



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 Road Not Taken

Note From the Editor

By Paul Barker, Bidokht, Shiraz, Tehran 1971-76

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood
And sorry he could not travel both,
President Biden chose the wrong one*

On his just completed trip to Israel and Saudi Arabia President Biden had two strategic visions to choose from to underpin his diplomacy: one was to build an anti-Iran military alliance building on President Trump's 'Abraham Accords'. The second option would have been to support the Baghdad Dialogue which for the past year has been decreasing regional tensions by bringing the leaders of Iran into dialogue with leaders from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other countries. Sadly, he chose the first path which will expand US military sales and commitments in the Middle East and in so doing increase the likelihood of military escalation and war in the region.

Prior to the 2020 election, Joe Biden and his future Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, made clear that they fully understood the disastrous errors made by the Trump team to destroy the Iran nuclear agreement. Nonetheless on his recent trip to Israel when President Biden was asked by a reporter if [he was prepared to walk away from the Iran nuclear deal \(or JCPOA\)](#) if the only way to close the deal was to remove the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) from the list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) he said, simply, "Yes." And when asked if he was prepared to use military force against Iran, he responded, "As a last resort, yes."

It is a shocking realization that Biden is willing to condemn to failure the singular diplomatic achievement of the Obama-Biden administration if the cost of reviving it is to reverse a Trump era action that was maliciously designed to prevent any future President from restoring the JCPOA, the only tool that has ever contained and walked back the Iranian nuclear program. Beyond that, Biden said he is willing to participate in another major military conflict in the Middle East in a likely vain effort to confront Iran's nuclear program.

Supporters of diplomacy to resolve international tensions are wont to call the JCPOA 'dead', but the options for reviving it now seem faint. Intransigent politicians in Tehran and Washington seem unwilling to make any compromises that might let detractors label them as weak. If there can be a viable Plan B alternative to restoring the JCPOA it can only be found through innovative diplomacy. We need to push back against [hawks in the Senate](#) and Congress who want to limit Biden to military tools for dealing with Iran. We need to encourage Biden and Blinken get in touch with [the better angels which used to guide their understanding of Middle East issues](#).

Iran Turning East – Blowback

Tom Nelson, Gonabad, Kakhk 1966-69

Today Messrs. Putin and Erdogan are in Tehran. Mr. Putin had an audience with the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, and with the President, Mr. Raisi. I'm not sure who Mr. Erdogan met with, but I understand there were bilateral meetings between Mr. Putin and Mr. Erdogan as well.

This has alarmed many in the West, particularly those in the U.S. To me, their presence in Tehran is a classic example of "blowback" - unintended but foreseeable and understandable consequences flowing from stupid initial decisions. I don't think it is at all alarming that Iran is getting very cozy with Russia and that Russia is reciprocating mightily. Before we came home last night there was a lot of information in the Iranian press (not so much, if any, in the Western press) regarding Russia's new trade route to India through Iran to Bandar Abbas port and then by ship to India. There is the rumored Russian purchase of Iranian drones. And there was news about how quickly Iran's trade with its immediate and nearby neighbors has grown since the JCPOA started fading into the background. In response to President Biden's attempt to create an anti-Iran coalition during his recent Middle East trip, the UAE said it wants no part of it; Saudi Arabia announced it wants to re-establish diplomatic relations with Iran; and Iran stated that if any country attacked Iran, Iran would attack that country in defense and also would attack Israel directly. No hiding behind Arab allies allowed!

That the West is alarmed is, to me, amusing. What did President Trump and President Biden think would happen when the United States unilaterally abandoned the JCPOA and then put the strongest-ever sanctions on Iran not for violating an agreement with the US but, rather, for Iran's entering into that agreement with the U.S. in the first place? The withdrawal and sanctions are complete and utter bullying, and had been demanded by Israel and Mr. Netanyahu. What did those folks expect Iran to do in response -- comply? Anyone who thinks that does not understand notions of self-respect and honor - and the importance of "face" in the Middle East. These notions are not extraordinary or

magic and certainly should not be unexpected. Iran economically has suffered enormously because of President Trump's maximum pressure sanctions. With the U.S. breach of the JCPOA it became clear that the U.S. could not be trusted, and that the U.S. would continue to be influenced by Israeli desires on Middle Eastern matters to Iran's detriment. The only rational response to this situation is for Iran to abandon the U.S. and the West in order to avoid future sanctions and make new friends in new economic areas -- which is precisely what Iran has done. (It is now a done deal; this is what Mr. Putin's and Mr. Erdogan's presence in Iran exhibits.)

The stupidity leading to this blowback goes far beyond Trump. It was foolish for Trump to abandon the JCPOA with little thought of the consequences. The result is an Iran today on the threshold of nuclear weapons, a growing non-western economy, and the non-Western bloc immensely strengthened by the gain of geographic access to and across Iran and the exclusion of the West from that access. The first instance of Iranian blowback was the CIA coup in 1953 that deposed democratically elected Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq at the request of the Brits who opposed Iranians actually insisting upon owning and controlling their own oil - instead of British Petroleum. The blowback this time is the result of President Trump's being enthralled by Benjamin Netanyahu and his insistence that the U.S. abandon the JCPOA. Trump hated his Black predecessor and wanted to erase any achievement he made. This partly explains why he fell under the sway of Israel and Benjamin Netanyahu. But there is more than enough blame for President Biden to share: He sat on his duff after he was inaugurated and continued President Trump's maximum pressure sanctions and added to them when it was clear that the new regime in Iran following the 2021 elections would be hard liners, not moderates. He did nothing to ease the humanitarian catastrophes caused by the maximum pressure sanctions in Iran.

Unlike the United States, none of Iran's recent actions violated any agreement that it had entered into outside of the JCPOA. Relaxing its compliance with the JCPOA was its right because of the U.S. reimposition of sanctions. Iran is still in full compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (a treaty that Israel has not signed and whose principles it violated) and is continuing to allow inspections under the treaty. Of course Israel has never allowed any inspections of anything nuclear in its country. Today a debate is emerging in Iran regarding whether Iran should withdraw from the NPT - an ominous sign. Notwithstanding (or perhaps, because of) President Trump's sanctions, Iran has turned into a military powerhouse - witness Russia's pursuit of Iranian-made military drones and President Biden's desperate hunt for allies to support Israel.

The problem with blowback is that, by definition, its occurrence is never reasonably unexpected. Everything bad that has happened to the U.S. as a result of Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA and his maximum pressure sanctions was almost predictable. The only unexpected part has been how quickly and effectively Iran has turned the tables on the U.S. and Israel. On the other hand, foreign policy defeats have become the rule for America post-World War II, from the stalemate of Korea to the defeat in Vietnam to the slow, long, painful and shameful losses in Afghanistan and Iraq. Another book authored by Chalmers Johnson - written after his publication of Blowback - describes the United States today: The Sorrows of Empire.

Options for Dealing with Iran

[The Fist-bump Seen 'Round the World](#), **Trita Parsi on Press the Button, 2022/7/18**

Why Biden should have promoted the Baghdad Dialogue rather than the Abraham Accords on his first trip to the Middle East.

[Biden Caters to Autocrats and Draws Battle Lines in the Middle East](#), **Robin Wright, 2022/7/16**

The President rallied Israel and key Arab nations as diplomacy on Iran's nuclear program falters.

Biden's trip has taken U.S. policy and the Middle East in a "much more dangerous direction," [Bruce] Riedel told me later. Both are now on a "slippery slope." A war with Iran would be "three or four times bigger and more deadly than a war with Iraq," he warned. "It will make everything else that we've done in the Middle East look like a kindergarten party."

[Biden's words make war with Iran more likely](#), **Mitchell Plitnick, 2022/7/16**

Joe Biden's chilling statements to an Israeli TV interviewer, including that he is prepared to use military force against Iran, present a grim outlook for reviving the Iran deal.

[Drifting Toward Disaster As Iran Nuke Talks Stall](#), **Emma Belcher and Tom Collina, 2022/7/14**

Biden seems to think he needn't cut a new deal until after the elections. That would be a mistake.

[The Last Chance to Restore Compliance with the 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal](#), **Arms Control Association, 2022/7/13**

[Biden's Middle East Trip: Bad Deal or Shrewd Diplomacy?](#) **Panel with Trita Parsi, Paul Pillar, Asli Bali and Joshua Landis, 2022/7/13**

Trita and the three speakers were really excellent and as is always true with the Quincy Institute folks, very forthright about the politics of the US, Israel, and the entire motivation of everyone related to the so-called Abraham Accords to create mischief and isolate and misdirect blame to Iran in the continuation of the Trump pariah state policy. They all said more than once that Biden has simply continued the Trump policies and now is changing his tune and building on the Kushner Abraham policy too. He has been a total disappointment on all Middle East policy despite some smart quotes about the need for restraint quoted from Antony Blinken from 2017 that once sounded like the Biden policy.

They pretty much trashed Biden for the hypocrisy regarding the human right issues related to what he is doing on this trip. Both his earlier policy of isolating MBL for his Kashoggi murder, ignoring the entire Palestinian human rights apartheid issues (two-state solution or not), and the Yemen horrors he is pandering for oil production and gas price reduction for the November elections with hat in hand. Now we have no credibility on international agreements - JCPOA - or anything remotely like human rights support and credibility.. We now will have squandered any claim to being different from Russia in their human rights / Ukraine targeting of civilians.

[New Iran sanctions may spell death of the JCPOA](#), **Trita Parsi, 2022/7/6**

Today's announcement suggests Biden is doubling down on maximum pressure while the nuclear deal is all but withering on the vine. (Video)

[Mark Dubowitz Endorses Biden's Iran Policy](#), 2022/7/13

[US Envoy: Nuclear Talks Needed 'Within Iran'](#), NPR, 2022/7/5

[Why is the US determined to build a security alliance against Iran?](#) Faezeh Fathizadeh, 2022/7/4

If Biden maintains his current approach, it will only serve to further isolate Iran and destabilize the entire region for several reasons.

If Biden's goal is stability, then his administration must bring all the major regional stakeholders to the table — including Iran. In addition, Washington should actively encourage detente between Riyadh and Tehran.

[On Iran, the Biden Presidency Has Been Trump's Second Term](#), Trita Parsi interviewed by Branko Marcetic, 2022/6/29

[EU to mediate US/Iran indirect talks in Persian Gulf to try to overcome nuclear stalemate](#), Laura Rozen, 2022/6/25

[Expert groups call Biden's dithering on Iran deal return 'perplexing'](#), Ben Armbruster, 2022/6/24

Many are wondering why the president is letting politics stand in the way of a sound nonproliferation agreement. The [letter to President Biden](#) was signed by 15 organizations.

[Why a US war with Iran would be a catastrophe](#), Assal Rad, 2022/6/23

Hawkish voices in Washington calling for pressure-only policies on Iran further risk an escalation that could entrench the US in another 'forever' war

[Borrell in Tehran: How to overcome three obstacles to the Iran nuclear deal](#), Ellie Geranmayeh, 2022/6/24

The collapse of the Iran nuclear deal could lead to military escalation and further turmoil in the global energy market. Europe can only address these threats through diplomacy with Iran and the US.

[Interview with Wendy Sherman](#), International Student House, 2022/7/12

"I don't think [the JCPOA] is dead. I think there is a very viable agreement and [#Iran](#) just has to say yes." Also says better for Iran to agree before our midterm elections.

Plan B:

[Hawkish senators make moves to take over Biden's Iran policy](#), Ryan Costello, 2022/7/21

Nuclear deal spoilers Bob Menendez and Lindsey Graham are at it again, introducing a bill experts say will undermine negotiations.

[What America Should Do If the Iran Nuclear Deal Talks Fail](#), Maria Fantappie and Vali Nasr, 2022/7/1

Outsourcing Middle East Security to Israel is a Bad Plan B. The situation recalls the 1970s, when U.S. President Richard Nixon subcontracted Middle East security to the

shah of Iran. Similarly, the Biden administration is, in effect, handing over the task of containing Iran to Israel. This is a risky approach: unlike some 50 years ago, this time the U.S.-designated policeman for the region is not trying to avoid conflict but is the regional actor most clearly pushing for escalation. Washington should adopt a different strategy, one aimed at averting conflict by combining beefed-up regional security with encouraging stronger diplomatic ties between Iran and Arab states—one of the few things that could help reduce the mounting tensions in the Middle East.

The Insane ‘Option’ of Attacking Iran, Daniel Larison 2022/6/19

Debating this is like debating the details of how to shoot yourself in the foot, except that the human cost of launching an attack on Iran would be much, much higher.

Iran Warns US on Bill Diminishing Biden Bid for Atomic Deal, Jonathan Tirone and Arsalan Shahla, 2022/7/20

- Bipartisan law would compel White House to present strategy
- Nuclear talks remain in limbo after 15 months of diplomacy

Most of the nuclear information demanded by the proposed law is already published in quarterly reports issued by International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors, who still have on-the-ground access to key Iranian nuclear sites despite new remote-monitoring restrictions. Potentially politicizing that information with spy data is a flashpoint for nonproliferation analysts.

“Adding intelligence assessments to the findings of the IAEA would serve to undermine the integrity of the agency’s reports as well as its independence,” said Tariq Rauf, the IAEA’s former nonproliferation policy chief.

“The legislation runs the risk of damaging the international nuclear verification system by second guessing the IAEA, whose inspectors are the only ones that can carry out on-site intrusive inspections.”

Joe Biden and the Middle East: Following Trump’s Playbook, Quincy Institute, 2022/7

Region

Bide and seek: The dangers of US support for a Gulf-Israeli defence pact, Cinzia Bianco, Ellie Geranmayeh, Hugh Lovatt, 2022/7/13

Military alignment between Israel and Gulf Arab states risks heightened conflict in the Middle East – without weakening Iran’s geopolitical position or nuclear programme

Why is Biden joining the warpath against Iran? Ted Snider, 2022/7/20

The president signed an agreement saying it would use all elements of US power, including force, to stop Tehran from getting a bomb.

Iran’s Increasingly Decentralized Axis of Resistance, Nancy Ezzeddine and Hamidreza Azizi, 2022/7/14

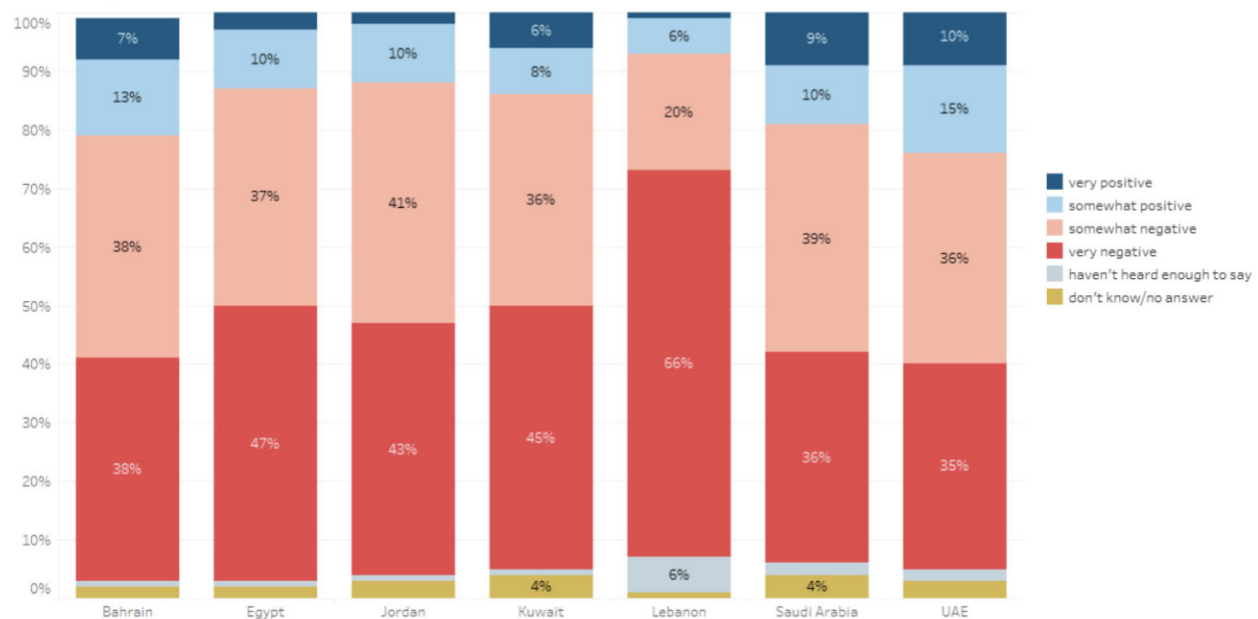
Israel Expands Operations Against Iranian Nuclear, Military Assets, Dion Nissenbaum, Dov Lieber and Aresu Egbali, 2022/6/20

Israel is targeting a broader range of key targets in a series of covert operations, people familiar with the new strategy say

President Trump’s Arab Alliance Is a Mirage, Antony J. Blinken, 2017/6/19

[Arab Public Opinion on Arab-Israeli Normalization and Abraham Accords](#), Dylan Kassin and David Pollack, 2022/7/15

March 2022: What is your view of the Abraham Accords between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan?*



[Why Iran's Provision of Drones to Russia for Ukraine War is a Diplomatic Failure of the Biden Administration](#), Juan Cole, 2022/7/12

[Putin visits Iran on first trip outside former Soviet Union since Ukraine war](#), Guy Faulconbridge and Parisa Hafezi, 2022/7/19

[The Mass Ethnic Cleansing of Syrian Kurds is Collateral Damage From the War in Ukraine](#), Patrick Cockburn, 2022/7/4

[Qatari foreign minister in Tehran to help nuclear deal efforts](#), Maziar Motamedi, 2022/7/6

The visit comes after Doha hosted two days of indirect talks between Tehran and Washington that ended without progress.

[Saudi-led airstrikes in Yemen have been called war crimes. Many relied on U.S. support](#), Joyce Sohyun Lee, Meg Kelly and Atthar Mirza, 2022/6/4

A joint Washington Post analysis reveals for the first time that the United States supported most air force squadrons involved in the Saudi coalition's years-old air campaign.

[On Cusp of Biden visit to Saudi Arabia, GAO questions US Accounting for Civilian Harm caused in Yemen by its Weapons](#), Juan Cole, 2022/7/11

[Russia's invasion of Ukraine is also Iran's loss](#), Mark Katz, 2022/7/7

Leaders in Tehran tout the country's close ties with Moscow, but they can't be happy with the ripple effects of the war in eastern Europe.

[Occupied Yemeni island could host part of US-led missile defense system](#), Conor Echols, 2022/7/6

Critics say the proposal is hypocritical given Washington's opposition to taking territory through force in places like Ukraine.

[Iran's regional outreach tested as Turkey plans Syria operation](#), Maziar Motamedi, 2022/7/5

Iran walks a diplomatic tightrope as Turkey warns to launch a military operation against Kurdish forces in Syria – a key Tehran ally.

[White House: Iran set to deliver armed drones to Russia](#), Zeke Miller and Josh Boak, 2022/7/11

Climate, Environment

[Climate Emergency: Iran's Abadan hits unprecedented 126° F., as Gov't Offices are forced to Close](#), Juan Cole, 2022/6/22

Ironically, Abadan is a major oil-producing region, so its major product is implicated in making it increasingly unlivable.

[Steel Industry Draining Iran's Scarce Water Resources](#), Maryam Sinaee, 2022/6/28

[Schools, Government Offices Shut Down In Several Iranian Cities Over Air Pollution](#), Radio Free Europe, 2022/7/5

[Several arrests at protest over dying Iranian lake](#), Ben Tobias, 2022/7/17

Sanctions, Economy

[Do Sanctions Pose an 'Irreversible Knowledge' Problem?](#) Esfandiyar Batmanghelidj, 2022/7/12

[Treasury Targets Iranian Oil and Petrochemical Trade Network](#), July 6, 2022

[Iran's Inflation Reaches 82.6% For Food Items](#), Scott Lucas, 2022/7/11

[Iran's Supreme Leader threatened protesters. But Iranians aren't listening.](#) Atlantic Council, 2022/7/8

[Violent carjackings increase amid poverty and unemployment in Iran](#), Alijani Ershad, 2022/7/8

[Iran's Supreme Leader threatened protesters. But Iranians aren't listening.](#) Atlantic Council, 2022/7,8

Human Rights

[56% of Muslim Americans support Women's Right to choose, and More Muslim-Majority Nations offer Abortion on Demand than do U.S. States](#), Juan Cole, 2022/6/25

[Blame game in nuclear talks, hijab enforcement spurs anger, & more.](#) NIAC, 2022/7/11

Peace Corps Reauthorization Act

SFRC Approves Peace Corps Reauthorization Act of 2022, 2022/7/19

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History

Removal of the heart: how Islam became a matter of state in Iran, Gareth Smyth, 2016/9/29

Some academics argue the Safavid Shahs gave Iranian Shiism a rule-fixation and abandonment of spirituality it has never lost

The Hidden History of Tehran's Red Light District, Sadaf Tabatabaei, 2022/7/6

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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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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.
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