



# ABOLITION 2000

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## The Breakdown of the Iran Nuclear Deal – Global Perspectives

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### About the speaker

We'll start with Emad Kiyaei, my colleague in METO, the Middle East Treaty Organization. Emad is one of the founders and a member of the core team. He holds a Masters of international affairs from Columbia University School of International Public Affairs. He's a principal at the International consulting firm, ITG group. He's the co-author of a book that is about to be published about the WMD free zone in the Middle East, and he contributes to many other articles, books, gives many, many interviews around the world about the region and about Iran.

### Intervention by Emad Kiyaei.

Thank you so much for the introduction and thank you to Abolition 2000 for the invitation. It's great to be here and as Sharon got us started the JCPOA, or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or the Iran Nuclear Deal, was such a refreshing development when it occurred in July of 2015. Now the discussions of Iran's nuclear program date back way before that and, in earnest, in 2003 onwards when Iran was able to enrich uranium, the file, the dossier of Iran's nuclear activity came to international attention and fast forward, and once President Rouhani replaced the more outspoken and possibly very damaging Iranian President Ahmadinejad, Rouhani came with a new sort of agenda and platform to engage the international community over Iran's nuclear capability. And this negotiation began and was really intense in September 2013 and then after two years in July of 2015 they reached an agreement.

Now, that agreement, from the beginning, was aimed at a specific endgame where the international community sought for Iran to not develop nuclear weapons, and, for Iran, it was to showcase that it has rights to enrichment and for a peaceful nuclear program and, at the same time, to remove draconian sanctions that were placed on the country. Those sanctions were in three levels from UN Security Council sanctions, which are global in nature, to unilateral sanctions by the United States and other ones from the European Union.

So Iran's emphasis was that at the end of these negotiations, Iran has its nuclear program that is under international supervision and inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the IAEA, to ensure to the international community that it doesn't want to have a nuclear weapon. And through these negotiations, the international community asked Iran to take specific steps so that the world can verify that Iran is not cheating. And this closed doors to two major pathways to a nuclear weapon. And that's Highly Enriched Uranium which is necessary for weaponisation, and the plutonium track which is used as a by-product of nuclear waste from heavy water reactors.

Now the deal provided 24-hour monitoring, inspections of Iranian facilities. It limited Iran's enrichment levels and facilities. It closed all of those doors and it did lead to the UN Security Council removing the sanctions, the EU removing the sanctions, and the United States, under the Obama administration, removing nuclear-related sanctions. So, it was fantastic! But the Iranians and the world powers, which were the five permanent members of UN Security Council plus Germany, saw these negotiations as a beginning of a much broader engagement with Iran.



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Iran in the world, specifically the United States, has a long list of issues that they would like to hammer out and iron out and one of them was the nuclear file and the Iranian government, through these negotiations, saw it as a gateway to broaden, eventually, discussions to other issues that are now again in the forefront of matters in the Middle East, maybe regional security, maybe Iran's support for non-state actors, others may call them terrorists, some people call them freedom fighters, whichever side of the fence you are, but Iran's engagements with these actors in Iraq, in Syria, in Lebanon, and Yemen and throughout the Middle East. So to deal with these other issues there was a hope that by achieving the Iran Nuclear Deal then we can go on to these other items on the list. Unfortunately, it was a very short-lived victory for those in the international community that believed in multilateralism, believed in diplomacy, and an end to coercive policies that were not giving any results. Instead Iran under heavy sanctions during Ahmadinejad enriched further levels. It expanded its nuclear program so it had an opposite effect on the specific target for Iran's nuclear program to be dismantled, instead it expanded. So, we know now that multilateralism in this case worked and, not just that, something very important also occurred. Non-proliferation, as we are well aware of in this group of people in this webinar, has had many loopholes and for a long time since the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty came into existence. And so, this nuclear negotiation in earnest had political will, had a lot of drivers behind it to succeed and in doing so they closed off many loopholes within the international Non-Proliferation Treaty that would have allowed countries such as Iran to find ways around the system. So the JCPOA, or the Iran Nuclear Deal, is not just useful in the case of Iran, but it's a blueprint for how to strengthen nuclear non-proliferation on a global level. And so, it is a double added bonus that it resolved a major international issue over Iran's nuclear program but also provided an avenue to strengthen global non-proliferation.

Unfortunately with the presidency of Trump, we have seen President Trump reversing every major multilateral agreement that was done under the Obama administration. It goes way beyond the Iran Nuclear Deal. It includes the intermediate-range nuclear forces agreement that was between Russia and United States. It includes the Paris climate change agreement, trade agreements with the EU, with China now, and, closer to home, Mexico and Canada. So, we have seen the destruction of multilateralism and international order and law that for many years allowed us to somehow reach agreements without the use of force.

Now, that being said, what has happened?

Since May 2018, President Trump unilaterally removed the United States from this multilateral deal, the Iran Nuclear Deal. That triggered a series of events. By pulling out of the deal, it took away a major pillar or leg of this agreement, namely the United States, and the USA has a profoundly important role in terms of the international arena and its influence. With this unilateral decision, and reinforcing U.S. unilateral sanctions on Iran, the United States' new administration used its weight to put pressure on other countries to make sure that Iran remains isolated, that these unilateral sanctions from the United States go beyond the borders of the United States and influence major trading partners of Iran, and specifically the Europeans. And here the European Union, even though it is in support of the Iran Nuclear Deal and it still remains a signatory to the agreement, has done very little tangible, on-the-ground, practical work to make assure the incentives Iran agreed to, under the agreement. Their [Iran's] end of the bargain was you can come and check our nuclear program, but in return we need these sanctions out and we need to re-engage economically and politically and socially with the world.



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So here, the pressure of the United States on their European partners has made the sustainability and the probability of the survival of the nuclear deal come into jeopardy. As we speak today the Iran Nuclear Deal is on life-support and as time goes by Iran, regrettably, has no other option but to also react to this sort of slow movement, or slow death, of this Iran Nuclear Deal. So, Iran has taken steps to revamp its nuclear program, has taken steps to increase enrichment a little bit further, has increased its stockpile of uranium, and so forth, which, of course, is not necessarily constructive. But here we are now in a stalemate of how to move forward from this situation and here I would like to just make two or three comments and then hopefully hear from the other speakers and then open it up later on to questions and answers.

Where we are now is not just a question of the Iran Nuclear Deal, it's about the future of multilateralism; the international community has to make a decision. Do they let this nuclear deal falter, and in doing so power those individuals in the Trump administration and President Trump himself, that are in reality bullying on the international arena other countries to move away from multilateralism and abide by unilateralism. In an emerging multipolar world this is not going to be beneficial to the international community. So, the world has to make a decision which direction it wants to go in and will it stand up to a very powerful country such as the United States.

Secondly, it may actually then be that if Iran decides that there's no endgame here and there's no way out, Iran may make a decision for its own national security and for its own calculations that remaining within the JCPOA Iran deal is no longer viable or beneficial. And here the dismantlement from Iran pulling out will completely collapse this deal and may lead to a huge proliferation risk, not just by Iran re-engaging in its nuclear program, but within a very volatile region, leading other countries, specifically Saudi Arabia and UAE and others, to accelerate their own domestic nuclear programs, and, of course, here we have Israel which is a completely different case which I hope we have time to address as well.

Thirdly, the nuclear deal was supposed to be, again, a gateway to a much broader discussion on regional security and other matters. Now, the fact that the Iranian nuclear deal collapses, it closes the door, from an Iranian government perspective, to engage the international community on key other matters. So, here we have a possibility of these major front lines that have been fought out, proxy wars, sectarian issues, instability that we constantly are seeing from the attacks on [Aramco](#) in Saudi Arabia, all the attacks in the Strait of Hormuz, to the quagmire that we're facing in Yemen, in Syria and Iraq, and in Libya, worsening, whereby Iran then plays out its security calculations through its proxies by making the region engulfed further, deeper into conflict.

So it's a 'lose-lose' situation at the moment. I hope that we will have some more optimism by the end of this webinar but I would like to just bring us to a reality check of, unfortunately, the challenges that we face at the moment.

I will stop there. Thank you so much.