



# Weighing Concerns and Assurances about a Nuclear Agreement with Iran: A Briefing Book



## CREDITS

The briefing book was drafted with major contributions from each of the core members of

The Iran Project: **Ambassador William Luers, Stephen Heintz**, President of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, **Dr. Jessica Mathews, Ambassador Thomas Pickering, Dr. Paul Pillar, Dr. James Walsh**, and **Ambassador Frank Wisner**, who have exchanged messages almost daily for weeks to get this analysis right and nonpartisan. Ambassador William Luers, Director of The Iran Project, did much of the writing for the briefing book and oversaw the completion of the final text. Dr. Jim Walsh did most of the substantive writing on Chapter II, “Concerns and Assurances About a Nuclear Agreement With Iran.” Austin Long did much of substantive writing of Chapter III, “The Benefits and Costs of Using Military Force,” drawing on the work he did for the first report of The Iran Project in September 2012, *Weighing the Benefits and Costs of Military Action Against Iran*. We have received many contributions from our larger network of experts and former senior civilian and military officials of the U.S. government. This core group has worked in this manner for years and in some cases for more than a decade. **Iris Bieri**, Deputy Director of The Iran Project, did the final edits, compiled all endnotes, and worked with our designer, **Okey Nestor** of On Design, Inc. to manage the publication of the book. **Trish Leader Weekes** did the copy editing.

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### 3. CONFIRM COMPLIANCE AND DETER VIOLATIONS

The agreement's verification requirements are designed **to verify** Iran's compliance with its nonproliferation obligations and greatly increase the U.S.' ability to detect and **deter** Iran from considering actions that would violate the agreement. Three concerns are most frequently discussed in this regard: breakout, "sneak out",<sup>8</sup> and issues to be resolved around Iran's past nuclear weapons activities (prior to 2003). This last issue, the possible military dimensions or PMDs, is treated separately. (See Section 5 below.)

#### 3.1 BACKGROUND.

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Verification (detection and deterrence) should not be mixed with issues of enforcement, i.e., how governments will respond to a breach of the agreement. These are separate issues and they are treated separately in this document. **The question considered here is whether the P5+1 and the IAEA can, with the measures in the agreement combined with national technical means, 1) identify violations of the agreement and 2) identify any violations early enough that the United States and others have enough time to respond before Iran is able to accumulate sufficient fissile material to construct a weapon.**

#### 3.2 CONCERNS.

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Governments correctly worry about potential Iranian violations since Iran has already violated its NPT obligations during the period before 2003 when it may have been doing research on nuclear weapons technology and when it failed to notify the IAEA about all of its enrichment facilities in a timely manner. There are also claims that Iran violated the JPOA and observations that the United States has a poor record at stopping proliferation in the past.

#### 3.3 ASSURANCES.

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**As the DNI has repeatedly pointed out, Iran has not made a decision to pursue nuclear weapons,** and so while cheating is certainly a possibility that should be guarded against, it nonetheless would **require a change in Iranian policy.** One must question why a country that could have developed a nuclear weapon any time over the last decade **would now agree to restraints with unprecedented verification and then cheat.**

- ▶ **The claim that Iran violated the JPOA is incorrect.** The IAEA, the sole arbiter of Iranian compliance with the JPOA, has reported openly and thoroughly that Iran has not been found in noncompliance at any point since November 2013 when the agreement went into force.<sup>9</sup>



## II. WEIGHING CONCERNS AND ASSURANCES ABOUT A NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN.

- ▶ **Iran is the most watched country in the world.** In addition to the intensive IAEA monitoring of all of Iran's declared nuclear facilities, the United States, Russia, Israel, Saudi Arabia, France, and others constantly monitor Iran's activities and most, if not all, will certainly continue to do so after an agreement. The ability to monitor Iran will be even more robust under a comprehensive agreement providing the most complete picture of Iran's nuclear activities ever achieved, including information on the front end of the fuel cycle and on imports and centrifuge fabrication.
- ▶ **The U.S. intelligence community has concluded that the IAEA would detect in a timely manner any direct violation of the agreement and that the intelligence community can detect undeclared facilities,** as it has done the two previous times Iran failed to declare in a timely manner its nuclear-related sites. The unprecedented extension of inspections under a comprehensive agreement will include uranium mines and mills, and centrifuge production that will make it even more difficult for Iran to conceal a new facility. In addition, the agreement provides for establishing a dedicated procurement channel,<sup>10</sup> which will make a sneak-out scenario more difficult. The United States has a greatly improved track record of identifying clandestine nuclear weapons programs with the development of new surveillance tools.

### 3.4 ASSESSMENTS.

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The challenge of sneak out is a danger with every nonproliferation and arms-control agreement. It should be treated seriously but cases are rare. **The mid-term risk in this particular case appears modest given the fact that the DNI has concluded that Iran is not now seeking a nuclear weapon** and that the agreement significantly increases transparency and monitoring of Iran. **Yet the risks could increase over the next 15 to 20 years when a new generation of Iranian leaders could decide to expand the size of its peaceful nuclear program.** In these circumstances it would become harder to assess with high confidence that small amounts of material diversion are not taking place.

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8 Breakout refers to the amount of time it would take for Iran to enrich enough weapons-grade fissile material for one bomb. Sneak-out is the same concept, only using covert clandestine or undeclared facilities.

9 International Atomic Energy Agency, "Report by the Director General," February 19, 2015, <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gov2015-15.pdf>

10 "A dedicated procurement channel for Iran's nuclear program will be established to monitor and approve, on a case-by-case basis, the supply, sale, or transfer to Iran of certain nuclear-related and dual use materials and technology—an additional transparency measure." See, Office of the Spokesperson U.S. Department of State, "Parameters for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action Regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's Nuclear Program," April 2, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/04/240170.htm>