

# John Helmer: IRAN'S 14-POINT PLAN: War Avoidance or Trap?

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## #Nima

Finally, Donald Trump got the response from the Iranian side, and he was waiting because they were supposed to receive it earlier. But after four days, as Donald Trump himself pointed out, we waited four days for a document from Iran that would take less than 10 minutes to prepare. And basically, he's talking about how Iran didn't change that much in this new response to the American proposal. The head of the Iranian parliament is saying that basically the main points on the part of the Iranians are the 14-point plan that they had handed to the American side before this.

We had a 10-point plan, if you remember, then a 14-point plan, which was the 10-point plan together with some preconditions on the part of the Iranians. And on the other hand, yesterday, the head of the Iranian parliament tweeted that we are prepared. If it is diplomacy, we're prepared for that. If it's war, we are more than prepared for that. And we have surprises for you. Donald Trump is going to be in China on Wednesday. How do you see the Iranian response and the way that Donald Trump expected the Iranian response and the way it went so far?

## #John

Big question. Let's take the pieces piece by piece. It's very valuable that you should indicate what Mr. Ghalibaf has said, because it's essential that we do understand the limitations of what Trump's able to say about what he understands the Iranian side is saying. It's interesting, and I can recommend that our audience go to [rollcall.com](http://rollcall.com) and look at the full transcript or watch it. It's easier to cope with Trump when you read it, of the May 11 press conference, which ironically was given at a mental health care event. If ever there was a case from Trump's texts of someone badly in need of mental health care, it's him. But let's just go through it. In the first place, you made a very important point, Nima.

The way he described the Iranian paper and then said he couldn't be bothered to read all the way through it indicates that he can't understand what he's shown, what he's reading. He doesn't actually read the originals. Others bring him summaries, quotes, excerpts, but he can't—his brain doesn't work on the detail. So, 14 points. He maybe understands, in general, two or three ideas.

First point: this is a serious problem from the Iranian side, or for the Chinese side, for the Russian side. Bear in mind, President Putin will follow to China quite shortly. It's been very clear, and Yuri Ushakov indicated that the Russian visit to China is around the corner. So, how does one understand how to negotiate with Trump when he can't understand the main points?

First. Second, as I understand it, the Iranian side has, as it were, grouped its points into three stages. The first stage is confidence-building and stabilizing the—let's call it—the platform of the battlefield, so there is no fighting and each side is secure in understanding that there will be no resumption of fighting. And the Chinese side clearly has emphasized, as Mr. Wang Yi emphasized—foreign minister, but more importantly, Politburo member—with Abbas Araqchi last week, not only no resumption of fighting, but a stable base for negotiations. So the Chinese side is endorsing the staging, as the Iranian side seems to have put it: first, a durable ceasefire and trust in the Americans not to break the ceasefire.

Durable covering the Israelis as well. But we basically already know the Americans broke the ceasefire with their provocative naval maneuvers in the Strait of Hormuz. And the Israelis have, if anything, escalated in Lebanon. So there are repeated violations of the ceasefire. So stage one, from an Iranian point of view, or from anyone else's point of view, is confidence building and stable adherence to terms. Trump doesn't get that. And in fact, he doesn't mention it. What he does mention over and over—and we've often referred to this as a cognitive disability on the president's part—and it's getting worse. You can see from the text in [rollcall.com](http://rollcall.com), and I've got it in front of me. That's why I'm looking down at the paper.

You can see that he can't understand more than one or two concepts of this negotiation. And so he focuses, actually in contradiction to the Iranian three stages. Iranian three stages, and correct me if I'm wrong: one, stable base, stable ceasefire, confidence building that one side isn't violating, and the two sides who are violators are the U.S. and Israel. Wow. Two, a Hormuz regime that comprises not only the Straits regime for the future, a toll that covers reparations, but also a dismantling of U. S. and worldwide sanctions on Iran, of which the Hormuz blockade is a good example. Third stage is nuclear issues. That's, on the one hand, an Iranian undertaking not to develop a nuclear weapon; next is the issue of what's to be done with the enriched nuclear material. And then associated with that is the issue of Iranian missile defense capabilities that the Israeli military demand to disarm Iran entirely. Well, let's just say the Israeli war aim here is genocidal destruction of the Iranian state, disarmament of every kind, and so forth and so on. But look at exactly what Trump had to say. He's asked what sort of plan he has in dealing with the Iranian proposal, and he repetitively goes to what he calls a very simple plan. Now, he's actually describing what's inside his head, which is very simple, and it's repeated. I don't know why, he says.

You don't say it like it is. Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon. Now, he repeats that approximately three times in about five minutes: Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon. He's otherwise going to the third stage, where Iran's proposals don't go yet. He doesn't and won't address the so-called preconditions, stage one, stage two. He can't accept as a negotiating position that the U.S. has to

reassure its adversary. No, instead his notion of negotiation is destroy the other side, which he repeats by saying that he's destroyed the Navy, he's destroyed the Air Force. "They have no anti-aircraft," he says. And I'm flipping my page.

Then he goes to something that's almost indicative of his failure to understand the nuclear enrichment issue. Iran told me very strongly, I'm quoting, because they intend to give us the nuclear dust, as I call it. What he means by nuclear dust is the stock of enriched nuclear material. But he calls it dust. It's easier than talking about other terms because it's a term. He means dust. But the nuclear dust, which is what we hit, then he repeats the story that, in fact, the bombing raid of last June, the uncontested bombing raid on Natanz, Isfahan, and the third site, he claims we've destroyed entirely.

## **#Nima**

Yeah, Fordow. You mean Fordow?

## **#John**

Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan. He claims, on the one hand, the United States must take out the dust and that Iran has agreed. That's false. Iran has, in fact, said we will retain the materials. President Putin spoke of this in some detail, interestingly, on Saturday night. I can come back to that in a minute. There's no question that Iran refuses to hand over enriched nuclear materials, either current stocks or future stocks that might be developed out of Bushehr and other nuclear facilities. Trump both says we destroyed it and says we want to take it. In other words, it exists. He can't mentally grip the contradictions between the two. So then he says, repeating it, they guarantee, meaning Iran, no nuclear weapons for a very long period of time and a couple of other minor things, but they just can't get there.

That's about his last word on the third stage, but it indicates he's nowhere near addressing the first two stages: ceasefire, stable undertakings, which also include no resumption of the U.S. bases in the area, no reinforcements, and so forth and so on. He can't grip and can't address the three stages. And he hasn't read because he says he threw it away. He stopped reading the plan. Now, what does one have when one looks at such a negotiator? What does the Iranian side think when they look at his two delegated negotiators, Witkoff and Kushner, from the Iranian point of view, from the record they've made in Gaza, the record they've made everywhere? They are liars. They are deception operators. They are sabotage agents. They are smoke screeners. They cannot be trusted to negotiate in good faith, fundamentally.

However, Iran says, as you said, Ghalibaf says, if they want to negotiate, we're ready. Ghalibaf is not, if I'm not mistaken, explicitly criticizing Witkoff and Kushner's performance to date. The same thing with China. The same thing with President Putin's press conference last Saturday night. So... what do we have then? A U.S. president who can't mentally deal with a plan of any kind, in this case

Iranian, but with Chinese and Russian additions. He can't negotiate through two negotiators who are considered absolutely untrustworthy. You can't negotiate with them. That leaves Vance, and all of the publicity that's come from Axios about what Vance achieved or didn't achieve, what pieces of paper he nearly signed, what he did—Axios is simply a totally inaccurate Israeli mouthpiece in Washington.

And the reporter who reflects that is Israeli, has served in the Israeli military, and isn't to be believed. Not only that, the record shows that whatever he reports as exclusive—and Trump is talking to him relatively regularly now, giving him exclusives—he's a deception operator. That's all. So it's near impossible to see how one would negotiate with such a combination. Vance is sidelined, Witkoff and Kushner are untrustworthy, and Trump is mentally incapable. Okay, now let's look, if you don't mind, I'll just extend it a bit to an important contribution Putin made, and then we'll come back to what you have to say about China, the China visit.

On Saturday night, there's been much misunderstood in the Western press about what President Putin said. He was speaking, I need to point out to our audience and remind, that it was at the end of the Victory Day parade, and he was speaking to a group of Russian reporters, okay? So... I've summed up what he said as a policy of three or four no's. There's to be no Russian criticism of Trump. There's to be no Russian deterrence of U.S. action on the Ukraine battlefield or throughout Europe. No Russian deterrence for the remilitarization of Germany, which has its counterpart with China and the remilitarization of Japan.

So no criticism of Trump, no deterrence of U.S. action, no escalation control. That's what Russia is, as it were, having difficulty gripping right now. We can go into the details on the battlefield, at sea, and in relation to the drone war, as the Ukrainians are increasingly using their range. And finally, no hurry. This is important. Let me explain. Russia is in the U.S. equivalent of a midterm election campaign. The national parliamentary elections take place in the third week of September—pardon me, September 25—which is a very short distance away. What we have then is a significant locking in of domestic political campaign calculation.

In such a time, what does a candidate trying to mobilize against increasing public disapproval of the president's performance, the prime minister's performance, the governor's performance, the parliament's performance, and so on, do? But there's no public disapproval of the army's performance. That's constant and high. The correlation between approval of Putin and approval of the Russian army has been broken now. It's very important to understand how Russians begin to feel about this. In this context, Putin is not in a hurry to do anything surprising. He needs to be reassuring. He needs to be reassuring to Trump. He needs to be reassuring to the Chinese. He needs to be reassuring to Iran, to North Korea, to Cuba.

He wants, in fact, a relatively stable platform as he goes into the election because he's got to combat rising disapproval. So no criticism of Trump is part of the no hurry. No deterrence for the United States is really a statement of, we're not going to escalate those threats to use the Iskander

against the center of Kiev. They were empty to start with. The Europeans treated them as empty. There was no drone attack on the parade on Saturday. There was no Russian retaliation. If you look carefully at the battlefield, you see slow preparation and a slowdown of advance westward. So no escalation control in any area. No escorts, military escorts at sea. Why?

Because in fact, when you look at it carefully, the Russian side sees long negotiation on the Iran war, high oil price between 95 and 110. Long negotiation. Get us into the election month at that level of price with a fleet that currently, some of these so-called alternative fleet tankers are idle. Russia doesn't need to arm-escort all the tankers that are going out, that are threatened by the Europeans and the Americans, or threatened by Ukrainian drone attacks. Doesn't need to, because some are idle. It can sacrifice tankers because it's got plenty. At the moment, the damage Ukrainian drones have done to Russian export infrastructure has been more than offset by, let's call it, the Iran war-induced price.

So we are exporting less volume but earning more revenue. And that combination is part of Putin's "no hurry till we get to the election." That's, as I understand it, the kind of line he tried to run on Saturday night, with one important point I need to reinforce. I published it yesterday. You can look at it. Readers can look at it in *Dances with Bears*. It's what President Putin said about the murder of Ali Larijani. This must be understood in Tehran to be deeply offensive. Why? When President Putin telephoned President Trump a few days ago, he made the point—I believe it's April 29, but I've forgotten the dates in my head—it was three days after the so-called assassination attempt in Washington, the Hilton Hotel ballroom.

President Trump, according to the readout from Yuri Ushakov, expressed his great sympathy for President Trump, his family, and his friends and officials that the assassination attempt was foiled. He expressed sympathy for what had happened and encouragement to the president. April 29th. And yet, Saturday night, when speaking of the Russian contribution to the negotiations on nuclear issues, Putin referred to Ali Larijani, whom he's met four times and negotiated on the nuclear issue with Larijani, who was secretary or chief executive of the Supreme National Security Council in Iran. He spoke of him as unfortunately passing away. The Russian is "departed from life," passing away.

## **#John**

Now, you never can use that Russian expression to describe bombing, assassination, or murder. That's what happened to Larijani. Not only that, Putin knows perfectly well that Netanyahu claimed credit for it and that Trump immediately endorsed it. Why express sympathy for Trump after an attempted assassination and use euphemisms that are offensively euphemistic about murder and assassination for Larijani? That's indicative of the way in which President Putin speaks publicly in such a way as to ingratiate or appease President Trump. That's the first—no criticism of Trump.