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



Seyed Hossein Mousavian is a research scholar at Princeton University. He served as the head of the Foreign Relation Committee of Iran's National Security Council from 1997 to 2005. He is the author of "The Iranian Nuclear Crisis: A Memoir."

September 4, 2013

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 sort of cooperation that occurred after 9/11 would help in Syria and would be vital for the security and stability of the whole region.

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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John Graubard NYC

One simple comment - in this case the road to Damascus leads through Teheran. Before anything else we must explore that option. It is an opportunity which may never come again.

Sept. 5, 2013 at 8:12 a.m.



McQueen NYC

Sounds great -- for Iran!

Sept. 5, 2013 at 8:12 a.m.



Kevin 420 new jersey

Iran's new President extended a greeting for all Jews and especially those living in Iran to wish them a blessed holiday, this on the eve of the Jewish New Year. Can Peace finally be at hand?

Sept. 5, 2013 at 8:12 a.m.



Ladislav Nemeč Big Bear, CA

The new Iranian President has to establish himself first and the real leadership of Iran has not changed at all.

Premature to seek ANY help from Iran.

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Seyed Hossein Mousavian, Former Iranian official

Talk to Iran, but Don't Let Up on Syria



Mark N. Katz, author, "Leaving Without Losing"

A Meeting Point Remains Elusive



Karim Sadjadpour, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

If Iran Is Influential, Bring It to the Table



Farideh Farhi, University of Hawaii at Manoa

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Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, author, "American Umpire"

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Andrew Tabler, Washington Institute

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