

The Iran Deal Puts Our Foot in the Door!  
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For fifty years, we did not talk to the Chinese. We mistrusted them. They mistrusted us. We hated each other and were blind to each other's internal workings. Then, suddenly, because of some youngsters playing ping pong together (not an accident), followed by some very secret diplomatic visits, the United States and Communist China opened relations.

This opening upset a lot of people: the Soviets, hardline Republicans (members of President Nixon's own party), and hardline Chinese Communists, all of whom were vested in the poisonous potential of nuclear warfare.

Nothing changed overnight, but the changes came and the pace of change for the world, looking back, was earth changing. I was visiting Washington when an early delegation of Chinese arrived, all dressed in the same ill-fitting blue Mao suits, trotting around the gardens at Dumbarton Oaks, clicking away on their cameras. A few years later, young women arrived from Mongolia, dressed in red "dressed for success" power suits, on State Department "Capitalism" crash courses, the latest phase of China's opening. My, how things changed. The economy had opened, even though political opening had not.

Our president and China's new president meet regularly and talk very frankly, a good thing indeed. As President Obama said, "You don't just talk to your friends. It is even more important to talk to your adversaries. You never know where you might have common interests."

So now, after nearly four decades of not talking to Iran, albeit for good reasons, we are now talking. The same sorts of people are gnashing their teeth, the same who gnashed after we opened to China. The hardliners in our Congress are right that Iran is tricky and untrustworthy, just as the hardliners in Iran are right that the United States is tricky and untrustworthy too.

The Israelis are right to be wary of Iran, which has, for political reasons of its own, threatened them verbally and planted ugly thuggish militants in their neighborhood and Iran is right to fear Israel which has assassinated some of its nuclear physicists and has the ability to sabotage their nuclear equipment.

But most of all, the Iranian hardliners are right to fear that our foot is in the door. The announcement of a potential nuclear deal sent delirious young people (now the Iranian majority) into the streets, eager to join the world as Persians again, not as Islamic Revolutionaries! This frightens the graybeards; it frightens the Islamic Guards, who only hold power through force; it frightens even the Ayatollah, who has visions of Gorbachev whose open door ushered in the collapse of the Soviet Union.

This is a deal that, if it is ratified, is far better than anybody expected. The Iranians are really desperate to get out from under their terrible sanctions, and if they do, tourists will really start to arrive, a good thing for Iran.

Also, Iranian oil will go out, which will have an effect on oil prices around the world (especially on Russian income, not a bad thing).

Our foot in the door can have another effect on some of the more troublesome mischief that Iran has played in its revolutionary zeal in the world. Its support for Shiite insurgency in Yemen, support for the Iraqi government, support for the Assad Alawites in Syria, could ultimately fade in the face of reentry into the global community. All of these Shiite groups speak Arabic, not Farsi. Without revolutionary zeal, Persians will lose interest. They have been Persians far longer than they have been Muslims! Watch this bloom.

The verification regimen goes on for a very long time, and when looked at over such a long period, it is difficult to imagine that Iran will still be an "Islamic Republic." The handwriting is already on the wall on that one. It is clear that Iran will always be a major power player in the balance of power in the Middle East, as it has always been and will always be. It balances the Arabs and Turks. Iran has been our ally before and can be again.

675 words

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