



Iranian Attitudes on Iranian-U.S. Relations in the Trump Era

A public opinion study | January 25, 2017

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The transition of leadership in the United States and the 1-year anniversary of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)'s implementation day served as the impetus for this new study. It is the latest in a series of Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM) studies of Iranian and American attitudes about Iran's nuclear program, the negotiations that led to the nuclear deal, and other facets of the countries' economic and security policies. Data for this study was collected in mid-December 2016, after the election of U.S. President Donald Trump.

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Summary of Findings

1. Enthusiasm for Nuclear Deal Declines, while Support for Nuclear Program Stays High

While the nuclear deal is still supported by a majority of Iranians, this number has diminished since the deal was reached in July 2015, with the number strongly approving dropping by half. A contributing factor may be that expectations for benefits from the deal were high. A year after the deal was implemented and nuclear-related sanctions on Iran were lifted, majorities believe that Iran has not received most of the promised benefits and that there have been no improvements in people's living conditions as a result of the nuclear deal. While support for the deal is buoyed by some optimism that it will eventually improve people's living conditions, that optimism is also declining. Just as in past years, four in five Iranians see the development of an Iranian nuclear program as very important.

2. U.S. Seen as Actively Obstructive, Contrary to Commitment under Nuclear Deal

A growing majority of Iranians lack confidence that the United States will live up to its obligations under the nuclear agreement. They believe either that the United States is finding other ways to keep the negative effects of sanctions that were lifted under the deal, or that the

United States has not even lifted the sanctions it was supposed to lift. A growing majority also believes that contrary to the terms of the agreement, the United States is trying to prevent other countries from normalizing their trade and economic relations with Iran. Two thirds say Iran's relations with the United States have not improved as a result of the nuclear deal. A plurality thinks that the agreement for Iran to purchase passenger airplanes from the United States is likely to have little impact on Iran's economy.

3. Little Appetite for Renegotiating the Nuclear Deal

Iranians expect President Trump to be more hostile toward Iran than was President Obama. Seven in ten Iranians believe it is likely that President Trump may decide not to abide by the terms of the nuclear agreement. In such an event, a plurality thinks that Iran should retaliate by restarting the aspects of its nuclear program that it has agreed to suspend under the deal, though 4 in 10 disagree.

There is no appetite among Iranians for renegotiating the agreement. Large majorities say that Iran should refuse to increase the duration of the special nuclear limits it accepted under the JCPOA or terminate its nuclear enrichment program, even if offered more sanctions relief in return.

4. Strong Support for Fighting ISIS, but Not for Collaborating with the U.S.

Iranians continue to support their government helping groups that are fighting ISIS. Yet, a bare majority continues to oppose Iran and the United States collaborating with one another to help the government of Iraq counter ISIS.

5. Views of P5+1 Countries

Majorities regard Russia, China, and Germany (half of the P5+1 countries) favorably, yet France, Britain, and especially the United States (the other half) are viewed unfavorably. Six in ten believe that most of the P5+1 countries, except for the United States, will fulfill their obligations under the JCPOA. Views toward all Western powers involved in the negotiations are now less positive than they were six months ago. Views toward the UN are roughly divided, and a majority continues to think that it possible for Islam and the West to find common ground.

6. Rouhani Losing Popularity as the 2017 Presidential Elections Approach

While Rouhani is still favored in the 2017 presidential elections, his support has dropped below half. Tehran's current conservative mayor, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who is regarded as the main contender, is in an improved position: the gap between him and Rouhani has narrowed by seven points since June 2016.

A large but diminishing majority say they have a favorable view of Rouhani, with the number having *very favorable* opinions dropping by more than half since the nuclear deal was reached.

Besides diminishing enthusiasm about the nuclear agreement, which is regarded as Rouhani's most important accomplishment in office, perceptions about the economy are also harming Rouhani's popularity. Six in ten say the economy is bad and, for the first time since Rouhani took office, a majority says it is getting worse. An overwhelming majority want Iran's next president to focus on reducing unemployment and fixing Iran's economy.

Methodology

The study is based on a telephone poll conducted between December 10 and 24, 2016, among a representative sample of 1,000 Iranians. The margin of error is +/- 3.2%.

The samples were RDD samples drawn from all landline telephones in Iran. The samples were stratified first by Iranian provinces and then in accordance to settlement size and type. All 31 Iranian provinces were represented in proportions similar to their actual populations, as were rural and urban areas.

All calls were made from Toronto, Canada. When a residence was reached, an adult was randomly selected from within that household using the random table technique. An initial attempt and three callbacks were made in an effort to complete an interview with the randomly selected respondents. The contact rate, defined as the proportion of respondents who were reached and ultimately agreed to be interviewed relative to the number of respondents attempted, was 73%. The completion rate was 84%.

All of the interviews were conducted using computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) and were monitored in real-time by call-center supervisors.

The Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM)

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