

Hope From Iran, but Not If There's an Attack

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By Seyed Hossein Mousavian

The recent presidential election in Iran has created a new opening for U.S.-Iran rapprochement to overcome over three decades of animosity and mistrust. This renewed hope for diplomatic engagement, however, can be spoiled with a U.S. military strike on Syria.

Any further U.S. military provocation in the Middle East — with the recent history of involvement in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Yemen — would add fuel to the conflict, strengthen the hand of extremists who would exploit increased anti-American sentiments and engulf the region into a protracted war.

The increasingly sectarian element to the Syrian conflict will spill over into neighboring countries, and will risk dismantling the fragile stability in Lebanon, Jordan, Bahrain, Turkey and Iraq. A U.S. military strike would open Pandora's box, with unforeseen circumstances that go beyond the boundaries of Syria and risk dragging in the United States for the long-haul.

It is in the national and regional interest of both Iran and the United States to bring about security and stability to the Syrian conflict under the umbrella of the United Nations Security Council as the only legitimate body responsible for maintaining peace, security and stability in the world.

In the aftermath of 9/11 terrorist attacks, Iran and the United States engaged and cooperated directly in the war on terror. This partnership in Afghanistan resulted in the fall of the Taliban and Al Qaeda there, forming a representative government based on democratic principles. This experience can serve as a blueprint for a new collaboration on Syria.

The implications of this cooperation will not be limited to the Syrian crisis and instead would be vital for the security and stability of the whole region. Multiple crisis in the Middle East require broader management for the time, and therefore, crisis management

of this and other crises would be a useful path for regional collaboration between Tehran and Washington under the United Nation's charter.

Such cooperation will also increase the prospects for U.S.-Iran engagement on bilateral issues and specifically the nuclear dilemma. In effect, cooperation on Syria could be an opportunity to decrease U.S.-Iran hostilities and usher in an era of cooperation for the betterment of the whole region and beyond. This opportunity for peace and stability should not be missed. The alternative could be catastrophic.

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