

## BICOM Briefing: International Concerns about the Iran nuclear parameters agreement – May 2015

The [US State Department](#) published details of 'Parameters for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action' on 2 April. The deadline for completing the agreement between the P5+1 and Iran is 30 June.

### The framework legitimizes Iran as a threshold state

- **The deal ultimately permits Iran to expand its enrichment and stockpiling of uranium without limits**, and reduce the breakout time virtually to zero. Most restrictions expire after just 10-15 years.
- **Iran is immediately permitted R&D** on advanced centrifuges that will greatly increase its enrichment capacity.
- **Were Iran to reduce breakout time to zero, there would be very little time to react** before Iran had successfully acquired or tested a weapon.
- **The demands on Iran to reveal its military nuclear research are not clearly addressed.**
- **The framework promises an end to sanctions** and it is not clear if this will be phased. Even if sanctions could be 'snapped back' – a US demand rejected by Iran – this would likely take time.
- **The framework does not address Iran's missile programme – the delivery system for a weapon.**
- According to [Henry Kissinger and George Schulze](#): "Nuclear talks with Iran began as an international effort ... to deny Iran the capability to develop a military nuclear option. They are now an essentially bilateral negotiation over the scope of that capability."
- **There is a significant risk that other states in the region will seek to catch up** and also become nuclear threshold or nuclear armed states. Former Saudi intelligence chief [Turki al-Faisal](#) said recently: "Whatever the Iranians have, we will have, too."

### The framework provides inadequate safeguards against breakout

- **After 10-15 years the international community will be reliant on inspections** to prevent Iran breaking out, with potentially no breathing space to react if Iran dashes to the bomb.
- **Iran has a long history of concealment.** The framework lacks details on how facilities are to be inspected or if inspections will be 'on demand' during the initial 10-15 years or after.
- **The mechanisms for defining, identifying and responding to Iranian breaches are not clear.**
- **Iran's Supreme Leader has declared Iran will not allow inspections of military sites**, though the IAEA has evidence of weaponisation research at military sites such as Parchin.
- **The credibility of US deterrence to react to Iranian violations has been eroded**, e.g. by their apparent over commitment to the deal, and their U-turn in using force after Syrian chemical weapons use.

### The framework ignores Iran's regional behavior

- **The deal does not condition lifting of nuclear restrictions on changes in Iran's regional behaviour.**
- Whilst the US hopes that ending Iran's regional isolation will moderate its policies, other **states in the region expect Iran to be further empowered in its destabilising regional behaviour**, driven by its radical ideology. In the context of warmed relations with the US, Iran has intensified support of proxies, particularly in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and the Gaza Strip, and increased interference in shipping.
- Aside from the Israeli concern that a country which calls for its destruction could develop the means to carry that out, **Israel fears Iran's proxies – Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad – being emboldened** in their armed struggle against Israel and against moderate Palestinians.
- **The lifting of sanctions will allow the Iranian economy to revive**, its conventional military capacity to grow, and for the Islamic Republic to advance its ambition to be the regional hegemonic power.
- **Sunni-Arab leaders fear the US will abandon them** in the face of Iranian aggression, and there is an expectation that some will seek to build their own alliances with Iran.
- **Former US Defence Secretary Robert Gates recently called for reinforcing of sanctions** if necessary to get "an agreement that reassures our allies or at least doesn't scare them half to death."