

Iran: What Now?



Photo courtesy of Gloria Duffy

Now that the nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1 (the United States, the other members of the UN Security Council and Germany) is virtually sure to come into force, what's ahead?

The success of an arms control agreement lies not just in the terms that are negotiated—which in the case of the Iran agreement have been

hotly debated. Success also depends on what happens after the agreement is signed. Does each country comply with the agreement, or does each party find every way possible to interpret the agreement in its own favor, circumvent its terms, and sometimes even cheat? Of course, we very much want Iran to comply with the new agreement, so that the pact leads to curtailment of Iran's nuclear program to prevent that country from developing nuclear weapons.

Whether compliance or cheating is the outcome depends on the internal politics and governmental behavior of each country. It also depends on whether each party gets out of the agreement what it seeks. Iran is primarily seeking economic benefits as a result of the nuclear agreement, while the United States and the other partners seek greater security.

Success of an arms control agreement also depends on whether the countries involved have a relationship that supports compliance with the agreement. And of course it depends on the other partners being able to verify whether Iran is indeed complying with its commitments.

The negotiations with Iran were difficult, but the hard part—helping the agreement to succeed—is just beginning. Here are some steps that can be taken to increase the likelihood of success. First, of course, the United States must keep its defenses strong and its intelligence capabilities up to the task of monitoring the Iran agreement. But perhaps less obviously, much work lies ahead to create a relationship with Iran that will incline its leadership to comply with, instead of loosely interpret and perhaps even cheat on, the pact.

The more Iran is exposed to the outside world, the stron-

ger its interest should grow in being part of the international community. In particular, the closer Iran's economic ties become with the United States and other members of the P5+1, the less willing its leadership should be to risk breaking those ties through cheating on the agreement.

Iran is fundamentally different from other isolated countries like North Korea in that it has an educated citizenry, a history of economic achievement and desirable resources like oil. Thus there is a greater prospect of Iran developing the economic ties with other countries that could foster its compliance with the agreement.

In the United States and abroad, discussion and meetings are taking place about how economic ties can be increased with Iran. Germany, especially, is stepping forward to explore new economic relations with Iran. Iran has opened a new trade office in Berlin, and Iranian and German oil ministers have been meeting over the past few months.

The United States should reach out—both officially through our government and directly through businesses—to explore greater trade and economic involvement with Iran.

In addition to mutually beneficial trade, creating a richer social fabric between Iran and the other countries should help increase Iran's incentives to comply. Some organizations have already started organizing travel groups to Iran, including the Club. The Commonwealth Club hosted a study tour to Iran last year, and it has another one coming up this October. Travelers returning from these trips report how eager Iranian citizens are to meet Americans, and how positive their communications are with visiting Americans.

Establishing greater trade ties with Iran and more people-to-people contact will foster Iran becoming less isolated and more of a "normal" country, with a greater interest in the status-quo. Other avenues for collaboration could be found in the arts and sciences, and of course Iran is a society that could benefit hugely from the application of the digital technologies that are so well-developed in the other six parties to the pact.

So the conclusion of an arms control agreement is really just the beginning of the road toward ensuring its success. Let's hope that we, the Iranians and the other five countries involved are committed for the long haul, to develop the relationships that will firmly steer Iran away from the nuclear weapons path. 🌱

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