

The US Wants Iran to Become a “Toothless Shark”: Its Allies and Missile Programme to be Swept Off the Table

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*There will be no deal between Iran and the US as long as **President Donald Trump** is unwilling to lift his aggressive sanctions against the “Islamic Republic”. Washington and Riyadh’s top leaders have asked [Pakistan](#) and [Iraq](#) to mediate with the Tehran leadership to ease tensions and stop the [attacks](#) that are jeopardising the turbulent peace in the Middle East. Iran’s answer is clear: all attacks are deniable and its only request has not changed. Iran [wants](#) all sanctions lifted and will then be ready to sit around the table offering more concessions to world leaders to make sure no nuclear bomb is prepared in any nuclear site in the country.*

But that is not really what Trump and his Israeli allies want. The nuclear deal is not the real issue – Iran believes – because the International Atomic Agency already has the necessary access and has acknowledged on many occasions that Iran’s programme – despite its breach of the JCPOA – is [not](#) headed towards the fabrication of nuclear weapons. Two points are essential for Trump and Israel, identified by the US as “[destabilising behaviour](#)”. These are the Iranian [missile](#) programme, and Iran’s allies in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Palestine and Afghanistan. The US implicitly recognises that Iran is a proven and recognised regional power- and thus wants to pull its teeth out.

When **President Barack Obama** signed off on the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), it was because his sanctions against Iran, and those of his predecessors, never worked. The agreement he negotiated would have [delayed](#) any Iranian military nuclear programme, if it existed, for another 15-20 years. He also tried to put on the table the Iranian missile programme and containment of Iran’s allies in the Middle East but was met with clear [rejection](#) from Iran. The “Islamic Republic” leadership was adamant that only the nuclear issue could be discussed, and nothing else. The deal was agreed between parties with no trust in each other but who nevertheless agreed to “sort out” their differences and conflicts.

Today Trump believes he can twist Iran’s arm with his “maximum pressure” and severe sanctions to force its leaders to the table and negotiate the two taboo topics. Iran informed those mediators seeking to ease the situation of its readiness to stop its missile programme if the world disarms Israel of all its nuclear bombs and if every country in the region becomes missile free. Otherwise, Iran will never give up its advanced missile programme, which enables the country to defend itself against any attacks and violations of its airspace—as, for example, happened with the US drone [downed](#) this summer. Moreover,

for Iran to cease or continue supporting its allies in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan is not a matter of choice. It is part of its ideology, its constitution, its very existence.

Iranian decision-makers said:

“If we stop support for Palestine, Israel will annex the West Bank and wipe Gaza from the map while the world stands watching, applauding Israel’s right of self-defence! If we stop support for Hezbollah in Lebanon, Israel will confiscate the disputed water and land borders and walk into Lebanon any time it wishes to. The Lebanese Army is not allowed to be armed with deterrent weapons to stop hundreds of violations of Lebanon’s sovereignty every single month by Israel. If we do not support Syria, the Golan Heights will be lost forever and Israel and the US will have a foothold in north-east Syria for good. If Iraq is left alone, it will be divided into three parts as was the case in 2014 when ISIS occupied a third of the country. All these countries will be crushed by US hegemony and subjected to Israel’s will and arrogance.”

What Trump doesn’t want to understand is that Iran’s missile programme represents the right hand of the country; its allies are its left hand. The entire body cannot survive if they are amputated, so it will naturally reject the process. Iran refuses to become the “toothless shark” the US and Israel want Iran to make of it.

The absence of [trust](#) between Iran and the US is all-pervasive. Trump has changed his mind about many agreements and has shown much aggression since he took office. Among both his allies and enemies, many are seriously thinking about – and some are already acting in this direction – detaching themselves from any relationship with the US, from its currency, and from doing any business with them. The US can no longer be considered a viable partner for peace for the following reasons: it offers what doesn’t belong to it (the Golan Heights and Jerusalem), and its foreign policy is unstable, with an inexperienced President and similarly inadequate advisors leading the country. It was the US that revoked the nuclear deal and imposed typically harsh sanctions on Iran: this sparked such serious tension in the Middle East that it has driven the region to the edge of the abyss.

Iran is also showing how incompetent Trump and his team really are, and how unwilling he is to defend Arab countries. He is merely interested in drying up their money and resources.

US leaders will not be able to calm the situation in the Middle East and meet with Iranian officials until sanctions are not lifted, or unless France and other EU members are allowed to open lines of credit for Iran to use (again leading to lifting the US sanctions).

It is difficult for Trump to withdraw the sanctions because that will mean a visible victory for Iran and a defeat for the US and its Middle Eastern allies. It will also indicate that all he has done in the last year or so against Iran was ineffectual. This will be an opening for his political enemies to embarrass him while he is seeking to be re-elected for another term. Iran won’t give him the satisfaction of taking pictures shaking President Hassan Rouhani’s hand for nothing. Iran will not give up its missile programme, nor its allies in whom Iran has heavily invested since 1982.

The situation will remain the same; pressure will continue to mount in the Middle East unless Trump takes his hand off the trigger and allows Iran to export its oil. The initiative that would help Trump to come down from the tree he has climbed up does not exist! Iran will

not be coerced into giving up its missile programme and its allies. Trump and his allies have been upstaged and outclassed.

*

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Michel Chossudovsky

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