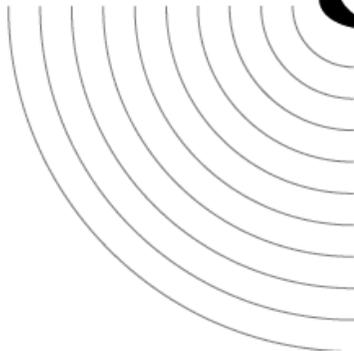


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by *Seyed Hossein Mousavian*

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo laid out a list of demands on Iran in a speech threatening to “crush” the country on Monday. His bellicose words come weeks after President Donald Trump pulled the United States out of the Iran nuclear deal and are nothing short of an ultimatum demanding Iran’s total surrender to U.S. wishes.

“Sanctions are going back in full effect, and new ones are coming,” Pompeo declared (<https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/21/politics/pompeo-iran-speech/index.html>), “The Iranian regime should know this is just the beginning.”

Pompeo’s twelve demands reflect a misunderstanding of Iranian foreign policy, international law, and the realities of the region.

The 12 Demands—Rebutted

First, Pompeo contended that Iran must “declare to the IAEA a full account of the prior military dimensions of its nuclear program.” However, as part of the nuclear deal (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) resolved the issue of “possible military dimensions” to Iran’s nuclear program after years of investigation, including visits to military sites. In December 2015, the agency issued (<https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/iaea-board-adopts-landmark-resolution-on-iran-pmd-case>) its “final assessment on past and present outstanding issues regarding Iran’s nuclear program.”

Second, Pompeo called on Iran to “stop uranium enrichment and never pursue plutonium reprocessing,” including “closing its heavy water reactor.” Such a demand is in direct contravention to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which allows signatories to develop the nuclear fuel cycle for civilian purposes, including enrichment.

As an NPT member, Iran has developed a uranium enrichment program, as have other states such as Brazil, Argentina, and Japan. Iran’s enrichment program was also recognized by UN resolution 2231, which endorsed the JCPOA.

Third, Pompeo stated that “Iran must also provide the IAEA with unqualified access to all sites throughout the country.” With the JCPOA, Iran has already accepted the highest standards on nuclear transparency in the history of nonproliferation. This includes accepting the safeguards agreement, additional protocol, and subsidiary arrangement 3.1.

Fourth, Pompeo said that Iran “must end its proliferation of ballistic missiles and halt further development of nuclear-capable missiles.” As arms control experts at organizations such as the International Institute for Strategic Studies have explained (<https://www.iiss.org/en/iiss%20voices/blogsections/iiss-voices-2018-2623/february-704f/assessing-iran-ballistic-missiles-6cca>), none of Iran’s modern missiles is designed to

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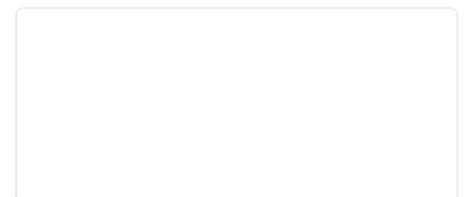
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be “nuclear capable.” Importantly, the context of Iran’s missile program is its falling victim to Iraqi missiles during the eight-year Iran-Iraq War, when Iran did not have the means to deter Iraq. Indeed, no nation in recent history has fallen victim to missile attacks as thoroughly as Iran has. Furthermore, ballistic missiles are a conventional armament that Iran has a strategic need to develop, especially to balance the threat posed by Israel’s nuclear-tipped missiles and Saudi Arabia’s long-range Dong Feng-3 (http://defense-update.com/20140502_saudi-arabia-unveils-part-strategic-missile-force-deterrent-move-iran.html) missiles and, moreover, as a deterrence to possible U.S. attack.

Fifth, Pompeo called on Iran to “release all U.S. citizens ... detained on spurious charges or missing in Iran.” In this regard, Pompeo should respect that Iran is a sovereign country, just like the United States. His demand is just as illegitimate as if Iran asked the United States to release all Iranian prisoners held in U.S. jails.

Sixth, Pompeo said that Iran “must end support to Middle East terrorist groups, including Lebanese Hizballah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad” even though these organizations represent major constituencies with legitimate grievances. In the case of Hamas and Hezbollah, they both have participated in and won in elections, with the later most recently making gains (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/07/hezbollah-makes-strong-showing-lebanon-elections>) in Lebanon’s parliamentary elections.

Of course, Trump himself recently quipped (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/10/world/middleeast/trump-qatar-terrorism.html>) that U.S. regional allies such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar fund terrorism, adding that “we’re stopping it.” In June 2017, former Qatari Prime Minister al-Thani also acknowledged (<https://www.alternet.org/grayzone-project/us-and-gulf-allies-supported-islamist-extremists-syria-qatars-ex-prime-minister>) that Qatar, along with the United States and other regional countries, made “mistakes” in “supporting the same groups” in Syria, among which were “extremists.”

Seventh, Pompeo stated that “Iran must respect the sovereignty of the Iraqi government and permit the disarming, demobilization, and reintegration of Shia militias.” This demand is ironic given that the United States currently has thousands of troops in Iraq, and a coalition headed by Hadi al-Ameri, a popular militia commander, came in second (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/14/cleric-moqtadr-al-sadr-who-fought-us-takes-surprise-lead-in-iraq-elections>) place in Iraq’s parliamentary elections. Senior Iraqi officials have recognized (<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/this-iran-backed-militia-helped-save-iraq-from-isis-now-washington-wants-them-to-disband>) that without Iranian support, the Islamic State (ISIS or IS) “would be standing on the doorsteps of Baghdad.”

By positioning himself against the Popular Mobilization Units (PMUs), which are not monolithically Shia and were created after a fatwa (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27834462>) by Iraq’s Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani after IS overran large parts of the country in 2014, Pompeo has aligned the United States against the Iraqi people, not Iran.

Eighth, Pompeo asserted that Iran must “end its military support for the Houthi militia and work towards a peaceful political settlement in Yemen.” From the beginning of the Saudi-led coalition assault on Yemen in 2015, which the United Nations says has created (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/yemen-worst-humanitarian-crisis-50-years-180105190332474.html>) the “world’s worst humanitarian crisis,” Iran has called for a political solution to the conflict. In April 2015, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif issued (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-iran/iran-submits-four-point-yemen-peace-plan-to-united-nations-idUSKBN0N823820150417>) a four-point plan that outlined a negotiated settlement to the conflict.

Ninth, Pompeo stated that “Iran must withdraw all forces under Iranian command from Syria.” Iranian forces, just like Russian forces, are in Syria at the invitation of the legal Syrian government to combat armed rebel groups. Only the Syrian government can ask for their withdrawal. On the other hand, U.S. forces are in Syria illegally under international law, and Pompeo’s demand further infringes on Syria’s right to fight terrorist groups and to defend its sovereignty.

Tenth, Pompeo said that “Iran must end support for the Taliban and other terrorists in Afghanistan and the region, and cease harboring Al Qaeda.” To accuse Iran of supporting groups such as the Taliban and al-Qaeda is baseless, given that Iran has actively fought the ardently anti-Iranian groups, both of which were for years the main proxies for U.S. allies such as Saudi Arabia in Afghanistan. Both were also a direct outcrop of U.S.-backed forces in Afghanistan in the 1980s, which former Secretary of States Hillary Clinton recognized in 2011, stating (https://www.huffingtonpost.com/akbar-ganji/us-jihadist-relations_b_5542757.html): “The people we are fighting today we funded 20 years ago.”

Eleventh, Pompeo stated that Iran “must end the IRGC Quds Forces’ support for terrorists and militant partners.” The Quds Force’s mandate is the same as U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) in the region. The difference is that Iran is in the region and has core national security interests to protect its borders and territorial integrity, while CENTCOM is operating thousands of miles away from American borders.

Twelfth, Pompeo said that Iran must “cease its threatening behavior against its neighbors.” He left out more than a little bit of history, such as how Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, an Arab country, invaded Iran in 1980 and received full support from the United States and most Arab states, including Saudi Arabia. The conflict cost hundreds of thousands of Iranian deaths and injuries. The reality is that the United States attacked Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya—sowing widespread instability and turmoil in the region.

What Pompeo Really Wants

Pompeo’s list of demands simply recycles many of the same coercive policies and statements made by past U.S. administrations. This U.S. approach has already proved to be counterproductive and self-defeating for U.S. interests and regional stability.

Despite Pompeo’s faux call for diplomacy, his speech amounted to an official declaration of a regime-change policy against Iran. His untenable demands eliminate the prospects for U.S.-Iran diplomacy and set the two countries up for a dangerous escalation cycle that may lead to a catastrophic war.

What the world needs is genuine diplomacy. Since the Iranian nuclear crisis was the only regional crisis resolved through diplomacy, this model needs to be used to diplomatically resolve other regional crises.

Seyed Hossein Mousavian is a Middle East security and nuclear policy specialist at Princeton University, former spokesperson for Iran in its international nuclear negotiations, and author of “Iran and the United States: An Insider’s View on the Failed Past and the Road to Peace.” @HMousavian

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Mr. Mostofi, do you have „a balanced view of world politics“? Or are you longing for the Pahlavi monarchy?



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SCHAHRI

Mr. Mousavian, thank you very much for your clarification. I think the US government isn't amenable to rational arguments. Its action are hate orientated against the Iranian regime and the Iranian people. They are looking for a reason to punish Iran. This goal is more important to them than peace, security and prosperity in the region.



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ALI MOSTOFI ([HTTP://ALIMOSTOFI.WORDPRESS.COM/](http://ALIMOSTOFI.WORDPRESS.COM/))

You wonder why so many Iranians objected to having this person get this job in Princeton. Where do you start with this point of view. First of all, he uses the word “Iran”, when he means Ayatollah regime. Secondly, as a member of that regime, he does not have a balanced view of world politics. For him, the beginning and end of all the problems, start and end with USA. For him, he has to respect the Shia Mahdi doctrines. He feels justified to blow up the world if need be to bring back the Mahdi. He dare not mention the deplorable human rights record of his paymasters, the Ayatollahs. Any innocent Iranian kill is one step closer for him to go heaven. But worse still, publishing his view, just because he is at Princeton, is no different to listening to Ayatollah Jannati, or some mad die-hard, in the Qom seminary. One day all his views will be used to show the world the disdain he has for the truth. One day all media who show this point of view will be scrutinized for fake news and helping Ayatollahs carry on killing Iranians. If you will print this point of view, then go ahead and print all the wonderful thoughts of other lunatics.

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