

A Short One Page Review of the Iran Agreement

Brief Background

Since 1979, when Radical Islamic Fundamentalists took over Iran, they have focused on spreading their extremist brand of Islam across the Middle East and destroying the State of Israel.

They also began a nuclear weapons program. In response, western nations, led by the US, sought to counter it, mainly through strong economic sanctions. Some were put in place by the president and some by Congress. These sanctions enormously degraded the Iranian economy, and led the regime to seek negotiations to alleviate them.

What is the recent Agreement?

The US, along with major European nations, signed an agreement with Iran that severely limits its nuclear program. However, it is not a formal treaty requiring Congressional approval, but a presidential agreement that the next president can keep or end. However, Congress recently passed a law requiring its approval and that vote is coming soon. Nevertheless, the agreement truly presents a serious degradation of the Iranian nuclear program. The negotiations only involve their *nuclear* program and not Iranian terrorism that threatens the US, Middle East, and especially Israel.

What is the key issue about this Agreement?

Can diplomatic negotiations alone bring about Iranian compliance, or must diplomatic negotiations have some serious consequences to enforce them?

How can one nation change the behavior of another? Will a well-worded agreement alone suffice, or must there be some serious consequence if that nation cheats? Agreements usually include something like “*comply ...or else face serious consequences.*” President Theodore Roosevelt famously said “*Speak softly ...but carry a big stick!*” For example, sanctions were the “big stick” that actually brought the Iranians to the negotiation table.

In this Agreement, all sanctions are released *before* there is any Iranian compliance. For example, Iran will immediately receive about *150 billion dollars* from its unfrozen foreign assets that it can use to continue terrorism. All other sanctions will also collapse as nations seek new Iranian markets. Is it really possible that sanctions can ever “snap back” if Iran cheats? Finally, the US and Europeans have clearly indicated that military force will never be used to back up the agreement.

KEY QUESTIONS ...Why should Iran actually comply with this agreement? What enforces it?

How did Jesus change behavior?

Jesus presented us with choices about our behavior. His way led to true and lasting happiness both in this world and the next. However, *not* following his way led to our unhappiness here and eternal damnation in the next. Jesus knew the power of both positive and negative motivation for behavioral change. He hoped for positive motivation but was clear about the negative consequences of a bad choice. Agreements between nations should do the same.

-Fr. Dave Heney
daveheney@gmail.com