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What the US withdrawal means for the future of the Iran nuclear deal  
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(MUSIC)

PITA: Welcome to Intersections, part of the Brookings Podcast Network. I'm your host Adrianna Pita. When the U.S., U.K., Germany, France, China, Russia, and Iran agreed to the Iran Nuclear Deal, or Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2015, part of the deal for Iran was that, in exchange for opening up their enrichment's sites to inspection and monitoring, the U.S. would lift some of its long standing economic sanctions. By Congressional Law, however, the lifting of those sanctions needs to be periodically renewed by Presidential Waiver.

On Tuesday, President Trump announced that the U.S. will resume sanctions on Iran, withdrawing the country from the nuclear deal. This episode you're about to hear was recorded on Monday, before it was confirmed that the U.S. would withdraw, but the questions still remain. Why would President Trump choose this path, and what will happen next?

With us today are Suzanne Maloney, a Senior Fellow and Deputy Director of the Foreign Policy Program, here at Brookings, and Robert Einhorn, a Senior Fellow in the Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Initiative at Brookings. Bob has also served at the State Department of the Obama Administration, as a Special Advisor on U.S. Sanctions and Negotiations Policies toward Iran. Suzanne and Bob, thank you so much for being here today.

EINHORN: Our pleasure, Adrianna.

PITA: In January, the last time that President Trump waived sanctions, he warned that the next deadline, May 12<sup>th</sup>, was going to be the last one. This, in spite of the fact that IAEA, The International Atomic Energy Agency, has so far been mostly satisfied with Iranian compliance with the deal. So, Bob, Suzanne, can I ask you to say: why is this coming to a head now? Suzanne, would you like to start on that?

MALONEY: Well I think what we've seen is that the President has sought to get tough on Tehran, really, throughout his years in office. He campaigned on the question of Iran as the bad actor in the region, essentially the root of all the troubles that the U.S. faces, and the challenges and threats to its allies and interests in the region, and for, I think, his own personal reasons, he has focused on the deal as the mechanism for pushing back on Iran, even at a time where he is frequently had advice from Senior Advisors within the Administration, that there are other avenues for restraining Iran's increasing reach across the region, and that the deal

might be better left intact. I think the President favors going after the deal, simply, because it is related to his own sense of identity as the Master of the Art of the deal.

This comes from his conviction that, despite the unlikely prospect that he actually has gone through the 156 pages of densely worded text of the agreement, he is convinced that, somehow, he could have made a better arrangement with the Iranians, and that the Obama Administration was essentially hoodwinked by a clever ruse by the Iranians to retain their Nuclear Industry.

EINHORN: Adrianna, you asked, "Why is this coming to a head now?" My question would be, "Why didn't it come to a head earlier in the Trump Administration?" because, as Suzanne mentioned, he campaigned, you know, against this deal. He said he was going to rip it up right away. I think it hasn't come to a head, until now, because, until now, President Trump has had a number of his Senior Advisors, who strongly advised him to stay within the deal.

PITA: Mm-hmm.

EINHORN: None of them thought this was a perfect deal, and they thought perhaps it could be improved, but they thought it made no sense to rip it up now, and I think President Trump was dissuaded from taking this action sooner, but on January 12<sup>th</sup>, he basically issued an ultimatum, both to the Europeans and to the U.S. Congress. "Help the Administration fix this deal, or by May 12<sup>th</sup>, I'm gonna terminate it." So, the President is very much the one dictating the timing now.

PITA: So, on May 13<sup>th</sup>, if as widely expected, he reissues sanctions on Iran. What actually happens next, and I guess my question is both in terms of the sanctions themselves and how quickly do those actually get implemented and actually go into force, and also in terms of the deal. Does it automatically collapse? Is there any possibility of the deal continuing in some kind of fashion between all the rest of signatories, absent the U.S.?

EINHORN: What the President would be doing, is failing to renew sanctions under the National Defense Authorization Act. These are actually sanctions involving the Central Bank of Iran, as well as the purchases of Iranian Crude Oil, which must take place through the Central bank of Iran. What the Administration will telling oil purchasers around the world, is that they must either stop all together purchasing Iranian Crude Oil, or they have to indicate their

willingness to make significant reductions in their purchases of Iranian Crude Oil, or else Banks associated with these transactions will be subject to very harsh sanctions, in particular, cutting them off from the U.S. Financial System.

So, that is what will actually happen, but that doesn't mean that deal automatically collapses. It will put the United States in violation of the deal, but the deal could continue, if all the other parties wanted to sustain it, and we know that the Europeans are going to try to convince the Iranians to stay bound by their Nuclear Restrictions, and perhaps it's possible to persuade them to stay bound by, you know, a few months, maybe a half a year, but what's going to happen is that, over time, the reimposition of U.S. sanctions will deter International Banks and Business from doing any economic dealings with Iran, and, so, over time, what will happen is that the economic benefits to the Iranians will dwindle, and they will decide this deal is not worth sticking to.

MALONEY: Yeah, I think the first impact of this decision on the 12<sup>th</sup>, will hit the oil markets, but it won't hit immediately because, in effect, the sanctions incorporate a 180-day period for reduction for importation of Iranian Crude, which gives traders, companies, countries a little bit of a grace period to begin to calculate how they might draw down, and how they might, in fact, negotiate an arrangement with The Trump Administration.

When these sanctions were put in place, originally, they were preceded by an enormous amount of diplomacy led by Bob and others from the Obama Administration to deal with countries and to identify what was a viable reduction in their reliance on Iranian Crude that wouldn't unnecessarily impact their own economic progress. In a way, they, particularly for America's Allies throughout Asia, that import large quantities of Iranian Crude, could have been quite detrimental.

As far as we know, we haven't seen any of that diplomacy taking place. None of those conversations have taken place, but they certainly will over the course of the next 180 days, and that gives the market some time to adjust. It gives alternative suppliers some opportunity to take advantage of the expected drawdown from other countries, and it gives the bureaucracy some time to take some of the other actions that are, in fact, necessary to support full implementation of these measures, including the re-designation of all of the various entities

that were targeted under this particular measure, and let me just re-enforce. I mean, this is a really complicated deal that was preceded by an incredibly complex array of measures intended to restrict Iran economic access and benefits.

The sanctions that are in play with this May 12<sup>th</sup> decision are certainly not the only sanctions that were put -- imposed on Iran by the United States. They were one particular, and particularly important measure, but there are a number of other measures that will come due for waivers over the course of the next few months, in particular, in July, and that will be, I think, the next timeline for the Trump Administration to indicate its stance on the deal.

The time period between May 12<sup>th</sup> and July 12<sup>th</sup>, is probably going to be an opportunity for some fairly frantic diplomacy, to see what, if anything can be done to somehow preserve the deal that might, in fact, persuade the Trump Administration to reissue waivers, to, in any way, facilitate the economic benefits that the Iranians were anticipating when they signed onto this arrangement.

PITA: There has been a lot of that, diplomacy going on between the U.S. and Europe, what they call the E-3 Partners, the European partners on this. Trying to come up with what it might take to keep the U.S. in the deal, but where have Moscow and Beijing been in all of this? So, have you heard from them about what their reaction will be if the U.S. withdraws?

EINHORN: The negotiations between the Trump Administration and the E-3, Germany, France and Britain, have gone fairly well. The Europeans say they've closed some differences, and, perhaps, with a last push, they could reach agreement, but none of them are terribly optimistic that, even if they can reach agreement with the Trump Administration, that that agreement will be sufficient to persuade Trump to remain in the deal. They are terribly concerned about that.

The Russians and the Chinese, of course, have not been involved in this, and they say they will not be bound by any agreement that's reached between the Trump Administration and The Europeans. The Russians and Chinese believe the JCPOA is working quite well. They don't believe it needs to be supplemented, and so, they've set it out, and if the negotiations do not work, and Trump ends up leaving the deal, the Russians and Chinese will use this as an opportunity to blame the United States.

The Russians and Chinese will make common cause with the Iranians in accusing the United States of a violation, and they will try to bring the Europeans on board, and to truly isolate the United States. So, the Russians and Chinese truly would like to see the deal continued, and if it's not, there will be very harsh recriminations.

PITA: Do you think, Suzanne, that Russia and Chinese economic activity might be enough to supplant some of what the U.S. sanctions would do to Iran, or are U.S. sanctions so wide reaching that it doesn't matter who else they are also trading with? It's not going to help.

MALONEY: Well, I think the rest of the world will try to move in to backfill, and take advantage of opportunities that are opened up, but, fundamentally, for the Iranians, the entire intent of this deal was to eliminate all the barriers that existed to doing business with the rest of the world, and most of those really emanate from Washington, in terms of the incredible scope and reach of American measures that target Iran's interactions with the International Financial System.

Obviously, the United States place in that system is absolutely unapparelled, and so, to the extent that doing business with Iran forces a choice, and essentially requires countries and companies to abandon any interests in, not simply the U.S. Market, but U.S. Banking System. It's not a choice that most companies and countries are willing to make, and so, this really gets, I think, to the heart of the matter, that the U.S. has a disproportionate role in sustaining the utility and viability of the JCPOA, but the U.S. also has a very divergent position from almost all of its partners and allies in this arrangement, and I think, you know, that's why we're in the predicament that we're in.

For the United States, this deal was the start of resolution of a much broader, and more (inaudible) set of challenges from Iran. It was a beginning, but not an end. For the Russians and Chinese, there's a relative degree of complacency about Iran's rule across the broader Middle East. There are real concerns, but the Russians have a strategic partnership with the Iranians and Syria.

They have no interest in really pushing back, in any significant way, on the rest of the threats that Iran poses to the International System. The Europeans, of course, are sympathetic to the American point of view, but saw the deal is very much a transaction, one that was about

the art of the possible, having originated the negotiations with Iran more than a decade before they, in fact, concluded the Europeans recognized how difficult it is to come to any kind of a conclusion, to come to any kind of a resolution, to concerns about Iranian behavior, and think it's very important to preserve a win, even if it is a partial win, and, so, this comes back to the United States with a much more far ranging set of objectives, with respect to diplomacy with Iran, feeling as though we haven't got what we paid for, when, in effect, it's the Iranians who haven't gotten what they paid for.

EINHORN: I just add to that, Adrianna. The Russians were very helpful in reaching the JCPOA. One reason the Russians were helpful is that they wanted to keep Iran's Uranium Enrichment Program at a very low level. Why? Because the Russians, they sell nuclear reactors to Iran, and they provide fuel, and it's very lucrative for the Russians to sell fuel to the Iranians to fuel these reactors.

So, that's why they happy to see Iran's Enrichment Program limited. One of the concerns that Trump Administration has had, and Europeans have had, is that some of the restrictions, nuclear restrictions, on Iran expire, after 10 and 15 years, and the Trump Administration, and the Europeans are looking beyond 10 and 15 years. "How can we constrain, Iran's Enrichment Program?"

The Russians would very much support that. They want to continue to sell fuel to Iran indefinitely. So, one might have expected them to work closely with the Trump Administration in dealing with the, so-called, Sunset Problem in the JCPOA, but the Russians strongly object to the idea of threatening to blow up the deal if, after 10 and 15 years, Iran engages in activities, that it's legally entitled to engage in. So, this whole episode has been very unfortunate.

We could have had the Russians, I think, as partners in trying to limit Iranian Nuclear capabilities over the long term. I think this is going to make it more difficult.

PITA: As we mentioned that, the U.S. and the European partners have been talking about some things, like the Sunset clauses and some additional things, additional agreements that would help keep the U.S. involved in the Iran deal. However, Iran has said they're not interested. They said, "We renegotiated this JCPOA Agreement. We want to stick to these

terms. We're not interested in add-ons or renegotiating some of these issues." If and when the U.S. pulls out, there is a dispute resolution mechanism that's built into this. Is Iran likely to try and pursue that as an avenue, as a way of continuing the delay on having anything actually happen? How does this mechanism work, is there any gain for them on this?

EINHORN: The Europeans hope that Iran will take advantage of this dispute resolution mechanism because it could buy some additional time. The JCPOA provides that, if any of the parties have concern about compliance by another party, it could take that matter to this joint commission, and on this joint commission, I represented the P5 plus 1, five permanent members of the security council and Germany, plus the European Union has a seat, plus Iran has a seat.

So, Iran could take this matter to the Joint Commission, and it has 15 days to make its case and try to resolve the issue. Then, if that doesn't work, there's a provision that Foreign Ministers of these countries could get together, for 15 days, to try to resolve, and then there is also a provision that an Advisory Panel could be constituted, and take 15 additional days. So, somewhere between 15 and 45 days, are allotted for this dispute resolution procedure to take place.

Now, I think the only reason Iran would bring this matter to the Joint Commission is to isolate the United States, to accuse it of a violation. Even the Europeans would be hard pressed, I think, to avoid the conclusion that the United States had violated its sanctions relief commitments, by re-imposing sanctions. So, it's likely to play out, it might buy some additional time for diplomacy, up to 45 days or even longer, but I think this is a dispute resolution that's not going to be resolved. I mean, clearly the Trump Administration is not going to back down -

PITA: Mm-hmm.

EINHORN: -- and I think the only logical finding of this procedure will be that the U.S. is in violation of its sanction's relief commitments.

PITA: Suzanne, can I ask you to weigh in a little bit about the Iranian Domestic Political Situation? President Rouhani, staked a lot on the JCPOA, and on economic renewal that would hopefully extend from it, but that economic situation did not go as well as they hoped, both between the combination of low oil prices, and just since the Trump Administration has come



in, a lot of the uncertainty about what America would do, has meant that, there was already not as much investment in the country as was hoped. What is Rouhani facing, with the U.S. withdrawal, domestically? How does this play out for him?

MALONEY: Well, I think, we tend to look at Iran as, kind of, perennially warring factions, and look at any development to see how it impacts that factional balance of power. I think, if anything, that's really irrelevant in this particular case. This was a decision that was endorsed by the Supreme Leader. There were opponents and proponents, and certainly Rouhani has been more invested in Nuclear Diplomacy than almost any other political actor in Iran, over the course of the past 20 years, but, fundamentally, the way that the nuclear deal has played out in Iran, has broader implications for the stability for the Islamic Republic than it does for the, you know, sort of, ups and downs of the factional balance of power in the country, and that really gets to the economic underpinnings of the system, which have been very much under pressure, for a number of years. Owing, in large part to the impact of the American sanctions, but also to decades of mismanagement and structural problems in the economy that were politically very difficult to resolve, for Iranian Government.

Rouhani has sought to address those problems, both by negotiating this deal, and trying to reopen Iran to Foreign Investment, and trade. But also, by trying to address the underlying root causes of corruption and mismanagement. Neither of those efforts has gone as he intended, and almost irrespective of the fate of the joint comprehensive plan of action, the Iranian economy has faced real struggles. There's been some positive growth since the deal went into implementation, largely owing to the reconstitution of Iran's Oil Productions and exports, but, fundamentally, the structural issues have been very difficult to resolve, very costly and painful, and the process has been very slow, and as a result of that, I think, you know, what we've seen is that coming to the fore, over the course of the past six to eight months, has been the deep rooted alienation of a lot of Iranian's who feel as though there's been, you know, promise after promise, that life will get better after the Revolution.

There have been different efforts at trying to see that through, but, in effect, the trickle-down hasn't really made it to their own pocket books, or to their table clothes, as one of the former Iranian Presidents campaigned upon, and I think, you know, given the high youth

unemployment, given the wide-spread conviction that the system is stacked against the ordinary Iranian. The threat that Iran faces, is not one of whether the reformists or moderates are up or down, it's really one that I think, could shake the stability of the system as a whole, and create the greater opportunity and greater incentive for Iranian's to simply say, "Throw all the bums out. We're really fed up and tired." and it's playing out in a very direct fashion, with respect to the value of the currency, which is had collapsed over the course of the past few months.

There is, I think, a sense of Iranians holding the breath, this week, to see what happens with this decision. Whether the rial, the local currency, will plummet even further on the black market as Iranian's rush to find more stable ways to preserve their wealth, and as those with means, try to move as much as their capitol outside the country as possible. I think all of this will precipitate a great deal of uncertainty about what the future holds for the system, as a whole, within Iran.

PITA: I expect that the job of trying to work on some structural economic fixes will only get harder with the sanctions back in place.

MALONEY: Yeah. The structural problems are ones that require a degree of political calm. That has been the approach of different Iranian Governments, including Rouhani's, but there's always been a sort of struggle within the system over the kind of philosophy of whether Iran should, in fact, be trading with the World, whether Iran should, in fact, have a market-based system. Some of those struggles have abated over the years, but, still, for the Supreme Leader of Iran, reliance on the rest of the world is a threat, and, so, he'd prefer to have, what he's called, resistance economy, simply cutting Iran off as much as possible from the rest of the World. He's welcomed, in fact, the prospect that the deal would collapse, and that Iran would be forced to be more self-reliant. Most educated Iranians understand that this is just an illusion. Iran simply can't get by, and I think that was the recognition that was taken, with respect to the decision, in 2013, to come to the table in a much more serious fashion than we had seen, in more than a decade, from Iran.

This recognition that Iran needs to be able to conduct business transactions with companies around the world, that Iran needs goods, and services, and technology, and learning

from all parts of the world, but this will be an opportunity for those with a very dark vision for Iran, to crackdown, to cut Iranian's off. They've already begun, as of last week, shutting down access to the most widely used social media application, called Telegram, that is the way that Iranian's communicate, both internally and with the outside world, and I think this is all, to some extent, expedited, facilitated, underpinned by the expectation that the deal is going to collapse.

PITA: Sorry to stick on you for one more moment, but that sounds like Iran is moving in, like, a more North Korea-like direction. Now, obviously, one of the big differences is that Iran does not yet have a Nuclear Weapon, whereas North Korea does. Do we know anything about how Iran has been viewing the U.S. and North Korea's negotiations, and how that whole thing has been going?

MALONEY: I can't speak to how the Iranian Leadership use the outreach to Kim Jong-un, and I know many are interested in how the North Koreans are, maybe, looking at what's happening, with respect to Iran. Bob, I'm sure has views on all that. I can say that on social media, there's a sense of absolute bafflement, that the United States would simply walk away, or somehow implode an Arms Control Agreement that was negotiated, painstakingly, over a great deal of time, and after a great deal of pressure had been applied, even as it seeks to come to some sort of a resolution, to another Arms Control Crisis, with another State Actor, and so there's a sense of absolute disconnect that the Trump Administration appears to be wholly disinterested in diplomacy with Iran, even at times it's ramping up diplomacy with North Korea.

EINHORN: It's hard to say how the Iranian Elite is viewing President Trump's efforts to engage with Kim Jong-un. On the one hand, perhaps they're encouraged, that here is the President reaching out, diplomatically, prepared to come to a deal, prepared to offer North Korea certain benefits, if Kim Jong-un gets rid of his nuclear weapons. On the other hand, the Iranians see President Trump taking a very unrealistic position toward the North Koreans, insisting that they completely denuclearize, which they're not prepared to do, and this may be seen by the Iranians as a bad signal that President Trump is going to continue to insist on unrealistic demands on Iran, in terms of Iran's willingness to make additional concessions, at this point, but it's hard to say.

PITA: Bob, I want to ask you about something that you wrote. A few weeks ago, on April 30<sup>th</sup>, the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, he made a very personal presentation, many people believe speaking directly to Trump, of an archive of Iranian Nuclear Data that Israeli Intelligence had recovered, a trove of intelligence regarding Iran's past Nuclear Program, and by and large the reactions from most experts was, "Yeah, we know. They had a Nuclear Weapons Program. They mostly stopped it, but this is why we want monitoring, to make sure they don't restart it."

But, in your piece, you pointed out that, aside from just the general existence of this archive, there were in fact, some useful elements, in the data that came out of that archive, but then, rather than weighing in against the JCPOA, or any sort of deal, they could actually provide Washington and the Trump Administration with some leverage to help strengthen the enforcement mechanisms. Can you talk a little bit about what was in that data that Israeli recovered?

EINHORN: I think this trove of information could provide the Trump Administration leverage to use to strengthen the JCPOA, if it's prepared to use that leverage. Now, if they pull out of the deal, they're clearly not prepared to that. The United States Intelligence Community, ever since 2007, has believed that Iran had a program to develop nuclear weapons, that somewhere around 2003, it mostly abandoned that program, and ever since then, has been keeping open the option to pursue nuclear weapons at some future time, if they so decide to go for nuclear weapons.

So, there is nothing fundamentally new and surprising in the archives that Prime Minister Netanyahu revealed about a week ago, but I think this is going to make an impression on public opinion, on governments around the world, because what this information shows goes way beyond the assessments of Western Intelligence Communities and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

This shows conclusively, on the basis of Iran's own records, that Iran did have a Nuclear Weapons Development Program, and that Iran has been lying for decades about this. The Iranian's claim that they have a religious edict against a development of nuclear weapons. So, how could they possibly have done this?

But these secret files demonstrate that the Iranians have been lying, and I think this is going to put the Iranian Regime on the defensive, and this should give the Trump Administration, if it wanted to use it, the ability to pressure Iran in a number of important areas. The Trump Administration has wanted to strengthen the inspection provisions of the JCPOA. Iran denies that the JCPOA permits access to military facilities. Well, a lot of these activities, in the secret files, took place in military facilities. It certainly strengthens the argument to insist that Iran must give access to the IAEA to inspect. Also, the Trump Administration wants to constrain Iran's Missile Programs.

Iran says, "There's no reason to do that because we can not possibly have nuclear weapons. So, these missiles are simply part of our conventional defense capabilities. They have nothing to do with nuclear weapons." Well, one of the documents that Netanyahu disclosed was a design of a nuclear payload for an Iranian Shahab Three Missile. So, clearly, they were working on intergrading nuclear weapons into their missiles, and this weakens the case that Iran should not negotiate over its Missile program. This has been another demand of the Trump Administration, and of the Europeans -

PITA: Mm-hmm.

EINHORN: -- for Iran to negotiate over its Missile Programs, and, finally, the Sunset Provisions of the JCPOA, the expiration of Key Nuclear Restrictions, after 10 and 15 years. The Europeans and the Trump Administration have wanted to pursue Iran to accept limitations on Iran's Enrichment Capacity, even after the expiration of these JCPOA Provisions.

Iran has said, "No. We have no reason to do that." But if its true, that Iran is keeping open the option, at some future date, to turn its enrichment capacity into a Nuclear Weapons Program, then that strengthens the argument considerably to keep restrictions on Iran's Enrichment Program, well into the future. So, in each of these cases, I think this new intelligence information could give the Trump Administration a good basis for staying in the deal, and trying to strengthen it on the basis of this information. Whether it will choose to do so, looks increasingly unlikely, however.

PITA: Right. On that question about why the Trump Administration is so willing to walk away from the deal, there is perception, both domestically and with some of our allies abroad,

that some members of Congress and those in the Trump Administration, particularly, who are most vociferously against the Iran deal, there's a perception that their objections are less on the merits of the specifics of exactly how the deals works, and more because they're most interested in the effecting regime change in Iran, and there was a quote to this effect. The International Crisis Group had interviewed a French Official, and the Official's quote was that, "The truth is that the Trump Administration's problem is not with the deal. It's with the Islamic Republic of Iran. We are in 2018, but the U.S. is still stuck in 1979." Can I ask you, both, for what your take on that assessment is, and how much weight or prevalence that kind of attitude has on the administration?

MALONEY: Well, I'll start. I think there's a little bit of a dichotomy here, that the Administration, at this stage, now, has a number of Senior Officials who have been on the record as supportive of regime change in several cases, including National Security Advisor, John Bolton. They are individuals who have interacted with, and accepted funding from cult-like expatriate group, which sometimes tries to present itself as the legitime opposition against the Islamic Republic, despite the fact that it has absolutely no credibility or constituency in contemporary Iran, and, so, there is this widespread discomfort on the part of many, who are watching the Trump Administrations approach to Iran, that there are these sorts of fantastical notions that somehow the regime will collapse, that we can spearhead a change in the nature of government and the nature of Iran's Policies, rather than simply try to manage the after effects of a bad government, and its very dangerous policies, which has been the long-standing approach of every prior administration to Iran, but I do want to note, that, you know, this is all playing out, somewhat, perhaps inconveniently at a time where, I think, Iran is beginning to shift in a direction where, if not regime change, at least some sort of holistic change within the government, within the system, is part of the conversation in a way that it hasn't been in a very long time for Iranians.

There are a variety of forces that have provoked this. In part, one can point to the Nuclear Deal, the expectations created by it, and then the threats applied by the Trump Administration, but, really, it comes from generational change, from a broader sense of young Iranians, who are in touch with the rest of the world, that some of the long-standing

restrictions on political and social life, imposed by this system, are no longer tenable, and it comes from the expectation that, in fact, the Supreme Leader is likely to pass from this world over the course of the next few years, and so there has been, for quite some time, a discussion within Iran about who could come next.

What I'm seeing play out, both in conversations among the very conservative, some defenders of the system, including former President Ahmadinejad, as well as among dissidence and others, who have tried to push Iran toward reform is that they are no longer asking who comes next, so much as they're asking what comes next. That's not to suggest that there is a kind of immanence to any kind of revolutionary upheaval within Iran, but I think that we are watching the slow-moving metastasis of the Islamic Republic, and that that is transpiring almost independently of the time line and of the actions of the Trump Administration. It may fuel the worst and most dangerous ambitions of some of those within the Trump Administration, but we simply shouldn't rule out of hand the possibility of real change within Iran because, in fact, it is long overdue.

EINHORN: Couple things to add to that. In terms of the attitudes in The Congress, and within the U.S. Administration, I think that there's a divide here. Clearly, there are some in the Congress who believe that the best solution to this problem is to change the Regime in Tehran. Others don't accept that. They believe that, through pressure and incentives, we can encourage Iran to behave more responsibly in the region, or in terms of their Nuclear or Missile Programs.

I think, that's similarly the case in the Administration as well. Suzanne mentioned the National Security Advisor, who has spoken about Regime Change. The Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, has also talked about Regime Change. Don't know where he stands on that issue since he became Secretary, but I think the Administration really is divided as to whether Regime Change is necessary to deal with the major threats that the Administration see coming from Iran, and I would agree with Suzanne.

Gradual Regime Transformation is probably more likely than sudden collapse, although who can tell, and I think one thing we should have learned from the Iraq experience is that our ability, from the outside, to promote Regime Change is not very good, that if there's going to be

a transformation within Iran, it will come because of issues that are indigenous to Iran.

PITA: Well, I think we're almost out of time. So, for my last question, I wanted to bring it back around to a line that you had written, Suzanne, in a recent piece. The Trump Administration is, obviously, hoping that by walking away from the deal, they can force Iran to come back to the table and renegotiate better terms on those inspection parameters, as you were discussing, Bob, on the question of, like, their ballistic missiles, their conventional weapons, as well as their nuclear arms, and other issues of their broader behavior in the region.

Suzanne, you said that trying to renegotiate this, after the U.S. walks away is the longest of long shots, but you also said that the U.S. walks away from this, and blows up the deal, that instead of writing eulogies for the deal, as it was, the defenders of the 2015 Iran Nuclear Agreement must begin strategizing around the diplomacy that could be, and, so, I guess, I'd like to ask you -- for both of your final thoughts on, where do we start with that, about what could be?

MALONEY: Well, I left it as an open-ended challenge in part because I don't have a clear game plan, but I think that where we're at today, on the eve of the President's decision about the sanctions waivers, is that we can no longer try to convince this Administration that the deal was a good one, and that what we have to do is to try to build a platform for some kind of sustaining of the restrictions on Iran's Nuclear Program, that involves the support of the Broader International Community, because that has proven to be the one tool that has had some positive effect, in terms of actually creating the intended outcome, with respect to Iran, and that we have a very short period of time in which to do it, somewhere between 30 to 60 days, before the next round of sanctions waivers come due.

That is not much of an opportunity, but I hope that instead of trying a loss cause of persuading The President to see reason, what we ought to be doing now is trying to find a way to fashion some kind of broader U.S., European multilateral effort to continue restrictions on Iran's Nuclear Program to address the broader array of challenges, with respect to Iran, and to ensure that we do not find ourselves in a situation where Iran is moving more quickly toward reconstituting its Nuclear Program, even as it is consolidating its position in Syria, and more widely across the region.



EINHORN: What is so unfortunate about the current crisis, regarding the JCPOA, is that it really was unnecessary. This was manufactured by President Trump and his Administration. An irony is that there is quite broad support, certainly, within Europe and elsewhere in the International Community, for some of the changes that Trump would like to see, some of the constraints over the long term, he would like to see on Iran, on its regional behavior, its missiles, its nuclear program, and so forth.

I think, if the United States had not provoked this crisis, we would have a better chance working with the International Community to try to address some of these long-term challenges posed by Iran. I think, in the short term, if the President goes through with this, and he's likely to go through with failing to renew the sanctions waivers. There's going to be a lot of ill will toward the United States, even among some of our closest allies, the Europeans, in particular, but also some of our Asian allies will wonder why in the world did we do this. I think we're going to have to, over time, bring the coalition we've put together in the pre-JCPOA period, to bring that coalition together, to try to convince Iran to constrain its behavior in a variety of ways, but it's not going to be easy.

I was in Europe last week, and I asked European Government Officials, "Can we reassemble this coalition?" and they said, "Not right away." There's going to be so much resentment at what President Trump has created that it's going to be very hard. They say, "It'll be possible." Europe and the United States have enduring common interests, and we will be able to work together, and there is a genuine concern about Iranian behavior that will bring us together over time, but it's not going to be very easy.

PITA: All right. Bob, Suzanne, thank you very much for being with us today, and helping to explain these issues to our listeners. I'm going to remind our listeners that they can look to the show notes. Go to [Brookings.Edu](https://www.brookings.edu) for more content on Iran, and on the President's decision on the JCPOA, including an event that's going to be held on May 17<sup>th</sup>, another discussion with the two of you, and some of your additional colleagues on this matter, where there'll be some further discussion. That'll happen after the President has made his decision. So, we'll have slightly clearer idea about what's happening next. Thank you again.

EINHORN: Thank you.

MALONEY: Thanks.