False Choice between JCPOA and Abram Accords, 2020/12/17
Tom Huf responding to [article](#) by Fred Kempe, CEO of the Atlantic Council

Fred,

I was nonplussed that you posed a hypothetical binary choice for the Biden team for Middle East policy priorities between the JCPOA or the Abraham Accords. A false premise such as this leads only to an ill-conceived conclusion and further discord. It

fuels the already dangerously volatile situation in the Gulf region. No accord that deliberately excludes one large player in the region can be other than destabilizing. Have we learned nothing from WW1 and the Versailles Treaty? Leaving out Iran to satisfy political and religious sectarian priorities of influential allies of the US will produce the same results as Versailles did to Germany in 1919.

Please rethink your history and policy preferences and consider the many voices of diplomatic expertise that strongly endorse rapid reentry of the US to the JCPOA prior to the Iranian election while supporting the part of the Abraham Accords that do not seek to place blame on any single player in the region. There is already enough blame and have been more than enough human rights violations among all of the parties to all of the accords.

Thomas Huf
Atlantic Council, PCIA, MaPA

Agenda for Biden-Harris Team

Trita Parsi and Barbara Slavin: [Iran may be Biden's first foreign policy challenge](#), 2020/12/17

Robin Wright: [Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran: What's Ahead for the Biden Administration?](#) 2020/12/16

Iran's June election provides the incoming U.S. administration with a short window to get negotiations on track.

Medea Benjamin and Nicholas Davies: [Ten Foreign Policy Fiascos Biden Can Fix on Day One \(and Should\)](#), 2020/11/20

Catherine Ashton: [I Helped Negotiate the Iran Nuclear Deal. Here's How Joe Biden Could Revive It](#), 2020/11/25

1. Shore up the team.
2. Position the JCPOA as the first deal, not the last.
3. Put the JCPOA on a stronger footing.

William Hartung and Mandy Smithberger: [The Pandemic of Pentagon Spending](#), 2020/11/29

Daniel Larison: [Israel Tries To Kill The Nuclear Deal](#), 2020/12/2

Through their efforts to blow up the nuclear deal, Iran hawks in the U.S. and Israel have unwittingly demonstrated the value of keeping it intact.

Trita Parsi: [Bibi Wants Biden to Bend the Knee](#), 2020/12/10

E3: [Statement on the JCPoA](#), 2020/12/7

The governments of France, Germany and the UK respond to Iranian plans to expand its nuclear programme and restrict IAEA monitoring access.

Richard LeBaron and Dan Sreebny: [Biden administration should act fast to bolster people-to-people exchanges with the Middle East](#), 2020/12/4

- David Barsamian (with Noam Chomsky, Ervand Abrahamian and Nahid Mozaffari), Targeting Iran (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2007).

Route back to JCPOA Compliance

International Crisis Group: [The Vital but Delicate Task of Reviving the JCPOA](#), 2020/12/10

President-elect Joe Biden says the U.S. will rejoin the Iran nuclear deal if Tehran resumes full compliance. Iran says it will do so if Washington relaxes sanctions. Each side should use the framework that already exists rather than try to squeeze the other for concessions.

Juan Cole: [Iran's Pres. Rouhani to Biden: We will Fulfill our Nuclear Obligations on Day One if you Return to 2015 Deal](#), 2020/12/15

Paul Pillar: [Why using Trump's sanctions as 'leverage' to get more from Iran won't work](#), 2020/12/10

Henry Rome and Ariane Tabatabai: [Iran, Biden and the Bomb: Why Tehran Is Now Speeding Up Its Nuclear Program](#), 2020/12/4

Tehran . . . is prepared to return to the nuclear accord, [and] it will lean on the nuclear tactics it used during the negotiations that led to the JCPOA to try to force the new administration's hand. Fundamentally . . . Iran is building leverage, not a bomb.

Chair: [Statement following JCPOA Joint Commission Meeting](#), 2020/12/16

"Participants discussed ongoing work to preserve the JCPOA and how to ensure the full and effective implementation of the agreement by all sides in light of existing challenges. Participants also agreed to hold an informal Ministerial meeting of JCPOA participants on 21 December in virtual format."

Maziar Motamadi: [Rouhani: 'No negotiations' needed to restore Iran nuclear deal](#), 2020/12/9

President Rouhani says Iran will return to its commitments that were part of the deal if other signatories do the same.

Europe and Restoring Diplomacy

ECFR: [A call for Europe to bolster transatlantic diplomacy on Iran](#), 2020/11/30

Patrick Wintour: [Europeans urged to quickly set out roadmap on Iran nuclear deal](#), 2020/12/1

Iran Podcast: [Europe's key role in diplomacy between Iran and the US in the past, present, and future](#), 2020/12/4

The folly of playing Trumpian hardball with Iran

Michael Llare: [A Very Trumpian Christmas Surprise? Signs Point to a Possible US Attack on Iran](#), 2020/12/10

Now is the time to prevent a possible strike on Iran, before Trump's military posturing becomes military action.

Kori Schake: [The Disastrous Idea That Won't Go Away](#). 2020/11/19

Trump might be tempted to order a military attack on Iran, because his "maximum pressure" campaign failed to thwart that country's nuclear program. . . Having failed in four years to craft a successful strategy for constraining Iran's nuclear-weapons program, the Trump administration can only make things worse by conducting a military attack on the country in the waning days of this president's tenure. Trump and the advocates of maximum pressure have learned the hard way that their theory of success was mistaken. They've managed to isolate the U.S., not Iran. Diplomacy is more than making demands and administering punishment; it also requires winning support from those countries essential to your policy's success."

Saeid Jafaari: [Biden Needs to Move Fast if He Wants a New Deal with Iran](#), 2020/12/3

Moderates will lose the June 2021 presidential election in Iran unless there is a new agreement and sanctions relief—and the United States can forget diplomacy if hardliners win.

Jamsheed K. Choksy and Carol E. B. Choksy: [China and Russia Have Iran's Back](#), 2020/11/17

Assal Rad: [Why Biden must ignore Sen. Coons' 'caveats' and stay on course to return to the Iran deal](#), 2020/11/23

Lawrence Wilkerson: There's the not-so-remote possibility that a new IRGC-dominated government after the summer elections will turn the tables on the U.S. (and the other parties) and forthwith extricate Iran from the deal, just as Trump did. That would surely place both Jerusalem and Washington, not to mention the EU, in a pickle. China and Russia would just chortle and move even closer to the IRGC-dominated and less-and-less theological government in Teheran. Considering the American people's strong reluctance to enter yet another war in the region, or perhaps even to countenance a bombing campaign whose result would be simply to ramify the decision to build a nuclear weapon, Washington might be without good options.

All the more reason to restore the agreement with the Rouhani government, though even that might not preclude a subsequent repudiation of the agreement by a new government.

NIAC: Middle East Roundup: [Iranian Parliament Plays Bad Cop, But Biden and Rouhani Remain Committed to Return](#), 2020/12/4

Sydney Martin: [Iranian reformists decry the assassination of a leading nuclear scientist](#), 2020/12/4

Nuclear Nightmare Possibilities

Ernest Moniz and Sam Nunn: [Sleepwalking Toward the Nuclear Precipice](#), 2020/12/15

Iranian Nuclear Program

Mark Fitzpatrick: [Assassinating a scientist to kill the Iran deal](#), 2020/11/30

The assassination of Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh was not meant to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. The real target was Joe Biden's foreign policy and his aspiration to restore the Iran nuclear deal.

Barbara Slavin: [Iran's reaction to Fakhri-zadeh assassination](#), 2020/12/2

Harriet Alexander and Gemma Carr: [How Mossad executed Iran's nuclear chief](#), 2020/11/29

Steve Hendrix and Shira Rubin: [The debate now is not whether Israel killed Iran's top nuclear scientist, but why](#), 2020/11/30

David Sanger: [Israel's Gamble: If Assassination Fails to Set Back Iran's Nuclear Program, Blowing Up Deal Is Easy](#), 2020/11/28

Farnaz Fassihi and David Sanger: [Iran Moves to Increase Uranium Enrichment and Bar Nuclear Inspectors](#), 2020/12/3

Iran's response to the assassination of its top nuclear scientist poses an early challenge to the Biden administration, and may be seen as a provocation by President Trump.

Ambassadors William Luers, Thomas Pickering, and Frank Wisner, and Stephen Heintz and Suzanne DiMaggio: "The assassination of a senior Iranian nuclear scientist appears to have been a deliberate effort to provoke a response which could be used to justify military strikes against Iran by the U.S. or other states. Iran has shown restraint by not retaliating against a series of recent incidents of sabotage. If Iran responds to this provocation, a new war could quickly inflame the Middle East on the eve of the inauguration of a new U.S. President. We call on all U.S. officials and members of Congress to vigorously oppose any further provocations and to stand against any escalation. Instead, the U.S. should pursue urgent diplomacy to reduce tensions and prepare the groundwork for the restoration of the international agreement that prevents Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons."

Laurence Norman, EU Spokesperson: On 27 November 2020 in Absard, Iran, an Iranian government official and several civilians were killed in a series of violent attacks. This is a criminal act and runs counter to the principle of respect for human rights the EU stands for.

William Tobey: [Nuclear scientists as assassination targets](#), 2020/11/27

Adam Taylor: [Who is Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, the Iranian nuclear scientist killed in attack outside Tehran?](#) 2020/11/27

Juan Cole: [In Bid to Kill a Biden return to Iran nuclear Deal, Israel Assassinate Leading Nuclear Scientist](#), 2020/11/28

Muhammad Sahimi: [Iran's nuclear advances went on, even as its scientists were picked off, one by one](#), 2020/12/1

US Election as Seen from Iran

Negar Mortazavi: [What the U.S. Election Meltdown Looks Like to Other Countries](#), 2020/11/23

Never before has the basic machinery of U.S. democracy looked so dysfunctional. And the rest of the world has been watching almost as closely as Americans themselves. Observers with a view from abroad tell us how dysfunctional the U.S. political system looks to everyone else.

Regional Entanglements and Opportunities

Juan Cole: [Did Israeli PM Netanyahu Meet Saudi Bin Salman in Bid to Thwart Biden Plan to restore Iran Deal?](#) 2020/11/24

Daniel Larison: [Understanding Iran's Foreign Policy](#), 2020/11/25

Ari Tolany: [What the Murder Of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh Could Mean for Iran and Pakistan](#), 2020/12/11

Barnett Rubin: [There Is Only One Way Out of Afghanistan](#), 2020/12/9
And it Requires Cooperating with Regional Powers

Bourse & Bazaar: [First Rail Network Opens between Iran and Afghanistan](#), 2020/12/11

The Iran terminus for this rail line is Khaf, Brad Hanson's old Peace Corps site.

Human Rights

Cornelius Adebahr and Barbara Mittlehammer: [A Feminist Foreign Policy to Deal with Iran? Assessing the EU's Options](#), 2020/11/23

NIAC: [Nasrin Sotoudeh Awarded Alternative Nobel Prize](#), 2020/12/11

David Brennan: [Biden Aides Condemn 'Horrible' Iran Execution Despite Nuclear Deal Hopes](#), 2020/12/14

Eric Randolph: [Caught in the Crossfire](#)

An arid country with mismanaged water resources, Iran is on the frontlines of the climate crisis. Yet it is persecuting experts who could help it chart a path for the difficult decades to come.

Media

Ben Armbruster: [How US media manipulates Iran's nuclear program into a sinister myth](#), 2020/12/1

History

USIP: [Iran in 2020](#), 2020/12/16

For Iran, 2020 was a particularly tumultuous year. It faced unprecedented economic challenges from tightening U.S. sanctions, a major political transition after a parliamentary election, and a health crisis that killed tens of thousands. It also marked the last full year of President Hassan Rouhani's presidency, with hardliners jockeying to succeed him by exploiting the failure in his diplomacy with the United States.

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.

ADVOCACY COMMITTEE PURPOSE STATEMENT

Peace Corps Iran Association advocates for peace and understanding through education, outreach, and cultural diplomacy.

PRINCIPLES: The Board of Peace Corps Iran Association has adopted the following Guiding Principles for our advocacy efforts toward improving relationships between Iran and the United States, and their peoples.

1. Understanding and acceptance of other people and cultures are the building blocks of friendship, inclusiveness and world peace. As citizens of a world power, Americans bear a special responsibility.
2. Tolerance and mutual respect form the foundation for peaceful interactions between countries and their citizens.
3. Bringing countries and their citizens into the global community through cultural and economic ties reinforces international cooperation and reduces the likelihood of armed conflict.
4. Negotiation and diplomacy are essential to resolving international issues.
5. Force is rarely justified in dealing with conflicts. Peace is built and sustained through voluntary agreement and consent.

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1. The Advocacy Bulletin is an opt-out email publication for PCIA members interested in this subject. It is a way to share ideas, information, and opportunities for action. The Bulletin is archived on the website.
2. PCIA members are invited to share articles for publication. The editor decides which articles are selected for publication. Some pieces, particularly when not aligned with PCIA's Mission, Values, and Guiding Principles, or which do not relate to the current state of Iran advocacy issues, may be posted in PCIA's Facebook group.
3. Articles should be addressed to AdvocacyBulletin@peacecorpsiran.org and the release question answered, "I consent/do not consent to the release of my writing beyond the Advocacy Bulletin distribution and PCIA archives." If consent is given, statements issued to the public will be identified as coming from the author, and not PCIA, the Advocacy Committee, or Board.
4. Writers are encouraged to include action recommendations and reference information to help readers understand issues.
5. The Advocacy Bulletin is not an academic journal, but it does aspire to be fact-based. Whenever possible citations and links to web-based articles should be included in the articles.
6. Opinions and ideas from members expressed in the Bulletin do not represent Board positions. However, members of the Advocacy Committee may present a position to the Board and request endorsement. Positions adopted by the Board to be posted in the Advocacy Bulletin will be identified as such.

The opinions of the in this issue are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the board of PCIA. Contributions to the Advocacy Bulletin are most welcome and may be submitted to the editor at AdvocacyBulletin@peacecorpsiran.org

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