

Today, we talk about the nuclear deal with Iran:

Nuclear Vision: The JCPOA

Connect
TheDots...

This is ConnectTheDots...

Cliffs are dangerous. One wrong step and the fall is sudden and unforgiving. Engineers don't solve that problem by removing the cliff. They install guardrails. The peril still remains, the drop is still there, but now so is a buffer, preventing ordinary mistakes from turning tragic.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, was such a guardrail.

The US and Iran have long viewed each other with suspicion, but tensions escalated in 2002 when secret Iranian nuclear facilities were revealed. The concern was that technology used to fuel nuclear power plants can also produce material for weapons. If Iran moved toward a bomb, Israel might strike to stop it. If Israel struck, Iran would retaliate. And in the Middle East, conflicts rarely stay contained.

Sanctions were imposed to force negotiations, and they took a serious toll on Iran's economy. **The Obama administration maintained sanctions but also worked to open diplomatic channels. At the same time, Iranian voters elected a more pragmatic president, Hassan Rouhani. These two things created an opportunity for negotiations. The result was the JCPOA.**

The agreement did not eliminate Iran's nuclear program. Instead, it imposed strict limits. Iran reduced its stockpile of enriched uranium, operated fewer centrifuges, and enriched uranium only to low levels suitable for civilian energy use. **Just as important, the deal established an extensive inspection system run by the International Atomic Energy Agency to monitor facilities, track nuclear materials, and detect any move toward a weapon.**

These restrictions extended the time Iran would need to produce enough material for a bomb from a few months to roughly a year, giving the world time to respond. In exchange, Iran received sanctions relief and renewed access to international markets. The cliff was still there. But now there were guardrails.

In 2018, President Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the agreement. In the years that followed, and with no oversight, Iran gradually resumed their nuclear activity, exceeded many of the deal's limits on uranium enrichment and stockpiles. The guardrails are gone. The cliff remains.

That's the big picture. Let's keep connecting the dots...

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