

The Fool's Errand for a Perfect Deal with Iran

After months of optimistic statements from negotiators, the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany) and Iran still have not achieved a comprehensive agreement to resolve the nuclear dispute. However, the interim Joint Plan of Action (JPA) is—at this writing—still in force and both sides maintain that a comprehensive deal remains within reach.

In reality, however, the negotiations have made limited overall progress. The two sides appear to have narrowed some seemingly intractable differences, most notably on Iran's IR-40 research reactor, which the United States and its allies have maintained could produce plutonium for a weapons program. Specifically, Iran has stated its readiness to make technical changes to the reactor's design that would reduce the amount of plutonium it can produce.¹ However, they have failed to resolve many of their most important differences. Moreover, both sides remain so far apart on these issues that it appears unlikely they could reach an accord to resolve them.

The problem, however, is not simply that the two sides might fail to reach an agreement. If the two sides fail to resolve the myriad outstanding differences before the term of the renewed JPA expires, they might not be able to sue for additional time to negotiate. Patience in both Washington and Tehran is

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wearing thin among the JPA's opponents, and in the absence of tangible results, hardliners are likely to become more assertive and argue that their skepticism of negotiations was valid. This could mean a return to the sanctions track for the United States and its allies, and a renewed effort by Iran to advance its nuclear program. This would likely result in an escalatory spiral, with the barriers to returning to meaningful negotiations extremely high. Contrary to what some critics of

the JPA might think, this would only substantially increase the chances of Iran eventually acquiring nuclear weapons (see below).

To avoid this outcome, we suggest an alternative approach. The P5+1 should set aside the effort to craft an all-at-once comprehensive bargain and instead adopt a strategy of negotiating incremental agreements. An incremental approach has a number of advantages. The negotiators could focus on one sticking point at a time, without having to coordinate agreement on all of them at once. Negotiators could defer currently intractable issues, like enrichment capacity, until greater trust is built or new opportunities arise. Most importantly, the compromises already achieved under the JPA could be maintained and consolidated, independently of the ups and downs of ongoing

The continuing attempt to craft a comprehensive agreement could leave all parties much worse off.

negotiations. Critics would likely argue that such an approach only provides Iran with an opportunity to stall. We argue that, on the contrary, so long as the conditions of the JPA are in effect, Iran is unlikely to benefit from delay. If anyone benefits, it is the United States and its allies.

An incremental strategy is not without risk. However, we should be wary of making the "perfect" the enemy of the "good": obviously a comprehensive deal that resolves all outstanding

issues to Washington's satisfaction is preferable. Yet, achieving such a deal is unlikely, and the attempt to do so without an alternative strategy to maintain and advance the JPA's achievements could leave all parties much worse off.

Major Obstacles Remain

Both the United States and Iran seem genuinely motivated to find a negotiated resolution to the nuclear stalemate, but a desire to reach a settlement is not the same as finding one that can be successfully sold to domestic constituencies. Nor

should the Iranian government's desire to find common ground disguise how little the Iranian position has changed toward its commitment to keep an advanced nuclear program, including a substantial enrichment capacity. President Rouhani put pressure on himself to reach an agreement when he ran his presidential campaign on the promise to undo sanctions. However, he also put pressure on himself not to compromise on the enrichment issue by repeatedly vowing to maintain his country's nuclear infrastructure.² Likewise, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has rarely passed up an opportunity to voice his distrust of the West, particularly of the United States, and has criticized Iranian moderates for advocating "that we should make concessions to the enemy."³ Against this backdrop, it is difficult to imagine a comprehensive agreement that entails any major reductions. It is also difficult to imagine the Obama administration successfully selling to Congress a deal that did *not* require major reductions to Iran's enrichment capacity. These are seemingly irreconcilable positions, and unless one side or the other is bluffing (or both), they preclude crafting an acceptable deal in the absence of significant changes to the current political landscape.

The dispute over enrichment capacity is only one among a host of unresolved issues. Substantial differences also remain over Iran's troubling past nuclear activities, its continuing effort to develop medium-range missiles that could potentially serve as delivery vehicles for nuclear warheads, and the verification mechanisms. In addition, important questions remain about whether the Obama administration can credibly deliver the lasting relief from sanctions which Iran requires, and whether the U.S. Congress would cooperate with the administration to provide any promised concessions. At this writing, there is no evidence that substantial progress has been made on these fronts, and little reason to believe conditions will change sufficiently to allow agreement in the near-term future. Together, these issues raise an imposing barrier to a comprehensive deal, and raise important questions about the very wisdom of continuing to pursue one.

Uranium Enrichment

Perhaps the largest point of disagreement between the two sides is Iran's capacity for a nuclear "breakout"—i.e., the time it would require for Iran to complete an all-out dash to acquire at least one nuclear weapon. The size and scope of Iran's uranium enrichment program will have a substantial impact on the country's breakout options, and the confidence the United States and its allies will have that they have sufficient time to detect a breakout attempt and consider their response. Once Iran produces enough weapons-grade uranium to fuel a weapon, U.S. options for military intervention become greatly reduced.

Estimates of Iran's breakout time depend chiefly on the number of centrifuges Iran can use, the efficiency and reliability of those centrifuges, and the initial stocks of uranium on hand needing enrichment. Experts hotly contest these estimates. They typically present Iran's best case for a breakout dash and consider only the time required to enrich uranium to weapons grade. U.S. government analysts currently estimate it would take two months for Iran to enrich a single bomb's worth of weapons-grade uranium, given its current inventory of about 19,000 installed centrifuges, of which about 10,000 are actually operating.⁴ The estimate likewise takes into consideration Iran's elimination of its stocks of uranium enriched to 20 percent and the cap that has been put on its stock of 5-percent low-enriched uranium (LEU) under the JPA.

U.S. officials have repeatedly stated this timeframe would need to substantially extend—likely to six months or even a year—before reaching a comprehensive deal.⁵ Therefore, to meet this demand Iran would have to accept a large reduction of its existing enrichment capacity. Iran, however, has consistently and firmly insisted that in accordance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty it has an “absolute right” to enrich uranium so long as it is done for peaceful purposes, and that it will never accept a significant rollback of its program.⁶

P5+1 negotiators have sought to justify their demand for reductions to Iran's centrifuge program by linking Iranian enrichment capacity to the country's requirements for reactor fuel. Under Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, the chief U.S. negotiator, has stated that Iran's enrichment capacity should reflect the country's “real practical needs,” which for the foreseeable future require only a “limited, modest enrichment program,” and thus involve “a lot of dismantling of [Iran's enrichment] infrastructure.”⁷ For the next several years and potentially longer, Iran's enrichment needs are quite meager. Iran has a contract with Russia to fuel its sole reactor in Bushehr (1,000 megawatts) until 2021, and it already has sufficient 20-percent uranium fuel for its Tehran research reactor to last a decade.⁸ If the IR-40 reactor at Arak is converted to a research reactor fueled by 3.5-percent LEU, Iran would only need to maintain a relatively small enrichment capacity.⁹

In the mid-term future, Iran, however, wants to greatly expand nuclear power production and argues for a much larger enrichment capacity than they currently possess, not a smaller one. Iranian officials have claimed they intend to construct an additional nineteen power reactors, ultimately boosting the country's nuclear energy program to a total power-production capacity of 20,000 megawatts of energy. According to Iran's chief of its Atomic Energy Organization, Ali Akbar Salehi, this will require Iran to maintain an enrichment capacity several times its current one.¹⁰ The Iranian negotiators

also steadfastly maintain that any caps on enrichment are temporary measures for the purpose of trust-building, caps that will eventually be after a few years.

The demand for large reductions to Iran's centrifuge program reflects domestic political realities as much as strategic calculations. Members of the U.S. Congress, including many high-ranking Democrats, have made clear their opposition to any deal that would leave a considerable portion of Iran's enrichment program intact.¹¹ Nor does the Iranian position represent mere posturing as a negotiating tactic. As mentioned above, Iran has for years insisted they will greatly expand nuclear power production, and it has never agreed to long-term limits on enrichment capacity. Rouhani has stated that Iran "will not accept any limitations" on enrichment beyond short-term measures.¹²

More recently, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei made clear in a public statement that reductions in Iran's enrichment capacity as the P5+1 demand are a nonstarter and that a huge built-up was required instead.¹³ The regime's nuclear ambitions bring the country closer to having a nuclear deterrent and have become a symbol of prestige and pride. Rouhani even once declared the nuclear program part of Tehran's "demand for dignity and respect and our consequent place in the world."¹⁴ In this respect, the two sides' positions could not be further apart, and there is little reason to believe negotiators can bridge this gap as part of a long-term deal which could be sold effectively to their respective domestic audiences.

Possible Military Dimensions

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Iran concluded the Framework for Cooperation last November, shortly before Iran and the P5+1 agreed to the Joint Plan of Action. Under the Framework and its subsequent agreements, Iran has agreed to work with the IAEA to resolve some of the outstanding questions about its nuclear program, especially the "possible military dimensions" (PMDs) that the IAEA laid out in an annex to its November 2011 report on Iran.¹⁵ Meanwhile, Tehran has pledged to give inspectors additional information about several of its suspected past nuclear activities, in particular research involving so-called exploding-bridgewire detonators, neutron transport calculations, and high-explosives suitable for an implosion weapon.

Despite these positive signs, Iran has so far provided few substantive answers about its past activities that the IAEA (and many Western intelligence agencies) suspect comprised part of a nuclear weapons program until at least 2003. The IAEA and others have presented evidence indicating Iran's nuclear program had organizationally been linked to its military, and Iran had conducted a wide array of research and development activities specifically related to nuclear weapons, including computer simulations for an implosion weapon, warhead and reentry-vehicle design, and the reduction and machining of

uranium metal suitable for the core of a bomb. Iran has thus far refused to address these allegations and has dismissed them as fabrications.

Few signs indicate this stance will change in the near future. To the Iranian defense establishment, such a move would severely endanger national security. Fereydoun Abbasi-Davani, the former head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, summarized that attitude when he said that sharing sensitive information would only leave Iran's nuclear infrastructure more vulnerable to foreign attacks.¹⁶ Against this backdrop, transparency would certainly enrage domestic hardliners and fuel political challenges. Furthermore, it would represent a huge loss of face for the proud regime (which its adversaries might use) to admit all of its weaponization-related activities, activities that it has consistently and strongly denied for more than ten years.

The IAEA's role further complicates the issue. If the other issues can be resolved to the P5+1's satisfaction, the negotiators might very well take advantage of the opportunity to resolve the nuclear dispute instead of blocking it over remaining questions about the PMD issue alone. Yet, the IAEA has its own interest in resisting political pressure from the P5+1 to smooth over remaining PMD issues in order to better facilitate a comprehensive agreement.

Iran's Missile Program

Iran's growing ballistic missile capabilities are a major concern for both the United States and its allies in the region. Iran's lack of effective air forces leaves missiles as the sole feasible delivery vehicle for a nuclear arsenal, apart from the clandestine delivery of a weapon. Both the IAEA and the U.S. government have cited evidence that Iranian scientists have worked in the past on warhead designs suitable for Iran's Shahab-3 missile—whose 900-km range would allow Iran to target many of its neighbors—and it is possible they succeeded in creating a usable design. Iran appears to have already modified the Shahab-3 to increase its range to approximately 1,600 km (this missile is known as the Ghadr) and continues to work on the development of the Sajjil (2,000 km).¹⁷

Because of these concerns, the United States and its partners in the P5+1 have argued for verifiable limits on Iran's missile program to form part of a comprehensive agreement. Iran, however, sees the missile program as distinct from the nuclear one, and argues that its ballistic missiles are needed to deter aggression. Thus, Iran has resisted including the missile issue on the negotiating agenda. Although missiles are unlikely to present as significant a stumbling block as the enrichment limits and other elements of the nuclear dispute—the United States has suggested the missile issue is “less important” to them than the nuclear program¹⁸—it will complicate negotiations so long as it is on the table.

Verification and Safeguards

Another significant stumbling block to a comprehensive agreement concerns the verification mechanisms that would ensure Iran's nuclear program is used only for peaceful civilian purposes. The P5+1 countries will very likely insist that Iran accept both the Additional Protocol (AP) and modified Code 3.1 of Iran's Subsidiary Arrangements with the IAEA on a permanent and legally binding basis.¹⁹ Iran might accept such measures in return for sanctions relief, and is already implementing many of their requirements on a voluntary, near-term basis under the JPA.²⁰

The Additional Protocol expands IAEA safeguards to include greater assurances against undeclared nuclear activities, access by inspectors to all parts of the nuclear fuel cycle, and stronger tools to resolve questions and inconsistencies about a state's declared nuclear activities. The AP additionally requires states to provide greater information on nuclear-related research and development, trade, and manufacturing that do not directly involve the use of nuclear material. Modified Code 3.1 would require Iran to notify the IAEA of its intentions to construct any new nuclear-related infrastructure once a decision has been made. Under the JPA, Iran has also accepted 24/7 remote monitoring by IAEA inspectors at its enrichment facilities and has given them access to its uranium mines, uranium processing facilities, and its centrifuge production plants. A comprehensive bargain could require Iran to continue these measures indefinitely.

Although these measures would provide substantial assurances about Iran's nuclear program, they would not resolve all remaining differences over the future scope of inspections. Most important among them is Iran's consistent reluctance to grant inspectors access to certain "sensitive" sites, such as military bases, to resolve suspicions about unreported nuclear activities. Iran views such inspections as unacceptably intrusive and a national security risk, and claims IAEA inspectors could use such spot inspections at sensitive sites to provide intelligence to Iran's adversaries. Some experts in Washington have gone so far as to advocate inspectors having access to sites in Iran "anytime, anywhere," similar to the UN Special Commission's (UNSCOM) access to sites in Iraq after the Gulf War, measures Iran will almost certainly reject.²¹

Sanctions Relief

In addition to the above issues—all of which are concessions Iran will be asked to make—similar questions exist on whether the P5+1 can deliver the sort of sanctions relief necessary to convince Iran to agree to a deal. The United States, which is responsible for most of the economic sanctions against Iran, has particularly targeted investments in Iran's oil and gas sector, its banking sector, and Iranian imports of refined petroleum. Washington has also orchestrated

severe restrictions on the purchase of Iranian oil through third-party sanctions.²²

However, the United States has not been alone in these efforts: in one of the most harmful moves against Iran's economy, the EU imposed an embargo on Iranian oil in 2012 and also targeted the banking sector. The combination of these sanctions has delivered a serious blow to Iran, whose oil exports have dropped to less than half of their pre-sanctions levels, and whose currency has lost most of its value. Hassan Rouhani won Iran's presidential election in June 2013 largely on the claim that he could negotiate sanctions relief, and rolling back sanctions has been the central Iranian demand in talks with the P5+1.²³

The Obama administration has hailed the implementation of tough international sanctions as a policy victory, and a central driver for bringing Iran to the negotiating table and agreeing to the JPA. However, now that the sanctions are in place, the administration's hands are tied in terms of lifting them. The administration has within its discretion the ability to lift sanctions imposed by Executive Order (which, however, only applies to some punitive measures) and to provide limited sanctions relief by issuing waivers. However, the permanent lifting of many sanctions already in place would require Congressional action.²⁴ Legislative action to remove sanctions is unlikely, as sanctions enjoy broad, bipartisan support, and there is stiff Congressional opposition to concessions which leave more than a token enrichment capability intact in Iran.²⁵ The sort of major, irreversible concessions which the P5+1 demand from Iran would almost certainly require a more credible form of sanctions relief than presidential waivers. In addition, it is unlikely that Western firms will be willing to commit themselves to long-term projects in Iran that require major initial sunk costs—as most projects to tap Iran's vast and largely untapped gas reserves would require—in the absence of the sort of credible commitment to rolling back sanctions that legislation would provide.

The Incremental Solution

The P5+1 is assuming a big risk by putting all of its eggs in the single basket of a comprehensive agreement. As shown above, large obstacles remain to reaching such an agreement. Additionally, both sides need to agree on the duration of a comprehensive deal, which is a challenge in itself. The P5+1 and especially the United States want a long-term deal (presumably spanning more than a decade or even two), whereas Iran prefers one that expires after a couple of years.²⁶ Failure to bridge these gaps before the interim agreement expires could result in

the total breakdown of negotiations. Without some concrete concessions in hand, such as the rollback of sanctions or irreversible cuts to Iran's nuclear program, Iranian and U.S. negotiators may lack the domestic political support necessary to renew the JPA for an additional term. If negotiations break down, the breaks on Iran's program will come off and any future round of negotiations would prove a tough sell indeed.

A promising alternative to this approach is to pursue a series of incremental agreements, with each successive round building on the last. According to this approach, negotiators would seek to consolidate their existing achievements, then move to deepen existing agreement by increments. To start, the existing terms of the JPA could merge into a more durable deal that puts caps on Iran's nuclear program (including on enrichment R&D practices), specifies design modifications for the Arak reactor that would verifiably limit its ability to produce plutonium in sufficient quantity for a weapon, and further increases transparency measures. In return, Iran would get sanctions relief that would have to be significant enough to give Iran an incentive to accept these measures and limited enough to keep the leverage over Tehran in future negotiations. To meet this challenge, the United States could allow Iran to modestly increase its oil exports.

There are reasons to recommend such an approach. It allows negotiators to focus on the most urgent aspects of the nuclear dispute and most amenable to compromise, while deferring issues that could upset the negotiating process entirely, such as reductions to Iran's enrichment program. In cases where those most upsetting issues are time-sensitive, negotiators can focus on crafting stop-gap measures that facilitate their deferral without needing to completely resolve differences that may remain irreconcilable.

Also, an incremental process would help build mutual trust over time as the two sides reach and honor agreements. Likewise, the compromises made by each side would increasingly lock in over time, as the political constituencies that benefit from them lobby for continued or deepened cooperation, hardline opposition loses political traction, and the more moderate forces that advanced compromise reap domestic political rewards. As a result, issues that are at present intractable could over time become easier to resolve.

Presently, a failure to resolve any one issue risks upsetting negotiations in all other areas, including those like the potential compromise over the Arak reactor in which progress has already been made. As a result, the overall negotiating process rises or falls according to whether negotiators can resolve the most intractable issues. This assumes that no agreement at all is better than one that resolves some issues but not others—a questionable assumption at best. It also frames the negotiating process in a way that makes any otherwise successful accord appear to be a failure if it does not account for differences across all outstanding issues.

Critics will likely identify a number of drawbacks to an incremental strategy. Before addressing these, it is essential to acknowledge that an incremental approach is not perfect; it is simply better than available alternatives, and it must be weighed in the context of these alternative courses. An incremental approach would undeniably appear inferior to a comprehensive agreement that resolved the entire nuclear dispute in a single stroke. The pursuit of a comprehensive deal, however, assumes such an all-encompassing bargain is available, although it is likely not.

Some critics might argue that the United States and its allies would be better off with no deal at all rather than to adopt an incremental approach. For them, the pursuit of a comprehensive agreement (or the current U.S. bargaining position) is a take-it-or-leave-it proposition—anything short of a considerable reduction in Iran’s enrichment program, transparency in Iran’s past nuclear activities, and an intrusive verification regime would leave Iran unacceptably

Time, however, does not work to Iran’s advantage.

close to a nuclear bomb and present too great a threat to the United States and its allies in the region. For this reason, critics believe the United States ought to continue to drive a hard bargain (or even harder than the current course) with the Iranians regardless of the chances of success at the negotiating table. If negotiations fail, the United

States has coercive options it can use—tougher sanctions or even military force—that, while inferior to a comprehensive agreement, would be preferable to a bad deal which leaves Iran’s breakout options intact.

Several flawed assumptions inform this view. First, it assumes that the status quo is unsustainable beyond the short term, and that time currently works to Iran’s advantage. Specifically, the presumption is that the JPA imposes insufficient limits on Iran’s nuclear program, and it is therefore urgent to negotiate tougher and more verifiable conditions within a time-limited frame or risk Iran moving closer to acquiring nuclear weapons. The corollary to this view is that similar time pressure also exists on sanctions: the longer Iran can stall for time without a comprehensive agreement, the more difficult it will become to maintain the sanctions regime. An incremental approach then, the criticism goes, would open up an opportunity for Iran to stall, and effectively wait out the sanctions, while keeping its nuclear program relatively idle but intact. Once the sanctions regime begins to crack, Iran would be free to continue its nuclear advance.

Time, however, does not in fact work to Iran’s advantage. The JPA both freezes the development of Iran’s nuclear program and provides more effective assurances against Iran’s development of a nuclear weapon than is commonly acknowledged. Under the JPA, Iran cannot increase its enrichment capacity and

has eliminated its stocks of uranium enriched to 20 percent. At the same time, the safeguards and inspections regime monitoring Iran's nuclear activities is substantial—significantly greater than what had been in place prior to the agreement, and very likely nearly as comprehensive as anything the P5+1 will ever achieve. Existing safeguards are certainly not perfect, but no verification mechanism will ever provide complete assurances. More to the point, the combination of the “limits on infrastructure” and “activities with increased safeguards” provisions in the JPA make it virtually impossible for Iran to carry out a nuclear breakout without providing the United States and its allies time to detect the attempt and to intervene. The Obama administration's estimate of a two-month breakout time sounds scarier than it is, especially if one keeps in mind that this is the minimum amount of time, under highly ideal conditions, it would take Iran to produce enough fissile material for a single weapon. Even having achieved that, Iran would still lack a credible nuclear deterrent and be substantially far from acquiring one. Therefore, the current risk of an Iranian breakout attempt, let alone a successful one, has to be judged extremely low.

At the same time, the sanctions regime does not appear to be weakening: Iran's best efforts to circumvent U.S. financial sanctions have failed to provide it with much relief.²⁷ Admittedly, Iranian oil exports were on the rise in the first months after the JPA, however more recently this trend has reversed. A further easing of oil sanctions in future interim agreements, as we suggest above, should also prove comparatively stable. Unlike many other sanctions, the oil-related sanctions currently in place against Iran are comparatively easy to restore once they are waived should Iran renege on the deal. Oil imports can be cut immediately and—given the current energy market—importers should be able to switch to competing suppliers. In addition, with the exception of China, all of the main importers of Iranian oil are U.S. allies (India, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Turkey), which should facilitate U.S. diplomacy. The threat of continued sanctions and their re-imposition should continue to provide Iran with the motivation to pursue a negotiated settlement.

Most importantly, the real threat to the sanctions regime is not continued negotiations, but their failure. If the failure to reach a comprehensive accord produces a breakdown of the JPA—particularly if the international community views U.S. hard bargaining as the cause—Washington would likely have a difficult time maintaining international support for sanctions. This is particularly problematic for critics of the JPA who support a more coercive U.S. strategy. Without a clear path back to

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the negotiating table, and in the face of waning international support for sanctions, the remaining U.S. options would be acquiescence or military force.

Slow and Steady Wins the Agreement

The Obama administration should be lauded for the important successes of its Iran policy. Tough international sanctions have given Iran a powerful reason to negotiate a way out of the nuclear impasse, and the Rouhani government appears genuinely willing to look for an acceptable compromise that resolves the crisis. The White House has deftly matched sanctions with subtle diplomacy, including bilateral talks with Iran that by all reports were central to reaching an interim agreement.²⁸

The JPA by itself represents an important achievement. It puts real limits on Iran's nuclear program while making Iran's nuclear activities more transparent. The combination of the two creates a strong deterrent against an Iranian breakout attempt and provides significant assurances against Iran's acquisition of a bomb. Moreover, the administration has achieved this without sacrificing much of the bargaining leverage the sanctions provide, or withdrawing the threat of military force as a last option.

Having achieved this, however, Washington is now in danger of losing a good deal in the pursuit of a perfect—but unachievable—one. By continuing to drive a hard bargain in negotiations over a comprehensive agreement, the

The nuclear dispute is a long-term management issue, not a near-term crisis needing resolution.

United States and the P5+1 are putting the JPA at risk by creating the possibility of reaching the end of the interim deal's term without having negotiated a comprehensive one to replace it.

We have argued that the Obama administration can sidestep this problem by reframing the nuclear dispute as a long-term issue needing management rather than a near-term crisis needing resolution. The conditions of the JPA are more stable and more favorable to the United States than most analysts have recognized, and each interim

agreement would contribute to building trust and giving Iran additional incentives to stand by its commitments. Such an approach could also be easier to sell politically at home, as a grand bargain must win domestic support for every element of a nuclear deal, whereas incremental agreements require support on a much narrower set of issues at any given time. Incremental deals

are also less likely to become hot-button issues that dominate the headlines in the way that a grand bargain would. Finally, the longer a successful incremental process continued, the harder it would become for hardline opponents to advance alarmist claims or to threat-monger. As a result, setting its sights on building upon the JPA through a series of incrementally deeper agreements would enable the Obama administration to stand a greater chance of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and winning domestic support for its course.

Incremental agreements have a greater chance of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

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