

Managing Iran's Growing Regional Influence.

The Trump Administration, in designing a more assertive policy of push back against Iran, must take into account the formidable regional influence Iran has acquired over the past decade. **Today, there are four simple realities:** no conflict in the Middle East can be resolved without Iran's participation; no conflict can be resolved by military force alone; the U.S. needs the cooperation of other states to constrain Iran and ensure its participation in conflict resolution; and Iran must be prevented from getting a nuclear weapon.

Iran's growing power has come about because:

- **Iran's increased capacity to pursue its historic ambition to become a regional power** and restore Shia respectability in the Sunni world.
- **The elimination of Saddam Hussein from Iraq and the Taliban from Kabul** reducing significantly the threat to Iran from its two closest neighbors.
- **Political instability in the Arab world**, including Gulf States' discord and lack of resolve about their regional role.
- **The growth and reach of Hezbollah and Shia militias** in conflicts against Sunni jihadist groups in Syria, Iraq and Yemen.
- **The empowerment and respectability Iran garnered internationally from the nuclear agreement.**
- **The enhanced authority Iran acquired from its evolving "strategic partnership" with Russia.**

U.S. policy should not be driven solely by revenge for past actions or by opposition to Iran's nefarious behavior, but should be part of a comprehensive, strategic diplomatic regional approach toward a regional power that the U.S. can neither isolate nor eliminate.

Some constructive policies include:

- **Commitment to an active American role in the JCPOA** to robustly enforce monitoring Iran's compliance and ensure other states are prepared to act against Iranian violations, if necessary.
- **Certification of Iran's compliance with the JCPOA, as long as it complies with the letter of the agreement**, while identifying any Iranian actions which the U.S. believes violate the spirit of the JCPOA and are contrary to U.S. interests.
- **Exploration of a follow-on agreement with other JCPOA negotiators.** While none of the JCPOA states would agree to renegotiate the deal, discussions could begin on a new plan of action to prevent an Iranian nuclear weapon permanently.
- **Engagement with Iran in multilateral bodies on issues outside the scope of the JCPOA**, such as: de-confliction efforts in regional conflicts; rebuilding of Syria and Iraq; and humanitarian assistance and refugee settlements.
- **Active American diplomatic engagement in reducing Gulf tensions and resolving conflicts.** The U.S. military presence must be supplemented by strenuous diplomatic engagement. The U.S. should be willing to speak directly to Saudi, Turkish and Iranian leaders. No regional conflict can be resolved without some agreement between the Gulf States and Iran.
- **Regular consultations with U.S. allies and regional partners to reduce threats to Israel and Saudi Arabia and push back against other Iranian destabilizing actions.**
- **Regular senior-level communications to enable the U.S. to express directly concerns about Iranian destabilizing actions** and provide a channel to reduce bilateral confrontations before they escalate; explore opportunities to work in parallel with Iran on problems impacting U.S. security interests in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen; and address prisoner issues.